Chronicles of Carlingford

MISS MARJORIBANKS

BY THE

AUTHOR OF 'SALEM CHAPEL,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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MISS MARJORIBANKS.

CHAPTER XIX.

BUT Lucilla's good luck and powers of persuasion were such that after a while she even succeeded in convincing little Rose Lake of the perfect reasonableness, and indeed necessity, of sacrificing herself to the public interests of the community. "As for enjoying it," Miss Marjoribanks said, "that is quite a different matter. Now and then perhaps for a minute one enjoys it; but that is not what I am thinking of. One owes something to one's fellow-creatures, you know; and if it made the evening go off well, I should not mind in the least to be hustled up in a corner and contradicted. To be sure, I don't remember that it ever happened to me; but then I have such

luck; and I am sure I give you full leave to box the Archdeacon's ears next Thursday; or to tell him he does not know anything in the world about art," said Miss Marjoribanks, thoughtfully, with a new combination rising in her mind.

"Thank you, Lucilla," said Rose, "but I shall not come back again. I am much obliged to you. It does not do for people who have work to do. My time is all I have, and I cannot afford to waste it, especially——"

"Rose," said Miss Marjoribanks, "how are you ever to be an artist if you do not know life? That is just the very reason why you ought to go out into the world; and I don't see, for my part, that it matters whether it is pleasant or not. To practise scales all day long is anything but pleasant, but then one has to do it, you know. I don't blame you," said Lucilla, with tender condescension. "You are a dear little thing, and you don't know any better; but *I* went through Political Economy, and learnt all about that;—you don't think *I* choose it for the pleasure? But you all know what is the object of my life, and I hope I am not one to shrink from my duty," Miss Marjoribanks added. And it was difficult to reply to such a sublime declaration. Little Rose left her friend with the conviction that it was her duty, too, to sacrifice herself for the benefit of society and the advance-

ment of art. Such were the lofty sentiments elicited naturally, as enthusiasm responds to enthusiasm, by Lucilla's self-devotion. Already, although she was not much more than twenty, she had the consoling consciousness that she had wrought a great work in Carlingford; and if Miss Marjoribanks required a little sacrifice from her assistants, she did not shrink from making the same in her own person, as has been shadowed forth in the case of Mr Cavendish, and as will yet, in the course of this history, be still more seriously and even sadly evolved.

Three weeks had passed in this way, making it still more and more visible to Lucilla how much she had lost in losing Mr Cavendish, of whom nothing as yet had been heard, when suddenly, one day, about luncheon-time, at the hour when Miss Marjoribanks was known to be at home, the drawing-room door opened without any warning, and the missing man walked in. It was thus that Lucilla herself described the unexpected apparition, which appeared to her to have dropped from the clouds. She avowed afterwards to Mrs Chiley that his entrance was so utterly unexpected, so noiseless, and without warning, that she felt quite silly, and could not tell in the least how she behaved; though the friends of Miss Marjoribanks, it is to be hoped, are too well acquainted with her promptitude of mind and action to imagine that she in any

way compromised herself even under the surprise of the moment. As for Mr Cavendish, he exhibited a certain mixture of timidity and excitement which it was remarkable, and indeed rather flattering for any lady to see, in such an accomplished man of the world. Lucilla, was not a person to deceive herself, nor did she want experience in such matters, as has been already shown; but it would be vain to deny that the conviction forced upon her mind by the demeanour of her visitor was that it was a man *about to propose* who thus made his unlooked-for appearance before her. She confessed afterwards to her confidential friend that he had all the signs of it in his looks and manners. "He gave that little nervous cough," Lucilla said, "and pulled his cravat *just so*, and stared into his hat as if he had it all written down there; and looked as They always look," Miss Marjoribanks added, with a touch of natural contempt. Nor was this all the change in Mr Cavendish's appearance. He had managed miraculously in his month's absence to grow the most charming little mustache and beard, which were, to be sure, slightly red, like most people's. It gleamed into Miss Marjoribanks's mind in a moment that people did such things sometimes by way of disguising themselves; but if such had been Mr Cavendish's intention, it had utterly failed, since he seemed rather more like himself than before, in Lucilla's opin-

ion, and certainly was more likely to attract attention, since beards were not so usual in these days. They met on the very spot where Lucilla had seen him last, with that look of insane terror on his handsome face. And the Archdeacon was still in Carlingford, if it was he who had occasioned such a panic. Mr Cavendish came in as if he had never been absent, as if he had seen Miss Marjoribanks on the previous night, and had no fear of anything in the world but of failing to please her; and Lucilla fortunately saw the nature of the position, and was not to be put out even by such an emergency. Of course, under the circumstances, to accept him was utterly out of the question; but, at the same time, Lucilla did not feel it expedient, without much more distinct information, to put a definitive and cruel negative on Mr Cavendish's hopes. As for Barbara Lake, that was a trifle not worth thinking of; and, notwithstanding that there was something rather unaccountable in his conduct, he was still the probable member for Carlingford, just, as Mrs Chiley so often said, the position which, of all others, she would have chosen for Lucilla; so that Miss Marjoribanks was not prepared, without due consideration, to bring the matter to a final end.

While Lucilla made this rapid summary of affairs and took her stand in her own mind, Mr Cavendish had taken a chair and had opened the conversation.

He hoped he had not been entirely forgotten, though a fortnight's absence was a severe tax on anybody's memory——

"A fortnight!" said Miss Marjoribanks; "how happy you must have been while you have been away!—for I assure you a month is a month at Carlingford; and one does not get such ornaments in two weeks," said Lucilla, putting her hand to her chin, which made Mr Cavendish laugh, and look more nervous than ever.

"It is a souvenir of where I have been," he said. "I could imagine I had been gone two years, judging by my own feelings. I am so pleased to see that you remember how long it is. I daresay it looked a little droll running away so, but I dared not trust myself with leavetakings," Mr Cavendish said, with an air of sentiment. "I have been watching over a poor friend of mine on his sickbed. He was once very good to me, and when he sent for me I could not delay or refuse him. I found he had telegraphed for me when I got home the last Thursday evening I was here," he continued, looking Lucilla full in the face with the candour of conscious truth—though, to be sure, when people are stating a simple fact, it is seldom that they take the pains to be so particular. "I started by the night-train, and crossed the Channel while you were all fast asleep. I wonder if any one gave me a

thought," continued Mr Cavendish; and it was still more and more impressed upon Lucilla that he had all the signs of a man who had come to propose.

"I cannot say about that night in particular, but I am sure a great many people have given you a thought," said Miss Marjoribanks. "We have all been wondering what had become of you, where you were, and when you were coming back. So far as I am concerned, I have missed you dreadfully," said Lucilla, with her usual openness; and she really thought for a moment that Mr Cavendish in a sudden transport was going down on his knees.

"I scarcely hoped for so much happiness," he said; and though he kept up the tone proper to good society, which might mean sport or earnest according as the occasion required, there was a certain air of gratitude and tenderness in his face which sent Lucilla's active mind a-wondering. "He is thinking of the music-stand," she said to herself, and then went on with what she was saying; for though Miss Marjoribanks had a very good opinion of herself, it had not occurred to her that Mr Cavendish was very deeply in love—with *her*, at all events.

"Ah, yes—not only for the flirting, you know, which of itself is a dreadful loss; but then you were so good in keeping the gentlemen to their duty. I missed you dreadfully—there has been nobody at all

to help me," said Lucilla. Her tone was so genuinely plaintive that Mr Cavendish grew more and more moved. He put down his hat, he cleared his throat, he got up and walked to the window—evidently he was getting up his courage for the last step.

"But I heard you had some distinguished strangers here," he said, coming back to his seat without having, as it appeared, made up his mind. "My sister wrote—that is to say I heard—I really don't remember how I got the news; a dean, or bishop, or something——?"

"Oh yes, Mr Archdeacon Beverley; he came precisely the night you went away," said Lucilla. "Didn't you see him? I thought you stayed till after he came into the room. A nice clergyman is very nice, you know; but, after all, a man who has some experience in socicty—and we have had no music to speak of since you went away. Poor dear Barbara has had such a bad cold. In short, we have all been at sixes and sevens; and the Archdeacon——"

"Oh, never mind the Archdeacon," said Mr Cavendish, and Miss Marjoribanks felt that he had not winced at the name, though he did glance up at her in spite of himself with a little gleam in his eyes when she mentioned Barbara Lake. Perhaps this was because he knew nothing about the Archdeacon,

perhaps because he was prepared to hear the Archdeacon named. Lucilla did not give him all the benefit of the uncertainty, for she began to get a little impatient, and to wonder, if the man had come to propose, as appearances suggested, why he did not do it and get done with it?—which was a very reasonable question. This time, however, it certainly was coming. "I don't like nice clergymen," said Mr Cavendish, "especially not when it is *you* who find them so. If I could really flatter myself that you had missed me——"

"We all did," said Lucilla; "there is no compliment about it; and poor dear Barbara has had such a cold——"

"Ah!" said the unfortunate aspirant; and once more he gave a doubtful glance at Lucilla—decidedly the name of Barbara had more effect upon him than that of the Archdeacon. It seemed to damp his fire and smother the words on his lips, and he had to take another promenade to the window to recover himself. After that, however, he came back evidently wound up and determined; and his eyes, as he returned to Miss Marjoribanks's side, fell upon the music-stand by means of which she had covered his fright and flight (if it was not a mere hallucination on Lucilla's part that he had been frightened and had fled) on the night he left Carlingford. He came back

with the air of a man who means to delay and deliberate no more.

"If I could flatter myself that *you* had missed me," he said; "*you*—not any one else—I might have the courage to ask——"

It was at that precise moment of all moments that Mrs Chiley, whom they had not heard coming upstairs, though she was sufficiently audible, suddenly opened the door. Mr Cavendish, as was natural, broke off in a moment with a face which had turned crimson, and even Lucilla herself felt a little annoyed and put out, when, as in duty bound, she got up to meet and welcome her old friend. One thing was fortunate, as Miss Marjoribanks afterwards reflected, that since it was to be interrupted, it had been interrupted so early, before he could have put himself in any ridiculous attitude, for example; for at such moments it is well known that some men go down upon their knees—or at least such is the ineradicable belief of womankind. If Mr Cavendish had been on his knees—though, to tell the truth, he was not a very likely subject—the position would have been much more embarrassing. But as it was, there was an end. *He* turned back again to the window, biting his glove in the most frantic way, and taking up his hat, while *she*, always mistress of the position, advanced to the new-comer with outstretched hands.

"I know you have come to have lunch with me," said Lucilla. "You are always so nice—just when I wanted you; for, of course, I dared not have asked Mr Cavendish to go down-stairs if I had been all alone."

"Mr Cavendish!" cried the old lady, with a little scream. "So he has really come back! I am so glad to see you. I can't tell you how glad I am to see you; and, I declare, with a beard! Oh, you need not blush for what I say. I am old enough to be both your grandmothers, and I am so glad to see you together again!" said Mrs Chiley, with an imprudent effusion of sentiment. And it may be imagined what the effect of this utterance was upon the suitor whose lovemaking (if he was really going to make love) was thus cut short in the bud. He coughed more than ever when he shook hands with the new-comer, and kept fast hold of his hat with that despairing grasp which is common to men in trouble. And then he kept looking at the door, as if he expected some one else to come in, or wanted to escape; and so far from following up his interrupted address by any explanatory or regretful glances, he never even looked at Lucilla, which, to be sure, struck her as odd enough.

"Miss Marjoribanks is very good," he said, "and I am very glad to see you so soon after my return, Mrs Chiley—though, of course, I should have called; but

I may have to go away in a day or two; and I am afraid I cannot have the pleasure of staying to lunch."

"Oh, yes, you must stay," said Mrs Chiley; "I want to hear all about it. Go away again in a day or two? If I were Lucilla I would not let you go away. She is queen now in Carlingford, you know;—and then poor old Mr Chiltern is so ill. I hope you won't think of going away. They all say it would be such a pity if anything happened to him while you were away. Tell me where you have been, and what you have been doing all this time. We have missed you so dreadfully. And now you look quite like a military man with that beard."

"I have been nursing a sick friend—on the Continent," said Mr Cavendish; "not very cheerful work. I am sorry about Mr Chiltern, but I cannot help it. I have doubts now whether, even if he were to die, I should offer myself. I couldn't give pledges to all the shopkeepers about my opinions," said the embarrassed man; and as he spoke, he put his hat against his breast like a buckler. "I must not detain you from your lunch. Good-bye, Miss Marjoribanks; I am very sorry I can't stay."

"But, dear me, stop a minute—don't run away from us," said Mrs Chiley. "Come and talk it all over with the Colonel, there is a dear—and don't do anything rash. Good-bye, if you *will* go," said the

old lady. She sat with a look of consternation in her face, looking at Miss Marjoribanks, as he made his way down-stairs. "Did I come in at a wrong time, Lucilla?" said Mrs Chiley, in distress. "Have you refused him, my dear? What is the matter? I am so dreadfully afraid I came in at the wrong time."

"Dear Mrs Chiley," said Lucilla, sweetly, "you can never come in at a wrong time; and it is just as well, on the whole, that he didn't—for I was not prepared to give him any answer. I am sure, on the contrary, it was quite providential," Miss Marjoribanks said; but it may be doubted whether Lucilla's mind perfectly corresponded to her words on this occasion, though she was so amiable about it, as Mrs Chiley afterwards said. For even when a woman has not her answer ready, she has always a certain curiosity about a proposal; and then when such a delicate matter is crushed in the bud like this, who can tell if it will ever blossom again, and find full expression? Miss Marjoribanks could not be said to be disappointed, but unquestionably she regretted a little that he had not been permitted to say out his say. As for Mrs Chiley, when she understood all the rights of it, she was afflicted beyond measure, and could not forgive herself for the unlucky part she had played.

"If you had only said you were engaged," the old

lady exclaimed, "or not at home—or anything, Lucilla! You know, you need never stand on ceremony with me. No wonder he looked as if he could eat me! Poor fellow! and I daresay he has gone away with his heart full," said Mrs Chiley, with the tenderest sympathy. She could not get over it, nor eat any lunch, nor think of anything else. "Poor dear boy! He need not have been so put out with an old woman like me. He might have known if he had given me the least hint, or even a look, I would have gone away," said the kind old woman. "But you must be all the kinder to him when he comes back, Lucilla. And, my dear, if I were you, I would stay in this afternoon. He is sure to come back, and I would not keep him in pain."

"I don't think he will come back," Lucilla could not help saying; for she had a conviction that nothing more would come of it; but nevertheless she did stay in that afternoon, and received several visits, but saw nothing more of Mr Cavendish. It was rather vexatious, to tell the truth; for to see a man so near the point and not even to have the satisfaction of refusing him, is naturally aggravating to a woman. But Miss Marjoribanks had far too much philosophy as well as good sense to be vexed on that account with Mrs Chiley, who could not forgive herself, and to make up for the consequences of her unlucky visit, would have

done anything in the world. The old lady herself returned in the afternoon to know the result, and was doubly vexed and distressed to hear he had not come back.

"I ought to be on the Archdeacon's side, Lucilla," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I know I ought, when it was I that brought him here: but I can't help feeling for the other, my dear. He always was so nice—a great deal nicer, to my way of thinking, than Mr Beverley; not to say but that the Archdeacon is very agreeable," Mrs Chiley added, recollecting herself; for in matters of that description a woman of experience is aware that she cannot be too particular about what she says; and supposing that Mr Cavendish did not come back, it would never do to prejudice Lucilla against the other candidate. "I never blamed Mr Cavendish about that Lake girl," the old lady continued. "It was not his fault, poor young man. I know he was always devoted to you in his heart; and to think he should come here the very first place as soon as he returned! I only wish I had had one of my headaches this morning, my dear, to keep me indoors for an old Malaprop. I do indeed, Lucilla. It would have served me right, and I should not have minded the pain."

"But indeed I don't wish anything of the sort," said Miss Marjoribanks. "I would not have the best man

in the world at the cost of one of those dreadful headaches of yours. It is so good of you to say so; but you know very well it is not that sort of thing I am thinking of. If I were to go off and marry just now, after all that has been done to the drawing-room and everything, I should feel as if I were swindling papa; and it is the object of my life to be a comfort to *him*."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs Chiley, "but we must not neglect your own interest for all that. I think it is most likely he will come this evening. He has just come from the Continent, you know, where people do make calls in the evening. I meant to have asked you to come down to us, as we shall be all alone——"

"All alone? Then where is the Archdeacon?" asked Lucilla.

"He has gone out to Sir John's for a day or two, my dear," said Mrs Chiley, and she could not understand the little gleam of intelligence that shot into Lucilla's eye. "He left word with me for you that he would be sure to be back before Thursday, but seeing Mr Cavendish when I came in made me forget all about it. He would be quite distressed, poor man! if he thought I had forgotten to give you his message. I won't ask you now to come down and cheer me up a little, Lucilla. I think poor Mr Cavendish is sure to

come this evening, and I will not stand in his way again. But, my dear, you must send me a little note after he has been. Now promise. I shall be quite in suspense all night."

"Dear Mrs Chiley, I don't think he will come," said Miss Marjoribanks. "For my part, I think it was providential your coming to-day—for I am sure I don't know what I should have said to him. And it is so odd the Archdeacon should be away just at this moment. I feel quite sure he will not come to-night."

"There is nothing odd about the Archdeacon," said Mrs Chiley. "It was for to-day he was asked, you know; *that* is simple enough. If you are sure that you prefer the Archdeacon, my dear——" the old lady added, with an anxious look. But Lucilla cut short the inquiry, which was becoming too serious, by bringing her kind visitor a cup of tea.

"I hope you don't think I prefer any of them," said the injured maiden. "If I had been thinking of that sort of thing, you know, I need never have come home. If they would only let one do one's duty in peace and quiet," said Lucilla, with a sigh; and to tell the truth, both the ladies had occasion on that trying afternoon for the consolation of their cup of tea. But while they were thus refreshing themselves, a conversation

of a very different kind, yet affecting the same interests, was being carried on not very far off, under the shelter of a little flowery arbour in another of the embowered gardens of Grange Lane, where the subject was just then being discussed from the other side.

CHAPTER XX.

MR WOODBURN'S house, everybody admitted, was one of the nicest in Carlingford; but that was not so visible out of doors as in. He was a great amateur of flowers and fruit, and had his garden lined on each side with greenhouses, which were no doubt very fine in their way, but somewhat spoiled the garden, which had not in the least the homely, luxuriant, old-fashioned look of the other gardens, where, for the most part, the flowers and shrubs grew as if they liked it and were at home—whereas Mr Woodburn's flower-beds were occupied only by tenants-at-will; but at one corner near the house there was a little arbour, so covered up and heaped over with clematis that even the Scotch gardener had not the heart to touch it. The mass was so perfect and yet so light that it was the most perfect hiding-place imaginable; and nobody who had not been in it could have suspected that there was a possibility of getting inside. Here Mrs Woodburn and Mr

Cavendish were seated on this particular afternoon; she very eager, animated, and in earnest, he silent and leaning his head on his two hands in a sort of downcast, fallen way. Mrs Woodburn had one of her lively eyes on the garden that nobody might enter unseen, and for this once was "taking off" no one, but was most emphatically and unquestionably herself.

"So you did not do it," she said. "Why didn't you do it? when you knew so much depended upon it! You know I did not wish for it myself, at first. But now since this man has come, and you have got into such a panic, and never will have the courage to face it out——"

"How can I have the courage to face it out?" said Mr Cavendish, with a groan. "It is all very easy for a woman to speak who has only to criticise other people. If you had to do it yourself——"

"Ah, if I only had!" cried the sister. "You may be sure I would not make so much fuss. After all, what is there to do? Take your place in society, which you have worked for and won as honestly as anybody ever won it, and look another man in the face who is not half so clever nor so sensible as you are. Why, what can he say? If I only could do it, you may be sure I should not lose any time."

"Yes," said Mr Cavendish, lifting his head. "To be sure, you're a mimic—you can assume any part you

like; but I am not so clever. I tell you again, the only thing I can do is to go away——"

"Run away, you mean," said Mrs Woodburn. "I should be foolish, indeed, if I were trusting to your cleverness to assume a part. My dear good brother, you would find it impossible to put yourself sufficiently in sympathy with another," cried the mimic, in the Archdeacon's very tone, with a laugh, and at the same time a little snarl of bitter contempt.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Nelly, no foolery just now," said Mr Cavendish. "I don't understand how you can be so heartless. To mimic a man who has my position, my reputation, my very existence in his hands!"

"Have you murdered anybody?" said Mrs Woodburn, with intense scorn. "Have you robbed anybody? If you have, I can understand all this stuff. He is the very man to mimic, on the contrary. I'd like to let you see him as he was on that famous occasion when he delivered his opinions on art in Lucilla's drawing-room. Look here," said the mimic, putting one hand behind an imaginary coat-tail, and with the other holding up a visionary drawing to the light; but this was more than her audience could bear.

"I think you must have vowed to drive me crazy," cried the exasperated brother. "Put aside for once that confounded vanity of yours—as if a man had al-

ways leisure to look at you playing the fool." While he spoke in this unusual way, he got up, as was natural, and took one or two steps across the narrow space which was shut in by those luxuriant heaps of clematis; and Mrs Woodburn, for her part, withdrew her chair out of his way in equal heat and indignation.

"You have always the leisure to play the fool yourselves, you men," she said. "Vanity, indeed! as if it were not simply to show you that one can laugh at him without being stricken with thunder. But leave that if you like. You know quite well if you married Lucilla Marjoribanks that there would be no more about it. There *could* be no more about it. Why, all Grange Lane would be in a sort of way pledged to you. I don't mean to say *I* am attached to Lucilla, but you used to be, or to give yourself out for being. You flirted with her dreadfully in the winter, I remember, when those terrible Woodburns were here," she continued, with a shiver. "If you married Lucilla and got into Parliament, you might laugh at all the archdeacons in the world."

"It is very easy for a woman to talk," said the reluctant wooer again.

"I can tell you something it is not easy to do," cried his sister. "It is frightfully hard for a woman to stand by and see a set of men making a mess of things, and not to dare to say a word till all is spoiled. What is

this Archdeacon, I would like to know, or what could he say? If you only would have the least courage, and look him in the face, he would be disabled. As if no one had ever heard of mistaken identity before! And in the mean time go and see Lucilla, and get her consent. I can't do that for you; but I could do a great deal of the rest, if you would only have a little pluck and not give in like this."

"A *little* pluck, by George!" cried the unfortunate man, and he threw himself down again upon his chair. "I am not in love with Lucilla Marjoribanks, and I don't want to marry her," he added, doggedly, and sat beating a tune with his fingers on the table, with but a poorly-assumed air of indifference. As for Mrs Woodburn, she regarded him with a look of contempt.

"Perhaps you will tell me who you are in love with," she said, disdainfully; "but I did not ask to be taken into your confidence in such an interesting way. What I wish to know is, whether you want a wife who will keep your position for you. I am not in the least fond of her, but she is very clever. Whether you want the support of all the best people in Carlingford, and connections that would put *all that* to silence, and a real position of your own which nobody could interfere with,—that is what I want to know, Harry; as for the sentimental part, I am not so much interested about that," said Mrs Woodburn, with a contemptuous smile.

She was young still, and she was handsome in her way (for people who liked that style), and it jarred a little on the natural feelings to hear a young wife express herself so disdainfully; but, to be sure, her brother was not unaccustomed to that.

"You said once that Woodburn was necessary to your happiness," he said, with a mixture of scorn and appeal, "though I can't say I saw it, for my part."

"Did I?" she said, with a slight shrug of her shoulders; "I saw what was necessary on another score, as you don't seem to do. When a man has nobody belonging to him, it is connections he ought to try for: and Lucilla has very good connections; and it would be as good as securing the support of Grange Lane. Do it for my sake, Harry, if you won't do it for your own," said Mrs Woodburn, with a change of tone. "If you were to let things be said, and give people an advantage, think what would become of me. Woodburn would not mind so much if somebody else were involved; but oh, Harry! if he should find out *he* had been cheated, and he only——"

"He was not cheated! You were always a great deal too good for him, Nelly," said Mr Cavendish, touched at last at an effectual point; "and as for *his* friends and family, and all that——"

"Oh, please, don't speak of them," said Mrs Wood-

burn, with a shudder; "but there are only two of us in the world; and, Harry, for my sake——"

At this appeal Mr Cavendish got up again, and began to pace the little arbour, two steps to the wall, and two steps back again. "I told you I had almost done it, when that confounded old woman came in," he said: "that could not be called my fault?"

"And she said she was both your grandmothers," said the mimic, with a slightly hysterical laugh, in Mrs Chiley's voice. "I know how she did it. She can't be there still, you know—go now and try."

"Let alone a little; don't hurry a fellow," said her brother, somewhat sullenly; "a man can't move himself up to the point of proposing twice in one day."

"Then promise that you will do it to-morrow," said Mrs Woodburn. "I shall have to go in, for there is somebody coming. Harry, before I go, promise that you will do it to-morrow, for my sake."

"Oh, bother!" said Mr Cavendish; and it was all the answer he deigned to give before Mrs Woodburn was called away, notwithstanding the adjuration she addressed to him. It was then getting late, too late, even had he been disposed for such an exertion, to try his fortunes again that day, and Lucilla's allusion had given him a great longing to see Barbara once more before his sacrifice was accomplished. Not that it was such a great sacrifice, after all. For Mr Cavendish

was quite aware that Miss Marjoribanks was a far more suitable match for him than Barbara Lake, and he was not even disposed to offer himself and his name and fortune, such as they were, to the drawing-master's daughter. But, to tell the truth, he was not a person of fixed and settled sentiments, as he ought to have been in order to triumph, as his sister desired, over the difficulties of his position. Perhaps Mrs Woodburn herself would have done just the same, had it been she from whom action was demanded. But she was capable of much more spirited and determined conduct in theory, as was natural, and thought she could have done a great deal better, as so many women do.

Mr Cavendish lounged about the garden a little, with his hands in his pockets, and then strayed out quite accidentally, and in the same unpremeditating mood made his way to Grove Street. He meant nothing by it, and did not even inquire of himself where he was going, but only strolled out to take the air a little. And it was better to go up to the higher parts of the town than to linger here about Grange Lane, where all the people he knew might pass, and stop to talk and ask him where he had been, and worry his life out. And surely he had had enough of bother for one day. By this time it was getting dark, and it was very pleasant in Grove Street, where most of the good people had just watered their little gardens, and brought out the sweetness of

the mignonette. Mr Cavendish was not sentimental, but still the hour was not without its influence; and when he looked at the lights that began to appear in the parlour windows, and breathed in the odours from the little gardens, it is not to be denied that he asked himself for a moment what was the good of going through all this bother and vexation, and whether love in a cottage, with a little garden full of mignonette and a tolerable amount of comfort within, was not, after all, a great deal more reasonable than it looked at first sight? This, however, it must be allowed, was no conclusion arrived at on sufficient premises, and with the calmness that befitted such an important argument, but the mere suggestion, by the way, of an impatient, undecided mind, that did always what at the moment it found most agreeable to do, and reflected afterwards, when the moment of repentance, not of reflection, had arrived.

He had paused by instinct under a lamp not yet lighted, which was almost opposite Mr Lake's house; and it was not his fault if he saw at the upper window a figure looking out, like Mariana, and sighing, "He cometh not." Naturally the figure was concerned to find out who he was, and *he* was anxious to find out who was the figure. And, on the whole, it was in a very innocent manner that this entirely natural curiosity was satisfied. First the window was opened a

little—a very little, just enough to change the air—and Mr Cavendish down below heard the voice of Barbara singing softly up above, which settled the matter as to her identity. As to *his*, Barbara had never, from the first moment she perceived him, had any doubt of that. Her heart leaped back, as she thought, to its right place when she first caught sight of that blessed apparition; and with her heart came the orange-flowers, and the wedding breakfast, and the veil of real Brussels for which Barbara had so much wept. She tried to sing something that would convey hope and assurance to her timid lover, according to romantic precedent; but her mind was far from being a prompt one, as has been said. Thus it was all in the most natural way that it came about. When Mr Cavendish felt quite sure who it was, he took off his hat, which was only civil, and made a step or two forward; and then Barbara took the extreme step of going down to the door. No doubt it was an extreme step. Nothing but a great public aim, like that of Miss Marjoribanks, could have justified such a measure; but then Barbara, if she had not a great public, had at least a decided personal, purpose, and obeyed the impulse of that mingled inclination towards another and determination to have her own way, which in such a mind calls itself passion, and which sometimes, by sheer force of will, succeeds bet-

ter than either genius or calculation. She went down to the door, all palpitating with renewed hope, and, at the same time, with the dread that he might escape her in the moment which was necessary for her passage down-stairs. But when she opened the door, and appeared with her cheeks glowing, and her eyes blazing, and her heart thumping in her breast, in the midst of that quiet twilight, the object of her hopes was still there. He had even advanced a little, with an instinctive sense of her approach; and thus they met, the street being comparatively quiet just then, and the mignonette perfuming the air. To be sure, the poetry of the situation was of a homely order, for it was under a lamp-post instead of a tree that the lover had placed himself; and it was not the dew, but the watering, that had brought out the odour of the mignonette; but then neither of the two were very poetical personages, and the accessories did perfectly well for them.

"Is it you, Mr Cavendish? Goodness! I could not think who it was," cried Barbara, out of breath.

"Yes, it is I. I thought, if I had an opportunity, I would ask how you were—before I go away again," said the imprudent man. He did not want to commit himself, but at the same time he was disposed to take the benefit of his position as a hero on the eve of departure. "I heard you had been ill."

"Oh, no—not ill," said Barbara; and then she add-

ed, taking breath, "I am quite well now. Won't you come in?"

This was the perfectly simple and natural manner in which it occurred. There was nobody in, and Barbara did not see, any more than her lover did, why she should sacrifice any of her advantages. They were, on the whole, quite well matched, and stood in need of no special protection on either side. Though naturally Barbara, who felt by this time as if she could almost see the pattern of the real Brussels, had a much more serious object in view than Mr Cavendish, who went in only because it was a pleasant thing to do at the moment, and offered him a little refuge from himself and his deliberations, and the decision which it was so necessary to come to. Thus it happened that when Mr Lake and Rose came in from the evening walk they had been taking together, they found, to their great amazement, Barbara in the little parlour, singing to Mr Cavendish, who had forgotten all about Grange Lane, and his dangers, and his hopes of better fortune, and was quite as much contented with the mellow contralto that delighted his ears, and the blazing scarlet bloom, and black level brows that pleased his eyes, as anybody could have desired. To be sure, he had not even yet given a thought to the wedding breakfast, which was all arranged already in the mind of the enchantress who thus held him in thrall; but perhaps that may be

best accounted for by referring it to one of those indefinable peculiarities of difference that exist between the mind of woman and that of man.

When Mr Lake and his daughter came in from their walk, and their talk about Willie, and about art, and about the "effects" and "bits" which Rose and her father mutually pointed out to each other, to find this unexpected conjunction in the parlour, their surprise, and indeed consternation, may be imagined. But it was only in the mind of Rose that the latter sentiment existed. As for Mr Lake, he had long made up his mind how, as he said, "a man of superior position" ought to be received when he made his appearance in an artist's house. Perhaps, to tell the truth, he forgot for the moment that his visitor was young, and his daughter very handsome, and that it was to visit Barbara and not himself that Mr Cavendish had come. The little drawing-master would not suffer himself to be seduced by thoughts which were apart from the subject from carrying out his principles. When Mr Cavendish rose up confused, with a look of being caught and found out, Mr Lake held out his hand to him with perfect suavity—"I have the pleasure of knowing you only by sight," said the innocent father, "but I am very glad to make your acquaintance in my own house;" and as this was said with the conscious dignity of a man who knows that his house is not just an

ordinary house, but one that naturally the patrician portion of the community, if they only knew it, would be glad to seek admittance to, the consequence was that Mr Cavendish felt only the more and more confused.

"I happened to be passing," he explained faintly, "and having heard that Miss Lake, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting——"

"I assure you," said the drawing-master, "that I hail with satisfaction the appearance of a gentleman whose intelligence I have heard so much of. We artists are a little limited, to be sure; for life, you know, is short, and art is long, as the poet says; and our own occupation requires so much of our thoughts. But still we are sympathetic, Mr Cavendish. We can understand other subjects of study, though we cannot share them. Yes, Barbara has been a little poorly—but she does not look as if there was much the matter with her to-night. Ask for the lamp, Rose," said Mr Lake, with a little grandeur. There was no light in the room except the candles at the piano, which lighted that corner and left the rest of the apartment, small as it was, in comparative shade. There was something magnificent in the idea of adding the lamp to that illumination; but then it is true that, as Mr Lake himself said, "every artist is a prodigal in his heart."

Rose had been standing all this time with her hat

on, looking at Mr Cavendish like a little Gorgon. What did he want here? How had he been admitted? She scorned to go and interrogate the maid, which involved a kind of infidelity to her sister, but all the same she looked hard at Mr Cavendish with a severity which had on the whole a reassuring effect upon him. For, to tell the truth, the benign reception which he was receiving from Mr Lake, instead of setting the visitor at his ease, made him nervous; for he was not in the least aware of the heroic soul which existed in the drawing-master's limited person. Mr Cavendish thought nothing but that he was being "caught," according to his own vulgar theory. He thought Barbara's father was cringing to him, and playing the usual mean part of an interested parent who means to secure a good match for his daughter. But as for Rose, she evidently, either from jealousy or some other reason, was not in the plot. She stood apart and scowled, as well as she knew how, upon the intruder. "I suppose, papa," said Rose, "Mr Cavendish wished to hear Barbara sing, and she has been singing. She is always very good-natured in that way; but as we have none of us anything particular to do, I don't see what need we have for a lamp."

At this trenchant speech Mr Cavendish rose. He was quite grateful to the little Preraphaelite for her incivility. It made him feel less as if he had com-

mitted himself, and more as if he were an intruder, which was the more agreeable suggestion of the two under the present circumstances. "You remind me that I should thank Miss Lake for letting me come in and hear once more her lovely voice," he said. "I am at present only a visitor in Carlingford, and indeed in England—I may have to leave again in a day or two—good-bye. If I am still here, I shall hope to meet you on Thursday." And then he pressed Barbara's hand, who, to tell the truth, was very reluctant to let him go away.

"If you must go——" she said, so low that her father could not hear her, though the vigilant suspicious little Rose caught the sound, and came a step nearer, like a little dragon, as Barbara was disposed to think she was.

"I *must* go," murmured Mr Cavendish; "but I shall see you—we shall meet." He dared not say another word, so alarming were the looks of the small Medusa, whose countenance he could see behind Barbara regarding the parting. As for Mr Lake, he too regarded it with a momentary curiosity. He did not quite understand how it was that his daughter and his visitor could know each other well enough to communicate in this undertone.

"I am sorry to see so little of you," said Mr Lake. "I am afraid it is my little girl's *brusque* way of

speaking that hastens your going. I assure you we were quite unoccupied, and would have been very happy—perhaps we may be more fortunate another time;" and with that the drawing-master gave a dignified dismissal to his surprising visitor. It was Rose herself who saw Mr Cavendish to the door, which she opened for him with an utter disregard of his excuses and attempts to do that office for himself. She would not even shake hands, but made him the most majestic curtsy that was ever executed by a personage five feet high, under the influence of which Mr Cavendish went away humbled, and, he could scarcely tell why, ashamed of himself. When Rose came back to the parlour, still with her hat on, she found that Barbara had gone to the window, and was looking out at the edge of the blind—which was all that was wanted to put a climax to her sister's exasperation.

"Papa," said Rose, "I should like to know in your presence, or I should like you to ask Barbara herself, what is the meaning of all that has been going on to-night."

Mr Lake turned right round at this appeal with an expression of utter amaze and bewilderment, which at another moment would have struck Rose with the profoundest delight as a study; and as for Barbara, without any more ado she burst into a flood of passionate tears.

"Oh, you nasty envious thing! oh, you jealous, disagreeable thing!" sobbed the elder sister; "to send him away and spoil everything with your airs! when he was as near—just as near"—but here Barbara's voice lost itself in her tears.

"My dear, what does this mean?" said Mr Lake.

"It means, papa, that she has encouraged him to come, and invited him in, and been singing to him," cried Rose. "To think she should be one of us, and have no proper pride! If he was fond of her, he would tell her so, and ask your permission; but she is laying herself out to please *him*, and is content that they should all jeer at her in Lucilla's parties, and say she is trying to catch him. I thought I could have died of shame when I saw him here to-night; and compromising you, as if that was why you were so civil. If it were for her good, do you think *I* would ever interfere?" cried Barbara's guardian angel. At this point Rose herself would have liked excessively to cry, if the truth must be told; but Barbara had already appropriated that facile mode of expression, and the little artist scorned to copy. As for Mr Lake, he turned from one to the other of his daughters with unmitigated consternation and dismay.

"It was all your coming in," sobbed Barbara, "if you had only had the sense to see it. *That* was what he meant. If I was singing, it was just to pass the

time; I know that was what he came for. And you to send him away with your airs!" cried the injured young woman. All this made up a scene entirely novel to the amazed father, who felt it his duty to put a stop to it, and yet could not tell what to say.

"Girls," he began with a trembling voice, "this is all perfectly new to me. I don't understand. If Mr Cavendish, or—or any one, wishes to pay his addresses to my daughter, it is, of course, his business to apply to me in the first place. Barbara, don't cry. You know how I dislike to hear you cry," said the poor man, gradually losing his head. "Don't make a fuss, Rose; for heaven's sake, girls, can't you say at once what you mean, and don't worry me to death? Ah, if your poor mother had but been spared!" cried the unfortunate widower; and he had five daughters altogether, poor soul!—and it was so easy to drive him out of his senses. At this point Rose intervened, and did what she could to calm matters down. Barbara, still sobbing, retired to her chamber; the boys came in from their cricket, and the little children had to be put to bed; and there was no one to attend to all these matters, in the absence of the eldest sister, except the little mistress of the School of Design, so that naturally all further explanation was postponed for this night.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was thus that Mr Cavendish, without particularly meaning it, impressed upon two interesting and amiable young women on the same day the conviction that he was about to propose, without in either case realising that expectation. After this last exploit he went home with his head more confused, and his will more undecided, than ever. For he had one of those perverse minds which cling to everything that is forbidden ; and the idea that he ought not to have gone near Barbara Lake, and that he ought not to see her again, made him more anxious to seek her out and follow her than he had ever been before. If such a thing had been permissible in England as that a man might marry one wife for his liking and another for his interests, the matter might have been compromised by proposing to them both ; and there cannot be a doubt that Lucilla, in such a case, would very soon have triumphed over her

handsome, sullen, passionate rival. But then such a way of conciliating a man with himself does not exist in the British Islands, and consequently was not to be thought of. And to be sure, every time he came to think of it, Mr Cavendish saw more and more clearly what a fool he would be to marry Barbara, who was evidently so ready to marry him. The same thing could not with any confidence be predicated of Miss Marjoribanks, though, if she were to accept him, and her father were to consent, nothing could be better for his interests. All this he felt, and yet an unconquerable reluctance kept him back. His history was not quite spotless, and there were chapters in it which he thought it would kill him to have brought before the public of Carlingford; but still he was far from being a bad fellow in his way. And down at the bottom of his heart, out of everybody's sight, and unacknowledged even by himself, there was one little private nook full of gratitude to Lucilla. Though he scarcely knew what was passing at the moment, he knew, when he came to think of it, that she had saved him from the effects of his first panic at the unexpected appearance of Mr Beverley. Perhaps it was partly this consciousness that made him so embarrassed in her presence; and he could not find it in his heart, with this sense of gratitude, to deceive her, and say he loved her, and ask her to marry him. To be sure, if Mr Cavendish

had been a very acute observer, he might have felt that Lucilla was quite able to take care of herself in such an emergency, and was at the least a match for him, however seductive he might appear to others; but then, few people are acute observers in a matter so entirely personal to themselves.

He felt furious with himself as he went home, and thought how foolish he had been ever to go near Barbara Lake in the present position of affairs; and yet he could not help feeling that it was more delightful to him to see the colour blaze into her cheeks, and the song rise like a bird from her full crimson lips, and that flush of excitement and triumph come from her eyes, than it could have been in any case to have been admitted to the same degree of intimacy with Lucilla, who was not in the least intoxicated by his presence. Thus the unfortunate man was torn asunder, not so much by love and duty, as by inclination and interest, though the inclination was not strong enough to have allowed of any great sacrifice, nor the interest sufficiently certain to have repaid the exertion. This only made it the more difficult to decide; and in his circumstances, and with the panic that pursued him, he did not feel it possible to adopt the only wise policy that remained to him, and wait.

As Mr Cavendish was thus making his way home,

horribly vexed and annoyed with himself, and avoiding Grange Lane as if the plague was in it, Miss Marjoribanks sat in her drawing-room alone, and thought the matter over. Certainly she had not expected him that evening, but still, when she heard ten o'clock strike, and felt that his coming was now absolutely impossible, she was a little—not exactly disappointed, but annoyed at herself for having felt a sort of expectation. Lucilla was not a person to hide her sentiments, or even to conceal a fact which was disagreeable to her *amour propre*. She had too thorough and well-founded a confidence in the natural interest of the world in all belonging to her to do that; so when ten o'clock had done striking, she opened her blotting-book and took one of her pretty sheets of paper, with Lucilla on it in delicate rose-tinted letters, the L very large, and the concluding letters very small, and dashed off her note to Mrs Chiley. The Miss Blounts' at Mount Pleasant had been one of the very first establishments to forsake the handwriting which was all corners, in favour of the bold running hand of the present female generation; and it was accordingly in a very free and strongly-characterised manuscript, black with much ink, that Miss Marjoribanks wrote—

"DEAREST MRS CHILEY,—I never expected him to come, and he has not. I daresay he never meant it.

I am so glad. It was Providence that sent you at that particular moment to-day.—Always in haste, with fond love, your most truly affectionate LUCILLA."

And when she had sent Thomas with this note, Miss Marjoribanks felt her mind relieved. Not that it had been much distressed before, but when she had put it in black and white, and concluded upon it, her satisfaction was more complete; and no such troublous thoughts as those which disturbed the hero of this day's transactions—no such wild tears as poured from the eyes of Barbara Lake—interfered with the maidenly composure of Lucilla's meditations. Notwithstanding all that people say to the contrary, there is a power in virtue which makes itself felt in such an emergency. Miss Marjoribanks could turn from Mr Cavendish, who had thus failed to fulfil the demands of his position, to the serene idea of the Archdeacon, with that delightful consciousness of having nothing to reproach herself with, which is balm to a well-regulated mind. She had done her duty, whatever happened. She had not injudiciously discouraged nor encouraged the possible Member for Carlingford; and at the same time she was perfectly free to turn her attention to the possible Bishop; and neither in one case nor the other could anybody say that she had gone a step too far, or committed herself in any way what-

soever. While these consoling reflections were passing through Lucilla's mind, Dr Marjoribanks came upstairs, as had grown to be his custom lately. Sometimes he took a cup of tea, though it was against his principles, and sometimes he only sat by while his daughter had hers, and amused himself with her chat before he went to bed. He was later than usual to-night, and naturally the tea-tray had disappeared some time before. As for Lucilla, she did not for a moment permit her own preoccupation to interfere with the discharge of her immediate duty, which was unquestionably to be amusing and agreeable, and a comfort to her dear papa.

"So you had Cavendish here to-day?" said the Doctor. "What brought him here? What has he been doing? Since you and he are on such good terms, I hope he gave you an account of where he has been."

"He has been nursing a sick friend on—the Continent," said Lucilla, with that largeness of geographical expression which is natural to the insular mind. "Who are Mr Cavendish's friends, papa?" added Miss Marjoribanks, with confiding simplicity; and it was beautiful to see how the daughter looked up into her father's face, with that angelic confidence in his knowledge on all subjects which is so rarely to be met with in the present generation. But it was not a question to which the Doctor found it easy to respond.

"Who are his friends?" said Dr Marjoribanks. "He's one of the Cavendishes, they say. We have all heard that. I never knew he had any friends; which is, after all, next best to having very good ones," said the philosophical old Scotchman; and there, as it appeared, he was quite content to let the matter drop.

"I like to know who people belong to, for my part," said Lucilla. "The Archdeacon, for example, one knows all about his friends. It's a great deal nicer, you know, papa. Not that it matters in the least about the Cavendishes——"

"Well, I should have thought not, after the way you made an end of him," said the Doctor. "I hope he doesn't mean to begin that nonsense over again, Lucilla. He is a good fellow enough, and I don't mind asking him to my house; but it is quite a different thing to give him my daughter. He spends too much money, and I can't see what real bottom he has. It may all flare up and come to nothing any day. Nobody can have any certainty with an expensive fellow like that," said Dr Marjoribanks. "There is no telling where he draws his income from; it isn't from land, and it isn't from business; and if it's money in the Funds——"

"Dear papa," said Lucilla, "if he had the Bank of England, it would not make any difference to me. I am not going to swindle you, after you have had the

drawing-room done up, and everything. I said ten years, and I mean to keep to it,—if nothing very particular happens," Miss Marjoribanks added prudently. "Most likely I shall begin to go off a little in ten years. And all I think of just now is to do my duty, and be a little comfort to you."

Dr Marjoribanks indulged in a faint "humph," under his breath, as he lighted his candle; for, as has been already said, he was not a man to feel so keenly as some men might have felt the enthusiasm of filial devotion which beautified Lucilla's life. But at the same time he had that respect for his daughter's genius, which only experience could have impressed upon him; and he did not venture, or rather he did not think it necessary, to enter into any further explanations. Dr Marjoribanks did not in the least degree share the nervousness of Mr Cavendish, who was afraid of deceiving Lucilla. As for her father, he felt a consoling conviction that she was quite able to conduct her own affairs, and would do him no discredit in any engagements she might form. And at the same time he was amused by the idea that he might be swindled in respect to the drawing-room, if she married at this early moment. He took it for wit, when it was the most solid and sensible reality; but then, fortunately, the points in which he misapprehended her redounded as much to Lucilla's credit, as

those in which he seized her meaning clearest, so that on every side there was something gained.

And when Miss Marjoribanks too retired to her maidenly chamber, a sentiment of general content and satisfaction filled her mind. It is true that for the moment she had experienced a natural womanly vexation to see a proposal nipped in the bud. It annoyed her not so much on personal as on general principles; for Lucilla was aware that nothing could be more pernicious to a man than when thus brought to the very point to be thrown back again, and never permitted to produce that delicate bloom of his affections. It was like preventing a rose from putting forth its flowers, a cruelty equally prejudicial to the plant and to the world. But when this pang of wounded philanthropy was over, Miss Marjoribanks felt in her heart that it was Providence that had sent Mrs Chiley at that special moment. There was no telling what embarrassments, what complications she might not have got into, had Mr Cavendish succeeded in unbosoming himself. No doubt Lucilla had a confidence that, whatever difficulties there might have been, she would have extricated herself from them with satisfaction and even *éclat*, but still it was better to avoid the necessity. Thus it was with a serene conviction that "whatever is, is best," that Miss Marjoribanks betook herself to her peaceful slumbers. There are so many

people in the world who hold, or are tempted to hold, an entirely different opinion, that it is pleasant to linger over the spectacle of a mind so perfectly well regulated. Very different were the sentiments of Mr Cavendish, who could not sleep for the ghosts that kept tugging at him on every side; and those of Barbara Lake, who felt that for her too the flower of her hero's love had been nipped in the bud. But, to be sure, it is only natural that goodness and self-control should have the best of it sometimes even in this uncertain world.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE Archdeacon returned to Carlingford before Thursday, as he had anticipated; but in the interval Mr Cavendish had not recovered his courage so far as to renew his visit to Miss Marjoribanks, or to face the man who had alarmed him so much. Everybody in Grange Lane remarked at the time how worried poor Mrs Woodburn looked. Her eyes lost their brightness, which some people thought was the only beauty she had, and her nerves and her temper both failed her, no one could tell why. The personal sketches she made at this moment were truculent and bitter to an unheard-of degree. She took off Mr Beverley with a savage force which electrified her audience, and put words into his mouth which everybody admitted were exactly like him, if he could ever be imagined to have fallen into the extraordinary circumstances in which the mimic placed him. In short, Mrs Woodburn made a little drama out of the Archdeacon. Mr

Beverley, of course, knew nothing about this, and showed some surprise now and then at the restrained laughter which he heard in the corners; but when anybody spoke of Mrs Woodburn, he showed an instinctive want of confidence. "I have not studied her sufficiently to give an opinion of her," he said, which was certainly the very reverse of her deliverance upon him. To tell the truth, she had rather studied him too much, and gave too keen an edge to his characteristic qualities, as is natural to all literary portraiture, and even went so far that, in the end, people began to ask whether she had any personal spite against him.

"She don't know him," Mr Woodburn said, when he heard some faint echo of this suggestion. "She's clever, and it carries her away, you know. She enters into it so, she don't know how far she is going; but I can answer for it she never saw the Archdeacon before; and Hal isn't here to give her the key-note, as she says. *He* has met everybody, I believe, one place or another," the simple man said, with a little natural pride; for in his heart he was vain of his fashionable brother-in-law. As for Mr Cavendish himself, it began to be understood that he was with a friend who was sick, on the Continent; and soon—for news had a wonderful tendency to increase and grow bigger as it spread in Grange Lane—that his friend

was dying, and that a probable large increase of fortune to the popular favourite would be the result, which was an idea that did credit to the imagination of Carlingford. He had disappeared completely once more after the eventful day which we have described, carrying out in the fullest way Lucilla's prediction, but striking Barbara Lake with bitter disappointment. Miss Marjoribanks had a great many things to occupy her, but Barbara had nothing except the humble duty of looking after her little brothers and sisters, and attending to her father's comfort, which had never been occupations particularly to her mind. And then Barbara was aware that, if she neglected her duties, Rose, on her return from the School of Design, would do them, though with a fierce little outbreak of indignation, which the elder sister felt she could bear; and accordingly, she did little else but brood over his sudden disappearance, and spend her time at the window looking for his return.

Lucilla conducted herself, as might have been expected, in a much more rational and dignified manner. She made herself very agreeable to the Archdeacon, who unbended very much, and grew very nice, as Mrs Chiley herself allowed. "But, my dear, I am uneasy about his opinions," the old lady said. He certainly had a very free way of talking, and was ready to discuss *anything*, and was

not approved of by Mr Bury. But still he had very good connections and a nice position, and had always a chance of being Bishop of Carlingford; and in marriage it is well known that one never can have everything one wants. So that, on the whole, even Mrs Chiley did not see what difference his opinions made, so far as Lucilla was concerned. When Miss Marjoribanks went down to Colonel Chiley's in the evening and made tea for the old people, like a daughter of the house, Mr Beverley was always disposed to go over to the enemy, as the old Colonel said. No doubt he had enough of Colonel Chiley, who had not received a new idea into his mind since the battle of Waterloo, and did not see what people had to do with such nonsense. And then the Archdeacon would very often walk home with the young visitor. During this time, as was natural, Mr Beverley heard Mr Cavendish's name a hundred times, and regretted, like all the world, that so eminent a member of the Carlingford commonwealth should be absent during his visit; but, at the same time, Lucilla took great care to avoid all personalities, and kept a discreet silence even about the gifts and accomplishments of her almost-lover. Mrs Chiley sighed, poor soul, when she saw how her young friend avoided this subject, and thought sometimes that he was forgotten, sometimes that the poor dear was breaking her heart for

him; but it is needless to say that neither of these suppositions was in the least true.

And then it began to be considered rather odd in Carlingford that the Archdeacon should pay such a long visit. Mrs Chiley no doubt was very kind and hospitable, and exceedingly glad to receive such a distinguished clergyman; but when a man has been six weeks in any one's house, and shows no inclination of going, it is natural that people should feel a little surprised. His visitation was over, and he had dined with everybody, and studied the place and its characteristics, and entered into everything that was going on. The only thing, indeed, that he did not seem to think of, was going away. If it had been Mr Cavendish, the chances are that he would have made himself so much one of the family, that his departure would have been felt as a domestic calamity; but the Archdeacon was very different from Mr Cavendish. So long as he was in the house it was impossible to forget either his position or his ways of thinking, or the absence of any real connection between himself and his hosts. He did not combat or contradict anybody, but he would give a faint smile when the Colonel uttered his old-fashioned sentiments, which drove the old soldier frantic. "As if I was not able to form an opinion, by Jove!" Colonel Chiley said; while, on the other hand, the Archdeacon was

quite ready to enter into the young people's absurd theories, and discuss the very Bible itself, as if that were a book to be discussed. As for the Rector, he turned his head away when he passed Colonel Chiley's door, and Miss Bury made visits of condolence and sympathy. "You must feel it a great responsibility having Mr Beverley with you," the Rector's sister would say, though naturally without any distinct explanation of her meaning; and then she would look at Mrs Chiley and sigh.

"Oh, I am sure it is a great pleasure," Mrs Chiley answered, not willing to let down the *prestige* of her guest. "He is very nice, and takes a great deal of interest in everything; and then, you know, he is a connection of ours. The Colonel's niece, Mary Chiley——"

"Yes, I know," said Miss Bury. "Poor thing! she looked suffering the last time I saw her. I hope she has found the true consolation to support her, now she has entered into the troubles of life."

"Well, yes, I hope so," said Mrs Chiley, a little doubtfully; "but you know one does not feel the troubles of life very severely at her age; and I don't think I should have called a baby a trouble when I was like her. I never had any, you know, and I used to fret over it a great deal; but the Colonel never liked the noise of children, and I suppose it is all for the best."

"One may always be sure of that," said Miss Bury, in her instructive way. "I suppose the Archdeacon is going soon," she added; "he has been here a long time now. I almost wonder he likes to be so long absent from his parish. Two months, is it not?"

"Oh no—not quite six weeks," said Mrs Chiley, briskly. "I hope he may be persuaded to stay some time longer. I look upon it as quite a compliment to Carlingford; for, to be sure, he would not stay if he had not some attraction," said the imprudent old woman. And this was precisely what Miss Bury wanted, as any one of acute perceptions might have seen from the first.

"It must be a great responsibility for you," said the Rector's sister, with a sigh, pressing Mrs Chiley's hand. "If it should turn out badly, you know——. Of course, my brother and I don't agree with Mr Beverley on all points—though I am sure I hope he is quite conscientious; but I do feel for you with such a responsibility," said Miss Bury, with a look that made the old lady nervous in spite of herself. Thus, notwithstanding all her sense of the duties of hospitality, and her anxiety about Lucilla's interests, she could not but feel that it would be rather a relief to get so formidable a guest fairly out of the house. It is uncomfortable, it must be allowed, to entertain in your house anybody, particularly a clergyman of whom your Rector

does not approve; and there could be no doubt that the Archdeacon was not like the clergymen that Mrs Chiley had been accustomed to. "And he could come back another time," she said to herself, by way of conciliating her own weariness with her visitor's advantage and the interests of Lucilla. But notwithstanding these reflections on Mrs Chiley's part, and notwithstanding the Colonel's less amiable growl, uttered every morning—"Does that parson of yours never mean to go away?"—the Archdeacon showed no intention of budging. It was poor Mrs Chiley who had all the brunt to bear, to exhaust herself in civilities and to be upbraided with "that parson of yours"—whereas he was not in the least her parson, nor even the kind of man she approved of as a clergyman. All this, however, the brave old woman bore with fortitude for Lucilla's sake: certainly it must be Lucilla who kept him in Carlingford—if it were not something else.

Things were in this condition, Mr Cavendish having again disappeared into utter darkness, and Carlingford beginning to enter warmly into the question whether or not Mr Beverley was paying attention to Lucilla, when it happened to Miss Marjoribanks one morning to meet the Archdeacon in a little lane running between Grove Street and Grange Lane. Opening from this lane was a little door in the wall, which admitted to a little garden very bright with flowers of the sim-

plest old-fashioned kinds, with a little house planted at its extremity, which had pretensions to be an old-fashioned and quasi-rural cottage, on the score of being very rickety, uncomfortable, and badly arranged. But it must be a very impracticable erection indeed which does not look tolerable under the bright sunshine on a summer noon, at the end of a pretty garden where children are playing and birds singing, and a woman or two about. Lucilla was standing at the door of this little closed-up hermitage, almost filling up the opening with her crisp summer draperies, and affording only a very partial and tempting glimpse of its flowers and shrubs and whitewashed walls inside; and when Mr Beverley came up to Miss Marjoribanks he felt his curiosity excited. "Is it Armida's garden, or the Elysian fields?" said the Archdeacon; and he made a dead stop before the door, not knowing any more than any other blind mortal what he was going to find inside.

"I don't know anything about Armida," said Miss Marjoribanks; "unfortunately they were all Cambridge in their ways of thinking at Mount Pleasant, and our classics got dreadfully neglected. But you may come in if you like—at least I think you may come in, if you will promise not to frighten the children. I am sure they never saw an Archdeacon in their lives."

"Are there children?" said Mr Beverley, with a

doubtful air; for, to tell the truth, he had come to the age at which men think it best to avoid children, unless, indeed, they happen to have a personal interest in them; and he stretched his neck a little to see in over Miss Marjoribanks's head.

"There are a whole lot of children, and a pretty governess," said Lucilla. "It is a school, and I am so much interested in it. I may call it my school, for that matter. I came to know her in the funniest way; but I will tell you that another time. And it was just my luck, as usual. She is so nice, and quite a lady. If you will not say you are an Archdeacon, to frighten the children, I will let you come in."

"You shall call me whatever you like," said Mr Beverley; "when I am with the lady-patroness, what does it matter what I call myself? Let me see how you manage your educational department. I have already bowed before your genius in the other branches of government; but this ought to be more in my own way."

"I don't think you care for visiting schools," said Lucilla. "I know you think it is a bore; but she is so nice, and so nice-looking; I am sure you will be pleased with her. I am quite sure she is a lady, and has seen better days."

"Oh, those dreadful women that have seen better days!" said the Archdeacon; "I think Mrs Chiley has

a regiment of them. It is hard to know how to get one's self into sympathy with those faded existences. They fill me with an infinite pity; but then what can one do? If one tries to recall them to the past, it sounds like mockery—and if one speaks of the present, it wounds their feelings. It is a great social difficulty," said Mr Beverley; and he fixed his eyes on the ground and entered meditatively, without looking where he was going, in his Broad-Church way.

"Dear Mrs Chiley is so kind," said Lucilla, who was a little puzzled for the moment, and did not know what to say.

"Mrs Chiley is a good, pure, gentle woman," said the Archdeacon. He spoke in a tone which settled the question, and from which there was no appeal; and no doubt what he said was perfectly true, though it was not a very distinct characterisation. Thus they went in together into the bright little garden, thinking of nothing particular, and loitering as people do who do not know what is coming. There was something that morning in Mr Beverley's tone and manner which struck Lucilla as something more than usual. She was not a young woman to attach undue importance to looks and tones; but the Archdeacon's manner was so softened and mellowed, and his eyes had so much expression in them, and he looked at Lucilla with such marked

regard, that is was impossible for her not to recognise that a crisis might be approaching. To be sure, it was not by any means so near as that crisis *manqué* which had so lately passed over her head in respect to Mr Cavendish. But still Miss Marjoribanks could not but remark the signs of a slowly-approaching and most likely more important climax; and as she remarked it, Lucilla naturally by anticipation prepared herself for the coming event that thus threw a shadow upon her. She did not make up her mind to accept Mr Beverley any more than she had made up her mind to accept Mr Cavendish; but she thought it only her duty to him and to herself, and to society in general, to take his claims into full consideration. And no doubt, if these claims had seemed to her sufficiently strong to merit such a reward, Miss Marjoribanks had it in her to marry the Archdeacon, and make him an admirable wife, though she was not at the present moment, so far as she was aware, absolutely what foolish people call in love with him. At the same time, she made herself all the more agreeable to Mr Beverley from her sense of the dawn of tenderness with which he regarded her. And in this way they went up the broad central path which traversed the little garden, neither looking to the left nor the right, but presenting all that appearance of being occupied with each other, which, espe-

cially to a female observer, is so easy of interpretation. For, to be sure, the Archdeacon had not the remotest idea into whose house he was going, nor who it was whom he was about to see.

But as it happened, Lucilla's *protégée*, who had seen better days, had just then finished one of her lessons, and sent her little pupils out into the garden. She was preparing for the next little class, when, raising her eyes accidentally, she saw Miss Marjoribanks coming through the garden with the Archdeacon by her side. She was the same person whom Mr Bury had brought to Lucilla with the idea of recommending her to Dr Marjoribanks as a companion and chaperone for his daughter; but since then Mrs Mortimer's appearance had considerably changed. She had grown younger by ten years during the period of comparative comfort and tranquillity which Lucilla's active help and championship had procured for her. Her house, and her garden, and her little scholars, and the bloom on her cheeks, and the filling-up of her worn frame, were all Miss Marjoribanks's doing. In the intervals of her legislative cares Lucilla had run about all over Carlingford searching for pupils, and at the same moment had cut and stitched and arranged, and papered walls, and planted flower-beds, for the feeble creature thus thrown upon her. This was a side of Lucilla's character which certainly she did nothing to

hide from the public, but which, at the same time, she never made any fuss about; and it was an endless pleasure to her to find a *protégée* so perfectly content to be "done for," and do as she was told to do. It was thus that the poor faded widow, who was sensitive and had feelings, and forgot herself so far as to faint, or nearly to faint, just at the most unlucky moment possible, when the Rector's character and dignity demanded superior self-control on her part, had found her youth again and her good looks under Lucilla's shadow. When she looked up and saw the two approaching, Mrs Mortimer's first impulse was to smile at the conjunction; but the next moment she had dropped the books out of her hands, and was standing gazing out like a woman in a dream, with the colour all gone out of her cheeks, and even out of her lips, in the surprise of the moment. It was only surprise and a kind of dismay; it was not terror, like that which Mr Cavendish had exhibited at the same apparition. She dropped into her chair without knowing it, and probably would have fainted this time also, if something more urgent than mere "feelings" had not roused her up. As it was, it happened very happily for her that she had thus a little preparation. When she saw that her patroness was leading Mr Beverley up to the door, and that in a minute more he would inevitably be brought to her very side, Mrs Mortimer roused up all her

strength. She gathered up her books in her hand without knowing very well what she was doing, and, taking virtue from necessity, went desperately out to meet them. It was Miss Marjoribanks who first saw her, white and tottering, leaning against the trellis of the little porch, and Lucilla could not but give a little cry of alarm and wonder. What kind of man could this be, who thus struck down another victim without even so much as a glance? It was just then that the Archdeacon raised his eyes, and saw standing before him, among the faded roses, the woman whom he had been approaching so indifferently—the faded existence that had seen better days. He saw her, and he stood stock-still, as if it was she who was the basilisk, and the look of pleased interest went out of his face in a moment. In that moment he had become as unconscious of the presence of Lucilla as if he had never in his life softened his voice to her ear, or talked nonsense to please her. His eyes did not seem big enough to take in the figure which stood shrinking and looking at him in the porch. Then he made one long step forward, and took hold of her sleeve—not her hand—as if to convince himself that it was something real he saw. He showed no joy, nor satisfaction, nor anything but sheer amaze and wonder, at this unexpected appearance, for he had not had time to prepare himself as she had. "Am I dreaming, or is it you?" he said,

in a voice that sounded as different from the voice with which he had been speaking to Lucilla, as if years had elapsed between the two. And it would be vain to describe the amazement and singular sense that the earth had suddenly given way under her feet, with which Miss Marjoribanks stood by and looked on.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MISS MARJORIBANKS was naturally the first to recover her senses in this emergency. Even she, self-possessed as she was, felt the natural giddiness inseparable from such a strange reversal of the position. But she did not lose her head like the others. She looked at the widow standing white and tremulous in the shadow of the little porch, and on the Archdeacon, whose manly countenance had paled to a corresponding colour. A man does not seize a woman by the sleeve and ask, "Is it *you?*" without some reason for an address so destitute of ordinary courtesy; and Lucilla was sufficiently versed in such matters to know that so rude and startling an accost could be only addressed to some one whose presence set the speaker's heart beating, and quickened the blood in his veins. It was odd, to say the least, after the way in which he had just been speaking to herself; but Miss Marjoribanks, as has been already said, was not the

woman to lose her head. She recovered herself with the second breath she drew, and took her natural place. "I can see that you have something to say to each other," said Lucilla. "Mrs Mortimer, ask Mr Beverley to walk in. Never mind me. I want to speak to the little Lakes. I shall come back presently," Miss Marjoribanks added, nodding pleasantly to the Archdeacon—and she went away to the other end of the garden, calling to the children with that self-possession which is the gift only of great minds. But when Lucilla found herself at a safe distance, and saw the Archdeacon stoop to go in under the porch, it cannot be denied that her mind was moved by the sight. It was she who had seen after the putting-up of that trellis round that porch, and the arrangement of the Westeria, which had been sprawling all over the front of the house uncared for. If there was any place in the world where she should have been free from such a shock, it certainly should have been here, in this spot, which she had, so to speak, created. Naturally the unfitness of these surroundings to witness a revolution so unlooked-for and disagreeable struck Lucilla. If she had to be again humiliated, and to submit once more to see another preferred to herself, it certainly should have been under other circumstances. When we admit that such a thought did pass through the mind of Miss Marjoribanks, it will prove to all

who know her that Lucilla found her position sufficiently aggravating. She had exerted herself for Mrs Mortimer as nobody else in Carlingford would have exerted themselves. She had not only found pupils and a means of living for the widow, which, perhaps, a committee of ladies might have done at the end of a year, had it been put into their hands; but Miss Marjoribanks had done it at once, and had taken charge of that timid and maladroit individual herself, and set her up, and done everything for her. It was Dr Marjoribanks's gardener, under Lucilla's orders, who had arranged and planted the garden, and trained the embowering foliage which had just brushed the Archdeacon's clerical hat as he went in; and in the act of refurnishing her drawing-room, Miss Marjoribanks had managed to procure, without costing anybody anything except a little trouble, as she herself said, many accessories, which gave an air of comfort to the little parlour, in which, no doubt, at that moment, Mr Beverley and Mrs Mortimer were explaining themselves. Lucilla had a great deal too much good sense to upbraid anybody with ingratitude, or even to make any claim upon that slippery quality; but she knew at the same time that the widow was the very last person from whom a new discomfiture should come, and that to enter in under that trellis when he left her was, on the Archdeacon's part, an aggravation of

the change in his sentiments which it was difficult to bear.

She walked along the garden path very briskly under the influence of these thoughts, and it was not in nature to do otherwise than snub the children when she joined them. Lucilla was a woman of genius, but she was not faultless; and when she found Ethelinda and Ethelfreda Lake, the two twins, the one with her clean frock all muddy and stained, the other with the front breadth torn right up the middle, it is scarcely to be wondered at if she lost her patience. "You little nasty untidy things!" she said, "I should like to know who you expect is to go mending up and washing every day for you? It will not be Barbara, I am sure," Miss Marjoribanks added, with a fine intonation of scorn, of which the culprits were insensible; and she gave Ethelinda a shake, who was sitting on the wet ground, all muddy with recent watering, and who, besides, was the one who most resembled Barbara. When this temporary ebullition had taken place, Lucilla began gradually to right herself. It was a grand sight, if anybody had been there to witness it, or if anybody could have seen into Miss Marjoribanks's maiden bosom; but the spectacle of a great mind thus recovering its balance is one which can rarely be visible except in its results. While she set the children to rights, and represented to Mrs Mortimer's

little servant, who was in the garden furtively on a pretence of cabbages, the extreme folly, and indeed idiocy, of letting them get to the water and make a mess of themselves, Lucilla was in reality coming to herself. Perhaps she spoke with a little more energy than usual ; but the offenders were so well aware of their guilt, and so thoroughly satisfied of the justice of the reproof addressed to them, that no other explanation was necessary; and, little by little, Miss Marjoribanks felt herself restored to her natural calm.

"You know I don't like to scold you," she said ; "but what would anybody say?—nice clean frocks, that I am sure were put on fresh this morning—and you, Mary Jane——"

"Please, Miss, it was only for a young cabbage. Missis is fond of a bit of vegetable," said the little maid. "I knew *she'd* not say nothing ;—and just as I had told 'em all to have done and be good—and nobody knew as *you* was here," said Mary Jane. There was something even in that small and humble testimony to Lucilla's sovereignty which helped on the process which was operating in her mind. She regained bit by bit that serene self-consciousness which places the spirit above the passing vexations of the world. What did it matter what other people might be doing or saying? Was not she still Lucilla Marjoribanks ? and when one had said that, one had said all.

"It is time you were all going home to your dinners," said Lucilla; "and I have asked Mrs Mortimer to give you a half-holiday. As for you, you little Linda, you are not fit to be seen; and I am sure if I were your sister I should send you off to bed. Now get all your hats and things and run away; and if you are not awfully good to-morrow, I shall never ask for another half-holiday again."

Saying which, Miss Marjoribanks herself saw the hats brought out, and the little scholars sent away. She took matters into her own hand with the confidence of a superior nature. "After all the long talk they are having she will not be able for her scholars to-day," Lucilla said magnanimously to herself; and she again made the tour of the garden, inspecting everything, to see that all was in order. With every step that she took, Miss Marjoribanks became more and more herself. As we have already said, it was a grand and inspiring sight; but then, to be sure, as in the former case, her affections, fortunately, were not engaged. She was not in love with the Archdeacon, any more than she had been in love with Mr Cavendish;—though it is true, love is not everything. And to think how he had been looking and talking not much more than half an hour ago, and to reflect that now he had most likely forgotten her very existence, and was explaining himself, and placing that position

which would have just suited Lucilla at the feet of the object of her bounty, was enough to have driven a young woman of ordinary mind half out of her senses with disgust and indignation. But, fortunately, Lucilla's mind was not an ordinary one; and every step she took round the garden restored her more and more entirely to herself. Instead of conceiving any jealous dislike to Mrs Mortimer, she had already, as has been stated, exerted herself with her usual benevolence to leave the widow free for the rest of the day. "After all, it is not her fault if she knew him before, or if he was in love with her," Lucilla said to herself. And when she had arrived at this perfectly true and profoundly philosophical conclusion, it may be said that the crisis was at an end.

But then where personal offence and indignation (if the natural shock to Miss Marjoribanks's feelings could be called by such hard names) ended, bewilderment and curiosity began. Who could this Archdeacon be who had frightened the most popular man in Carlingford out of the place, and whose unlooked-for appearance had driven Mrs Mortimer back out of her recovered good looks and cheerfulness into pallor and trembling? It is true that Lucilla knew quite well who he was—the second son of Mr Beverley of Trent Valley, a family as well known as any family in England. Everybody knew all about the Archdeacon: his career

from his youth up was as clearly traceable as if he had been killed in a railway accident and had had his memoir published in the 'Times.' There was nothing in the smallest degree secret or mysterious about him; and yet how could it come about that the sight of him should frighten Mr Cavendish out of his senses, and make Mrs Mortimer, who was utterly unconnected with Mr Cavendish, all but faint, as she had done on a former occasion? Was it his mission to go about the world driving people into fits of terror or agitation? To be sure, he was a Broad-Churchman, and not the type of clergyman to which Lucilla in her heart inclined; but still a man may be Broad-Church, and speak a little freely on religious matters, without being a basilisk. As these thoughts went through her mind, Miss Marjoribanks could not help observing that the branches of the pear-tree, which was all that the garden contained in the shape of fruit, had come loose from the wall, and were swaying about greatly to the damage of the half-grown pears,—not to say that it gave a very untidy look to that corner. "I must send Crawford down this evening to fasten it up," Lucilla said to herself, and then went on with what she was thinking; and she made one or two other remarks of the same description in a parenthesis as she made her tour. After all, it is astonishing how many little things go wrong when the man or woman with a hundred

eyes is absent for a few days from the helm of affairs. It was nearly a week since Miss Marjoribanks had been round Mrs Mortimer's garden, and in that time the espalier had got detached, some of the verbenas were dead in the borders, and the half of the sticks that propped up the dahlias had fallen, leaving the plants in miserable confusion. Lucilla shook her head over this, as she asked herself what mysterious influence there could be in the Archdeacon. For her own part, she was not in the slightest degree afraid of him, nor could she confess to having felt agitated even when he walked with her into this fated garden; but there could be no doubt of the seriousness of the effect produced by his appearance on the two others. "They have broken half of the props, the little nuisances," Lucilla said to herself, as she pursued her musings. For her large mind was incapable, now that its perfect serenity was happily regained, of confining itself, unless with a very good reason, to one sole subject.

When she had finished her inspection, and saw that nobody had yet appeared at the door, Miss Marjoribanks collected the books which the children had left lying in the summer-house, and put them under cover—for, to tell the truth, it looked a little like rain; and having done this, and looked all round her to see if anything else required her immediate care, Lucilla carried philosophy to its highest

practical point by going away, which is, perhaps, a height of good sense which may be thought too much for humanity. It was not too much for Miss Marjoribanks's legislative soul and knowledge of human nature;—and in thus denying herself she was perfectly aware of her advantages, and of the inevitable result. She knew, just as well as if she had already received it, that Mrs Mortimer would write her a little three-cornered note, marked *Private*, as soon as the Archdeacon was gone; and she thought it was highly probable that Mr Beverley himself would come to give some explanation. With this tranquil assurance in her mind, Lucilla turned her face towards Grange Lane. She began to have a kind of conviction too, since this had happened, either that Carlingford would not be raised into a bishopric, or that the Archdeacon at least would not be the first bishop. It was difficult to give any ground for the idea, but it came into her mind with a kind of quiet certainty; and with this conviction, in which she recognised that beautiful self-adjusting balance of compensations which keeps everything right in the world, Lucilla, quite recovered from her shock, had on the whole a pleasant walk home.

As for the two who were shut up together in Mrs Mortimer's parlour, their state of mind was far from partaking of the virtuous peace and serenity which filled Miss Marjoribanks's bosom. It was more than

an hour before the Archdeacon went away; and when Mrs Mortimer had a little collected her faculties, the result arrived which had been foreseen by Lucilla. In the first place, terror seized the widow as to what had become of her pupils, whom all this time she had forgotten, and deep was her gratitude when she had ascertained that her protecting genius had sent them away. But with that gratitude came a sudden recollection of the manner in which Mr Beverley and Miss Marjoribanks had been coming together up the garden path, before the mistress of the house showed herself. Mrs Mortimer wrung her hands when she recollected the looks and attitude of the two, and the rumour which had reached her ears that the Archdeacon was paying attention to Miss Marjoribanks. What was she to do?—was her miserable presence here to dispel perhaps the youthful hopes of her benefactress, and make a revolution in Lucilla's prospects? The poor woman felt herself ready to sink into the earth at the thought. She went to the window and looked out disconsolately into the rain—for it had come on to rain, as Lucilla supposed it would—and felt like a creature in a cage, helpless, imprisoned, miserable, not knowing what to do with herself, and the cause of trouble to her best friends. A little house in a garden may look like a little paradise in the sunshine, and yet feel like a dungeon when a poor woman all alone looks

out across her flowers in the rain, and sees nothing but the wall that shuts her in, and thinks to herself that she has no refuge nor escape from it—nobody to tell her what to do, nothing but her own feeble powers to support her, and the dreadful idea that she has done harm and can do no good to her only protector. Any reasonable creature would have said, that to be there in her own house, poor enough certainly, but secure, and no longer driven lonely and distressed about the world, was a great matter. But yet, after all, the walls that shut her in, the blast of white, sweeping, downright rain, which seemed to cut her off from any succour outside, and the burden of something on her mind which by herself she was quite unable to bear, was a hard combination; and wringing one's hands, and feeling one's mind ready to give way under a new and unexpected burden, could not advance matters in the slightest degree. She was not strong-minded, as has been already proved; nor, indeed, had she the ordinary amount of indifference to other people, or confidence in herself, which stands in the place of self-control with many people. After she had wrung her hands, and looked out again and again with a vague instinct of perhaps finding some suggestion of comfort outside, Mrs Mortimer relapsed by necessity into the one idea that had been a support to her for so many months past. All that she could do was to consult Lucilla—it might be to wound Lucilla,

for anything she could tell; but when a poor creature is helpless and weak, and has but one friend in the world who is strong, what can she do but apply to her sustainer and guardian? When, after beating about wildly from one point to another, she arrived ultimately, as might have been predicted, and as Miss Marjoribanks had expected from the first, at that conclusion, there remained a further difficulty in respect to the means of communication. Lucilla had settled quite calmly in her own mind that it would be by the medium of a three-cornered note, a matter in which there was no difficulty whatever, for the widow was sufficiently fluent with her pen; but then Lucilla had not thought of Mary Jane, who was the only possible messenger. It was to this point now that Mrs Mortimer's ideas addressed themselves. At that moment the rain poured down fiercer than ever, the bricks of the uncovered wall grew black with the wet, and the Westeria crouched and shivered about the porch as if it wanted to be taken indoors. And then to get wet, and perhaps catch cold, was a thing Mary Jane conscientiously avoided, like the rest of the world; and it was with a sense of alarm even stronger than that excited by the possibility of injuring Lucilla, that Mrs Mortimer very gently and modestly rang her bell.

"I don't think it rains quite so heavily," said the timid experimentalist, feeling her heart beat as she

made this doubtful statement. "Have you a pair of goloshes, Mary Jane?"

"No," said the little handmaiden, with precaution; "and, please, if it's for the post, it rains worse nor ever; and I don't think as mother would like——"

"Oh, it is not for the post," said Mrs Mortimer; "it is for Miss Marjoribanks. You can take mine, and then you will not get your feet wet. I go out so very little; you may have them—to keep—Mary Jane. And you can take the big shawl that hangs in the passage, and an umbrella. I don't think it is so heavy as it was."

Mary Jane regarded the rain gloomily from the window; but her reluctance was at an end from the moment she heard that it was to Miss Marjoribanks she was going. To be sure, the distance between the Serenissime Nancy and Thomas, and the other inmates of the Doctor's kitchen, and Mrs Mortimer's little handmaiden, was as great as that which exists between an English duke and the poorest little cadet of a large family among his attendant gentry; but, correspondingly, the merest entrance into that higher world was as great a privilege for Mary Jane, as the Duke's notice would be to the Squire's youngest son. She kept up a momentary show of resistance, but she accepted the goloshes, and even after a moment agreed in her mistress's trembling assertion about the rain.

And this was how the three-cornered note got conveyed to its destination in the heaviest of the storm, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs Mortimer still sat at her window, wringing her hands from time to time, with her head aching and her heart beating, and a dreadful question in her mind as to what Lucilla would say, or whether perhaps she might reject altogether in her natural indignation the appeal made to her; which was an idea which filled the widow with inexpressible horror. While at the same moment Miss Marjoribanks sat looking for that appeal which she knew was sure to come. The rain had set in by this time with an evident intention of lasting, and even from the windows of Lucilla's drawing-room the prospect of the garden walls and glistening trees was sufficiently doleful. Nobody was likely to call, nothing was doing; and Lucilla, who never caught cold, had not the least fear of wetting her feet. And besides, her curiosity had been rising every moment since her return; and the widow's pathetic appeal, "Come to me, my dearest Lucilla. I have nobody whom I can talk to in the world but you!" had its natural effect upon a mind so feeling. Miss Marjoribanks got up as soon as she had read the note, and changed her dress, and put on a great waterproof cloak. Instead of thinking it a trouble, she was rather exhilarated by the necessity.

"Be sure you make your mistress a nice cup of tea as soon as we get there," she said to Mary Jane. "She must want it, I am sure, if she has not had any dinner;" for the little maid had betrayed the fact that Mrs Mortimer could not eat anything, and had sent away her dinner, which was naturally an alarming and wonderful occurrence to Mary Jane. The widow was still sitting at the window when Lucilla appeared tripping across the wet garden in her waterproof cloak, if not a ministering angel, at least a substantial prop and support to the lonely woman who trusted in her, and yet in the present instance feared her. But anything more unlike a disappointed maiden, whose wooer had been taken away from her under her very eyes, could not have been seen. On the contrary, Miss Marjoribanks was radiant, with rain-drops glistening on her hair, and what Mrs Chiley called "a lovely colour." If there was one thing in the world more than another which contented Lucilla, it was to be appealed to and called upon for active service. It did her heart good to take the management of incapable people, and arrange all their affairs for them, and solve all their difficulties. Such an office was more in her way than all the Archdeacons in the world.

"I saw you knew him the moment I looked at you," said Lucilla. "I have seen other people look

like that when he appeared. Who is he, for goodness' sake? I know quite well, of course, who he is, in the ordinary way; but do tell me what has he done to make people look like that whenever he appears?"

Mrs Mortimer did not directly answer this question —she fixed her mind upon one part of it, like an unreasonable woman, and repeated "Other people?" with a kind of interrogative gasp.

"Oh, it was only a gentleman," said Lucilla, with rapid intelligence; and then there was a little pause. "He has been here for six weeks," Miss Marjoribanks continued: "you must have heard of him; indeed, you would have heard him preach if you had not gone off after these Dissenters. Did you really never know that he was here till to-day?"

"I did not think of him being Archdeacon—he was only a curate when I used to know him," said poor Mrs Mortimer, with a sigh.

"Tell me all about it," said Lucilla, with ingenuous sympathy; and she drew her chair close to that of her friend, and took her hand in a protecting, encouraging way. "You know, whatever you like to say, that it is quite safe with me."

"If you are sure you do not mind," said the poor widow. "Oh, yes, I have heard what people have been saying about him and—and you, Lucilla; and if

I had known, I would have shut myself up—I would have gone away for ever and ever—I would——"

"My dear," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a little severity, "I thought you knew me better. If I had been thinking of that sort of thing, I never need have come home at all; and when you know how kind papa has been about the drawing-room and everything. Say what you were going to say, and never think of me."

"Ah, Lucilla, I have had my life," said the trembling woman, whose agitation was coming to a climax —"I have had it, and done with it; and you have been so good to me; and if, after all, I was to stand between you and—and—and—anybody——" But here Mrs Mortimer broke down, and could say no more. To be sure, she did not faint this time any more than she did on the first occasion when she made Miss Marjoribanks's acquaintance; but Lucilla thought it best, as then, to make her lie down on the sofa, and keep her quite quiet, and hasten Mary Jane with the cup of tea.

"You have been agitated, and you have not eaten anything," said Lucilla, "I am going to stay with you till half-past six, when I must run home for dinner, so we have plenty of time; and as for your life, I don't consider you gone off at all yet, and you are a great deal younger-looking than you were six months

ago. I am very glad the Archdeacon did not come until you had got back your looks. It makes such a difference to a man," Miss Marjoribanks added, with that almost imperceptible tone of contempt which she was sometimes known to use when speaking of Their absurd peculiarities. As for Mrs Mortimer, the inference conveyed by these words brought the colour to her pale cheeks.

"It will never come to that," she said, "no more than it did in old days; it never can, Lucilla; and I don't know that it is to be wished. I couldn't help being put out a little when I saw him, you know; but there is one thing, that he never, never will persuade me," said the widow. Lucilla could not but look on in surprise and even consternation, while Mrs Mortimer thus expressed herself. A warm flush animated the pale and somewhat worn face—and a gleam of something that looked absolutely like resolution shone in the yielding woman's mild eyes. Was it possible that even she had one point upon which she could be firm? Miss Marjoribanks stood still, petrified, in the very act of pouring out the tea.

"If it is only one thing, if I were you, I would give in to him," said Lucilla, with a vague sense that this sort of self-assertion must be put a stop to, mingling with her surprise.

"Never," said Mrs Mortimer again, with a still more

distinct gleam of resolution. "In the first place, I have no right whatever to anything more than my uncle gave me. He told me himself I was to have no more; and *he* was very, very kind to poor Edward. You don't know all the circumstances, or you would not say so," she cried, with a sob. As for Miss Marjoribanks, if it is possible to imagine her clear spirit altogether lost in bewilderment, it would have been at that moment; but she recovered as soon as she had administered her cup of tea.

"Now tell me all about it," said Lucilla, again sitting down by the sofa; and this time Mrs Mortimer, to whom her excitement had given a little spur and stimulus, did not waste any more time.

"He is my cousin," she said; "not my real cousin, but distant; and I will not deny that long, long ago—when we were both quite young, you know, Lucilla——"

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Miss Marjoribanks, pressing her hand.

"He was very nice in those days," said Mrs Mortimer, faltering; "that is, I don't mean to say he was not always nice, you know, but only——I never had either father or mother. I was living with my uncle Garrett—my uncle on the other side; and he thought he should have made me his heiress; but instead of that, he left his money, you know, to *him;*

and then he was dreadfully put out, and wanted me to go to law with him and change the will; but I never blamed him, for my part, Lucilla—he knows I never blamed him—and nothing he said would make me give in to go to the law with him——"

"Stop a minute," said Lucilla, "I am not quite sure that I understand. Who was it he wanted you to go to law with? and was it to the Archdeacon the money was left?"

"Oh, Lucilla," said the widow, with momentary exasperation, "you who are so quick and pick up everything, to think you should not understand me when I speak of a thing so important! Of course it was not to Charles Beverley the money was left: if it had been left to him, how could he have wanted me to go to law? It has always been the question between us," said Mrs Mortimer, once more lighting up with exceptional and unwonted energy. "He said I was to indict him for conspiracy; and I declare to you, Lucilla, that he was not to blame. Uncle Garrett might be foolish, but I don't say even that he was foolish: he was so good to him, like a son; and he had no son of his own, and I was only a girl. He never was anything to me," said Mrs Mortimer, wiping her eyes—"never, whatever Charles may choose to say; but if ever I was sure of anything in the world, I am sure that he was not to blame."

Lucilla's head began to whirl; but after her first unsuccessful essay, she was wise enough not to ask any more direct questions. She made all the efforts possible, with ears and eyes intent, to disentangle this web of pronouns, and failing, waited on in the hope that time and patience would throw a little light upon them. "I suppose Mr Beverley thought he was to blame?" she said, when the narrator paused to take breath.

"Is not that what I am saying?" said Mrs Mortimer. "It was through that it was all broke off. I am sure I don't know whether he has regretted it or not, Lucilla. It is not always very easy to understand a gentleman, you know. After I was married to poor Edward, naturally I never had any more correspondence with him; and to see him to-day without any warning, and to find him just as bent as he was upon making me prosecute, and just as full of bad feeling, and speaking as if there was some reason more than truth and justice why I should be so determined. No, Lucilla," said Mrs Mortimer, raising herself up on the sofa, "it is just the same thing as ever, and the same obstacle as ever, and it never will come to *that*."

"You are agitating yourself," said Miss Marjoribanks; "lie down—there's a dear—and keep quite still, and see whether we cannot make anything better of it. Tell me, what would you go to law with him

for?" Lucilla continued, with the natural humility of imperfect comprehension. It was perhaps the first time in her life that such a singular chance had happened to Miss Marjoribanks, as to have a matter explained to her, and yet be unable to understand.

"He says he could be indicted for conspiracy, or for having too much influence over him, and making him do what he liked. But he was very good to him, Lucilla, and to my poor Edward; and when I was married to him——"

"Goodness gracious! were you married to him as well?" cried Lucilla, fairly losing the thread and her balance in this confusing circle. Mrs Mortimer grew pale, and rose quite up from the sofa, and went with the air of an insulted woman to seat herself in her usual chair.

"I don't know why you should address me so," she said. "He is nothing to me, and never was. It is an insult to me to think that I must have a personal reason for refusing to do a wicked and unjust thing. I could give up anything," said the widow, losing a little of her dignity, and growing again pathetic—"I would give in in a moment if it was any fancy of mine —you know I would; but when I am sure it would be wicked and unjust——"

"I am sure I am not the person to bid you do anything unjust or wicked," said Lucilla, who, in the utter

confusion of her faculties, began to feel offended in her turn.

"Then I beg you will never speak to me of it again!" cried Mrs Mortimer. "How is it possible that either he or you can know the rights of it as I do, who was in the house at the time and saw everything? He may say what he likes, but I know there was no conspiracy; he was just as much suprised as you could be, or Charles, or anybody. Of course it was for his advantage—nobody denies that—but you don't mean to say that a man is to reject everything that is for his advantage?" said the widow, turning eyes of indignant inquiry upon her visitor; and Miss Marjoribanks for once was so utterly perplexed that she did not know how to respond.

"But you said when you were married to him?" said Lucilla, who felt that the tables were turned upon her for the moment. "I am sure I beg your pardon for being so stupid; but whom were you married to?" This was said in the most deprecating tone in the world, but still it irritated Mrs Mortimer, whose mind was all unhinged, and who somehow felt that she was not finding in Miss Marjoribanks the help and support to which her clear and detailed explanation entitled her. Though her head was aching dreadfully, she sat up more upright than ever in her chair.

"I don't think you can mean to insult me, Miss

Marjoribanks," said the widow, "after being so kind. Perhaps I have been trying you too much by what I have said; though I am sure I would have given up everything, and gone away anywhere, rather than be the cause of anything unpleasant. You know that it was my poor dear Edward I was married to; you know I have a—a horror," said Mrs Mortimer, faltering, "in general—of second marriages."

"Oh, yes," said Lucilla, "but there are always exceptions, you know; and when people have no children, nor anything—and you that were so young. I always make exceptions, for my part; and if you could only get over this one point," Miss Marjoribanks added, making a dexterous strategical movement. But Mrs Mortimer only shook her head.

"I don't think I am hard to get on with," she said; "but my poor Edward always said one must make a stand somewhere. He used to say I was so easy to be persuaded. He was glad to see I had a point to make a stand on, instead of being disagreeable about it, or thinking he was anything to me. And oh, Lucilla, he was so kind to him," said the widow, with tears in her eyes. "We met him quite by chance, and he was so kind. I will never forget it, if I should live a hundred years. And why should Charles be in such a way? He never did him any harm! If any one was injured, it was me, and I never felt myself injured

—neither did Edward. On the contrary, he *always* did him justice, Lucilla," Mrs Mortimer continued, fixing a pathetic look upon her friend. What could Lucilla do? She was burning to take it all in her own hands, and arrange it somehow, and unite the two lovers who had been so long separated; but unless she could understand what the point was on which Mrs Mortimer made her stand, what could she do?

"I never could understand," said the widow, who began to feel her heart sick with the disappointment of that hope which she had fixed in Miss Marjoribanks, "why he should take it so much to heart. Poor Edward never thought of such a thing! and why he should be so set against poor Mr Kavan, and so —— Lucilla! oh, tell me, do you see anything? what do you mean?"

"I want to know who Mr Kavan is?" said Miss Marjoribanks, much startled. She had for the moment forgotten the Archdeacon's discovery and her own suspicions; and the idea of connecting the man who had (apparently) fled from Mr Beverley's presence, with the innocent and helpless woman upon whom the appearrance of the Broad-Churchman had so overwhelming an effect, had never hitherto entered her imagination. But this name, which was not the name of anybody she knew, and yet seemed to bear an odd sort of rudimentary relationship to another name, struck her like a

sudden blow and brought everything back to her mind. It was a bewildering sort of explanation, if it was an explanation; but still a confused light began to break upon Lucilla's understanding. If this was what it all meant then there was the widest opening for charitable exertions, and much to be done which only a mind like Miss Marjoribanks's could do.

"That is not his name now," said Mrs Mortimer, "I don't see, if he liked it, why he should not change his name. I am sure a great many people do; but his name was Kavan when he lived with my uncle. I don't remember what it was after, for of course he was always Mr Kavan to me; and Charles Beverley never could bear him. He used to think——but oh, Lucilla, forgive me—oh, forgive me, if it is too much for you!" she added, a moment after, as another idea struck her. "It was not with the idea of—of anything coming of it, you know; it will never come to that—not now;—I don't know if it is to be wished. I am sure he is quite free so far as I am concerned. It was not with that idea I asked for your advice, Lucilla," said the poor woman, in piteous tones. If Miss Marjoribanks had pressed her, and insisted upon knowing what *was* the idea which had moved her friend to ask her advice, Mrs Mortimer would no doubt have found it very hard to reply; but Lucilla had no such cruel intentions; and the widow, notwithstanding her piteous

denial of any motive, now that her mind was cleared, and she had caught the comprehension of her auditor, began to regard her with a certain instinct of hope.

As for Miss Marjoribanks, this revelation at once troubled and cleared her mind. If this was the culprit, he *was* a culprit and yet he was innocent; and to heap coals of fire upon his head was in some respects a Christian duty. Her ideas went forward at a bound to a grand finale of reconciliation and universal brotherhood. She saw the tools under her hands, and her very fingers itched to begin. Large and varied as her experience was, she had never yet had any piece of social business on so important a scale to manage, and her eyes sparkled and her heart beat at the idea. Instead of shrinking from interference, her spirits rose at the thought. To vanquish the Archdeacon, to pluck out from the darkness, and rehabilitate and set at his ease the mysterious adventurer, whom, to be sure, *she could not say she knew*—for Lucilla was very careful, even in her own thoughts, not to commit herself on this subject—and to finish off by a glorious and triumphant marriage—not her own, it is true, but of her making, which was more to the purpose —such was the programme she made out for herself with the speed of lightning, the moment she had laid hold of the clue which guided or seemed to guide her through the labyrinth. It would be too lengthy a

matter to go into all her tender cares for the widow's comfort during the rest of her stay, and the pains and delicacy with which she managed to elicit further particulars, and to make out her brief, so to speak, while she cheered up and encouraged the witness. Miss Marjoribanks jumped to the conclusion that "poor Edward" had been, after all, but a temporary tenant of the heart, which was now again free for the reception of the Archdeacon, if he could be got to accept the conditions. When half-past six arrived, and Thomas came for her with the great umbrella, she went off quite resplendent in her waterproof cloak, and utterly indifferent to the rain, leaving Mrs Mortimer worn out, but with a glimmer of hope in her mind. Such was the great work which, without a moment's hesitation, Lucilla took upon her shoulders. She had no more fear of the result than she had of wetting her feet, which was a thing Mrs Mortimer and Thomas were both concerned about. But then Lucilla knew her own resources, and what she was capable of, and proceeded upon her way with that unconscious calm of genius which is always so inexplicable to the ordinary world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was the most unlucky moment for the weather to change, being the middle of July, and as near as possible to St Swithin's day; but the season had been so delightful up to that time that nobody in Carlingford at least had any reason to complain. So far as Miss Marjoribanks was concerned, she was rather glad, on the whole, that the next day was wet, and that she could not go out all the morning, nor was likely to be interrupted by visitors. She had all her plans to settle and mature for the great enterprise which she had taken in hand. By this time, so far from feeling any personal interest in the Archdeacon, or considering herself injured by his sudden desertion, that little episode had gone out of Lucilla's mind as completely as if it had never been. In one point, however, Miss Marjoribanks's conviction remained firm; it was impressed upon her mind that Carlingford would not be made into a bishopric, or, if made into a bishopric,

that it was not Mr Beverley who would be chosen to occupy the new see. It was one of those instinctive certainties which are not capable of explanation, which was thus borne in upon her spirit, and she could not have felt more sure of it had she seen it under the Queen's own hand and seal. While she went about her usual morning occupations, her mind was full of her great and novel undertaking. Mr Beverley was not a man to be revolutionised in a moment; and many people would have shrunk from the attempt to work in a few days or weeks, with no better arms than those of acquaintance, a change which the influence of love had not been able to do in so many years. But it was not in Lucilla's nature to be daunted by a difficulty so unimportant. There was, thank heaven, some difference between herself and the widow, who, in a strait, could think of nothing better to do, poor soul! than to faint; and Miss Marjoribanks had the advantage of never as yet having been beaten, whereas Mrs Mortimer had undergone numberless defeats.

The hardest matter in the whole business, however, was the identification of the Mr Kavan whom the Archdeacon thought he had seen in Carlingford, and was not afraid to speak of as a clever rascal and adventurer. Mr Beverley had never seen the fellow again, as he had told Lucilla not many days back, and Miss Marjoribanks had been unfeignedly

glad to hear it; but now matters had changed. In the course of her reflections, she decided that it would now be best that these two men, if possible, should meet and recognise each other, and that the business should once for all be definitively settled. If all the offence he had committed against society was to have had a large sum of money left him by a childless old man, Lucilla saw no reason why this mysterious culprit should conceal himself; and even if he had taken a little liberty with his name, that was not a crime—his name was his own surely, if anything was his own. At the same time, Miss Marjoribanks took pains to impress upon herself, as it is to be hoped a friendly audience will also have the goodness to do, that she had *no real foundation* for her suspicions as to the identity of this personage, and might turn out to be completely mistaken. He might have made no change whatever on his name; he might be flourishing in some other quarter of England or the world, with all his antecedents perfectly well known, and unconscious of anything to be ashamed about; which, to tell the truth, was, as Lucilla confessed to herself, a much more likely hypothesis than the supposition which had taken such possession of her mind. But then Miss Marjoribanks had a just faith in her instincts, and in those brief but telling pieces of evidence which supported her conclusion. She was thinking over this

important branch of the subject with the greatest care and devotion, when, looking out by chance into the rain, she saw the Archdeacon crossing the garden. Perhaps it was just as well that she thus had warning and a moment to prepare for his visit; not that Lucilla was a person to be taken at disadvantage; but still, in a matter so practical and pressing, it was always better to be prepared.

Mr Beverley came in with an air and expression so different from that which he had borne in their intercourse no farther gone than yesterday, that, notwithstanding the corresponding revolution in her own mind, Miss Marjoribanks could not but regard him with mingled admiration and surprise. She judged him as the general world so often judged herself, and gave him credit for skill and courage in assuming such an attitude, when the fact was he was only preoccupied and natural, and did not think of his attitude at all. It did not occur to the Archdeacon that he had sinned towards Lucilla. He thought it right to explain to her his extreme surprise at the sight of Mrs Mortimer, and possibly to make her aware, at the same time, of his grievances, in so far as Mrs Mortimer was concerned; but perhaps Mr Beverley was, on the whole, innocent of those intentions which Mrs Chiley had attributed to him, and which even Lucilla, more clear-sighted, had seen dawning in their last interview; for,

to be sure, this is one of the questions which the female intellect is apt to judge in a different light from that in which it is regarded by a man. The Archdeacon, accordingly, came in preoccupied, with a cloud on his brow, but without the smallest appearance of penitence or deprecation; by which demeanour he gained, without deserving it, the respect, and to a certain extent the admiration, of Lucilla. His expression was not that of a man repentant, but of a man aggrieved. He had a cloud upon his countenance, and a certain air of offence and temper; and when he sat down, he breathed a short impatient sigh.

"Thank you for receiving me so early," he said. "I called yesterday afternoon, but found you out. You must have had very particular business to take you out in that rain," Mr Beverley continued, with subdued exasperation; for naturally, being a clergyman, he was a little impatient to find, when it was *he* who wanted her, any of his female friends out of the way.

"Yes," said Lucilla, who thought it was best to open her battery boldly and at once. "I was spending the afternoon with poor Mrs Mortimer; poor dear, she is so solitary!" and to meet Mr Beverley's ill-temper, Miss Marjoribanks put on her most heavenly air of sympathy, and rounded her words with a soft sigh, as different from his as a flute is from a trumpet.

It was with an exclamation of impatience that the Archdeacon replied.

"*Poor* Mrs Mortimer!" he cried; "I don't know whether you are aware how much her obstinacy has cost me; and herself, I suppose," he added, in a parenthesis. "Not to depreciate your kindness, or the truly human and Christian way in which you have conducted yourself—fancy what my feelings naturally must have been to find her an object of charity—actually of charity! I don't mean to say," said Mr Beverley, controlling himself, "that it is degrading to accept succour when given as from man to man—quite the contrary; but you will excuse me from entering into the general question. She knew perfectly well that if I had known where she was—if she had consented to yield to me on one point—solely on *one* point——"

"And she such an obstinate woman!" said Miss Marjoribanks, with fine scorn. "How could you ever think of such a thing? A woman that never gives in to anybody. If you knew her as well as I do——"

The Archdeacon glanced up with a momentary intense surprise, as if it was within the possibilities that such a change might have taken place in the widow's nature; and then he caught Lucilla's eye, and grew red and more aggrieved than ever.

"Mrs Mortimer happens to be a relative of mine,"

he said, in his authoritative voice. "I have known her from her youth. I am better instructed in all her affairs than she can possibly be. When I urge her to any step, however much it may be against her inclinations, she ought to know that it can only be for her good. I beg your pardon, Miss Marjoribanks. It will give me great grief to find that you, upon whose superior good sense I have so much calculated, should support her in her folly. I know how much she owes to you——"

"Oh, no, she does not owe me anything," said Lucilla. "It was just my luck, you know. I knew she would turn out to be a lady. I don't want to stand up for her if she is wrong; but I have only heard *her* side. When you tell me about it, I shall be able to form an opinion," Miss Marjoribanks added prudently; "for of course everything has two sides."

"Most things," said Mr Beverley, "but this is precisely one of the things which have not two sides. Nothing except some sort of infatuation or other—but never mind, you shall hear the facts," said the Archdeacon, once more making an effort upon himself. "Her uncle, Mr Garrett, was above eighty. Why Providence should have let him live to such an age to do so much mischief, heaven alone knows. Some different rule seems to exist up *there* about those matters, from what we find to answer on earth," the Broad-

Churchman said, with a certain air of disapproval. "He had this young fellow to see him and then to live with him, and took some sort of idiotic fancy to him; and when the will was made, it was found that, with the exception of a small sum to Helen, everything was left to this impostor. No, I can't say I have any patience with her folly. How could any man have two opinions on the subject? He was neither related to him, nor connected with him," cried Mr Beverley, with a momentary inclination, as Lucilla thought, to get aground among the pronouns, as Mrs Mortimer had done. "I do not suspect my cousin," the Archdeacon continued, with an air so severe and indignant that it was evident he was contradicting his own sentiments, "of having any partiality for such a person; but certainly her obstinacy and determination are such——"

"Hush, please," said Lucilla; "you are only laughing when you use such words. Now, tell me one thing, and don't be angry if it is a stupid question—If there was any one that knew her and you, and perhaps him, and was to try—don't you think it might be arranged?"

"By money?" said the Archdeacon; and he smiled one of those disagreeable smiles which youthful writers describe by saying that his lip curled with scorn. "You seem to take me for Mortimer, who could go into that sort of compromise. I suppose he did give

them money before—before she was left a widow," said Mr Beverley, grinding his teeth slightly with a savage expression. "No, Miss Marjoribanks. Where everlasting truth and justice are concerned, I do not understand how things can be arranged."

After such a truculent statement, what was the peacemaker to do? She left the fire to blaze out by itself for a minute or two, and then she came down upon the enemy on another wind.

"I am sure I am very sorry," said Lucilla, softly, "to think you should be so fond of her and she so fond of you, and nothing but this standing in the way; and then she is too good for this world, and never thinks of herself. I often think, if anything was to happen to me—and my life is no safer than other people's lives," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a sigh—"what would become of her, poor dear! I am sure, if I knew of any way —— As for obstinate, you know it is not in her to be obstinate. She thinks she is right, and you think you are right; and I suppose neither of you will give in," cried Lucilla. "What is anybody to do?"

"If any one gives in, it should be she," said the Archdeacon. "For my part, I will never stand by and consent to such a robbery,—never. In these matters, at least, a man must be a better judge than a woman. If you are her friend you will persuade her of her duty," Mr Beverley added; and he did not show so

much as a symptom of yielding. To say that Miss Marjoribanks was not discouraged would be more than the truth; but she was still at the beginning of her forces, and no thought of giving in was in her courageous soul.

"I will tell you what occurs to me," said Lucilla, frankly. "Let us find out something about him. Do you know anything about him? If she were to hear that he was, as you say, an impostor, you know, and a villain?—What is his name?—Where does he live?—Is he a very very wicked man?" said Miss Marjoribanks, and she looked up with that ingenuous look of appeal which was always so touching in her, to the Archdeacon's face.

As for Mr Beverley, in his haste and excitement he gave vent to two very contradictory statements. "She knows all about him. I don't know anything about him," he said, with some heat. "I mean, she knows as much as I do, though she draws such a different conclusion. I am sure I saw him in Carlingford the first day I was here. For anything I can tell, she knows *more* of him than I do," said the Broad-Churchman, with a sudden flash of jealousy and anger. It occurred to Lucilla then for the first time that she had found the grand clue to the whole.

"That would be dreadful," said Miss Marjoribanks, "if she knew him, and was keeping him out of the way

till you were gone. I did not think of that. If such a thing should be the case, fond as I am of Mrs Mortimer, I never could go near her any more," said Lucilla, sadly. "Oh, don't say you think so, please. I should have to give her up, and that would be dreadful; for I owe it to papa, when he gives me so much liberty, to be very careful. Oh, Mr Beverley, don't say you think so," cried Lucilla, deeply moved. She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and yet she kept watch upon the Archdeacon through one of the corners. He had got up by this time, and was walking about the room like any other man in trouble. To throw suspicion on the widow, or separate her from so effectual a protector, was the very last thing he had any inclination to do: for, to tell the truth, he made that jealous suggestion only in order to receive an indignant denial, and to be assured that such a thing was impossible. But then Mr Beverley did not know whom he had to deal with, nor that he was not the first man whom Miss Marjoribanks had reduced to his proper place.

"If that was the case," said Lucilla, drying her eyes, "dreadful as it is to think of it—oh, Mr Beverley, if such a thing were the case—it would be far better for her to marry him, and then she would have all the fortune without going to law. If things have gone so far, though it is miserable to think of it, and

to believe that she could be so unkind," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a sob, "and so double-minded, and so deceitful to *me*——"

"In heaven's name what are you thinking of?" said the Archdeacon. He had grown as pale as he was before red, and came to a dead stop in front of Lucilla, and stood lowering and menacing over her. His shadow was so big and strong, and stood so directly between her and the window, that Miss Marjoribanks's heart gave one bound of something like alarm.

"Dear Mr Beverley," said Lucilla, "try and compose yourself. It would be a dreadful trial to me, but I should endeavour to bear it. If we love her, we should, on the contrary, urge her to do it," said the young moralist, with solemnity, "however hard it may be to us. It would be better than—than dreadful concealment and misery—it would be better than knowing and not telling, as you say. Oh, Mr Beverley, if you are sure that is the case, let us both go to her, and beg her to marry him. I could never, never, never see her again," sobbed Lucilla, "but she would be happy, and that would be the end of all."

The Archdeacon, though he was not a weakling, was altogether stunned by this address. He sank into the nearest chair, and drew it closer to Lucilla, and looked perfectly flabby and ghastly in his white tie, with his

alarmed countenance. "For the sake of all that is sacred," said Mr Beverley, bending forward towards her, "tell me what foundation you have—tell me all you know."

Now was the critical moment, and Lucilla felt it. If Mrs Chiley, for example, had only advised herself to come in then instead of interrupting people's proposals, and driving a likely suitor to desperation! But such happy chances do not occur at the real crises of life. What she wanted was, naturally, not to explain herself, but to let that arrow rankle in her opponent's heart until it should have served her purpose. All that she said in answer to Mr Beverley's appeal was to hide her face in her handkerchief, which was the only means that occurred to her for the moment of gaining a little time for reflection.

"It is so hard to have such thoughts put into one's head," said Lucilla, "of a person who has been one's friend. And she always looked so nice and so true! I never thought she would deceive any one. I thought she was so transparent, you know. Oh, Mr Beverley, it is so dreadful to be disappointed in one's friends! I wish I had never heard of it—I wish you had never told me. I almost wish, though it is dreadful to say such a thing, that you had never come to Carlingford and found it all out."

"My dear Miss Marjoribanks," said the Archdeacon,

solemnly, "I implore you, as the greatest kindness you can do me, to tell me all you know."

"Indeed, I don't know what I know," said Lucilla, partially raising her face out of her handkerchief; "I don't think I know anything, for my part. I always thought if one could rely upon any one, one could rely upon her — for truthfulness, and for yieldingness, and doing what any one asked her. I did think so; and it is perfectly bewildering to think, after all, that she should be obstinate and deceiving, and yet look so different!" said Lucilla. "But if it has come to that, we must be firm, Mr Beverley. If you ask my opinion, I say she should be allowed to marry him. That would solve everything, you know," Miss Marjoribanks added, with sad decision. "She would get all the fortune without going to law, and she would be settled, and off one's mind. That would be my final advice, if everything has happened as you say."

Mr Beverley was driven as nearly out of his senses by this counsel, as it was possible for a man of ordinary self-control and warm temper to be. He got up again and made a stride to and fro, and wiped the moisture from his forehead, which, as Lucilla remarked at the moment, had a Low-Church look, which she would not have expected from him. But, on the other hand, he gave vent to some stifled and unintelligible exclama-

tions which, whatever they might be, were not blessings. Then he came to himself a little, which was what Miss Marjoribanks was most afraid of, and stood over her, large and imposing as before.

"Tell me, for heaven's sake, what you mean!" cried the Archdeacon. "You do not think, surely, that I for a moment meant to imply that Helen would waste a thought upon such a miscreant. Good heavens, marry him! You must be raving. She would as soon think of—going for a soldier," said Mr Beverley, with a hoarse and perfectly unmirthful laugh, "or doing anything else that was mad and unnatural. That is how you women stand up for your friends—always ready to suggest something inconceivably horrible and debasing! Happily you always go too far," he added, once more wiping his forehead. It was a very Low-Church, not to say Dissenterish, sort of thing to do, and it unconsciously reduced her adversary's dignity in Miss Marjoribanks's opinion, besides affording a proof that he was not nearly so much convinced of what he said, as he professed to be, in his secret heart.

"Mr Beverley, I think you forget a little," said Lucilla, with dignity. "I know nobody but yourself who has any suspicions of Mrs Mortimer. If it had been anybody but you, I should have laughed at them. But to return to the question," Miss Marjoribanks

added, with calm grace; "I always used to be taught at Mount Pleasant, that feelings had nothing to do with an abstract subject. I don't see, for my part, now you have mentioned it, why she should not marry him. It would arrange the money matter without any trouble; and I have always heard he was very nice," said the bold experimentalist, fixing her eyes calmly upon the Archdeacon's face. "I am sure I should never have thought of it, if it had been left to me; but speaking calmly, I don't see the objections, now it has been proposed. Oh, it is only the bell for luncheon that Thomas is ringing. Is it actually half-past one? and I expect some people," said Lucilla. She got up as she spoke and went to the mirror, and looked at herself with that beautiful simplicity which was one of Miss Marjoribanks's distinguishing features. "When one has been crying it always shows," she said, with a little anxiety. As for Mr Beverley, his state of mind, as the newspapers say, could better be imagined than described.

"I must go away," he said, taking up his hat. "I don't feel capable of meeting strangers after this exciting conversation. Miss Marjoribanks," continued the Archdeacon, taking her hand, and holding it fast over his hat to give emphasis to his address, "at least I can trust to you not to breathe a word to Mrs Mortimer—not a syllable—of the horrible suggestion which

has got utterance, I don't know how. I may surely trust to your honour," Mr Beverley said, with emphasis; but by this time Miss Marjoribanks considered it time to bring the crisis to an end.

"I wish you would stay to luncheon," she said; "there are only one or two of my friends. As for *honour*, you know you gentlemen say that we have no sense of honour," said Lucilla, airily; "and to think that two women could be together and not talk of what might perhaps be a marriage——"

At this moment some one rang the door-bell. Lucilla knew perfectly well that it was only the baker, but it could not be expected that the Archdeacon should be similarly initiated into the secrets of the house. He thought, as was natural, that it was the people she expected, and almost wrung her hand as he let it go. "You will let me see you again first," he said, in a tone of entreaty. "Before you see her, you will let me see you again. For heaven's sake don't refuse me," cried Mr Beverley. If anybody had but heard him! as Lucilla said to herself the minute he was gone. And the truth was that Thomas did hear him, who had just opened the door to tell his young mistress that her luncheon was waiting, and whom the Archdeacon did all but knock down-stairs in his sudden and unlooked-for exit. The impression naturally conveyed to Thomas by these words was of the

clearest and most distinct description. He was even known to say afterwards, "That he never knew a gentleman as spoke more plain." But Mr Beverley rushed down-stairs, without thinking of Thomas, in a most unenviable frame of mind, into the rain. He was more afraid of meeting Miss Marjoribanks's friends than a man of his size and principles should have been afraid of meeting anybody; but then there is a vast distinction, as everybody is aware, and no one more than the Archdeacon, between physical and moral strength.

As for Lucilla, her tears and anxieties passed off in a miraculous manner as soon as her visitor was gone. She went down-stairs and ate her luncheon with the serenest brow and a most agreeable lady-like appetite. And it was not a fib, as may perhaps be supposed, that she was expecting people—for at that hour Miss Marjoribanks always did expect people, who, to be sure, might be kept back by the rain, but whom she was always justified in looking for. Perhaps, on the whole, notwithstanding her warm sense of the duties of hospitality, Lucilla was glad that it rained so heavily, and that nobody came. She had a great deal to think of as she took her maidenly and delicate repast. The first step had been taken, and taken triumphantly. Henceforward, whatever the Archdeacon's illusions might be, he could no longer stand calm upon his

eminence, and conclude that it was he, and he alone, who could raise the widow from her lowly estate. Lucilla, it is true, knew that no such idea as that of marrying her uncle's heir would ever present itself to Mrs Mortimer; and that—at least so far as Miss Marjoribanks's information went—such a thought was equally removed from the mind of the personage unknown, whom Mr Beverley denounced as an impostor. But this did not in the least affect the value of the suggestion as an instrument to be used against the Archdeacon, who was big enough to defend himself, and on whose account the young philanthropist had no compunctions. The first step was thus taken, and taken successfully, but it was only after this that the real difficulties began; and Lucilla knew no more as yet how she was to find and identify, not to say assail and vanquish, the other side, the mysterious Mr Kavan, the man whom the Archdeacon abused and the widow defended, than even the greatest military genius knows at the commencement of the first campaign how to conduct the second. This was what she considered so closely as she sat alone in the dull afternoon. She did not go to Mrs Mortimer, because it was impossible that every day could be a half-holiday, and because, on the whole, she judged it best not to subject herself, in the present undeveloped state of the position, to much questioning; but she sent her a little note to satisfy her mind, telling her to

keep herself easy, and not to let the Archdeacon bully her, and to confide in the devotion of her affectionate Lucilla. When she had thus satisfied the immediate demands of friendship, Miss Marjoribanks took her work and sat down to reflect. Nothing could be more exciting than the position in which she found herself; but the difficulties were only such as stimulated her genius; and then it was not any selfish advantage, but the good of her neighbour in its most sublime manifestation—the good of her neighbour who had injured her, and been insensible to her attractions, which, according to the world in general, is the one thing unpardonable to a woman—which Lucilla sought. And it was not even the scriptural coals of fire she was thinking of as she pondered her great undertaking in her mind. The enterprise might not be free from a touch of human vanity, but it was vanity of a loftier description: the pleasure of exercising a great faculty, and the natural confidence of genius in its own powers.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE fruit of Lucilla's long and mature reflection was, that, next morning being fine and all the clouds dispersed, she went out with her usual firm step and self-possession, and, what was rather unusual with her, except on necessary occasions of ceremony, knocked at Mrs Woodburn's door.

Mrs Woodburn and Miss Marjoribanks had never, as people say, taken to each other. They were as different in their ways as it is possible to imagine. The mimic was a little indolent, and would not take the trouble to make any exertions for the good of the community, except in the exercise of her peculiar talent, though she had been known, when excited, to go through real fatigue for that; but she had none of the steady force, the persevering energy—or, to sum up all in one word, the genius—of Miss Marjoribanks, who, for her part, recognised the *use* of such an instrument of entertainment as Mrs Woodburn possessed

without appreciating it in her own person; for Lucilla had no sense of humour, as she candidly admitted, with that consciousness of her own faults, and slight disposition to consider them virtues, which is common to persons of great endowments. It was accordingly with a slight sense of effort on both sides that they met thus in the familiarity of an early visit, at a moment when people doing their duty to each other in a ceremonial way would not have thought of calling. She was aware that Mrs Woodburn regarded her, even when she kissed her in the most neighbourly and affectionate manner, with a look which seemed to say, "What can she want, coming here so early?" As for Lucilla, she was too wise to pretend that it was a mere visit of regard. She was too wise, and her interlocutor was too clever, and prone to catch every touch of expression, though Miss Marjoribanks flattered herself she had sufficient experience to enable her to dismiss, when there was occasion for it, all expression from her face. But such was not her policy at this moment. When the two faces had touched each other in that loving and sisterly salutation, their owners immediately separated, and regarded each other from two opposite chairs, without decided hostility, it is true, but with the watchful air of two people whom the fates may range on different sides, and whom it behoves to be mutually watchful. And Lucilla thought

it the most expedient course, under the circumstances, to begin her investigations at once.

"I have come to make an inquisition," she said; "I may as well confess it at once, for you would find me out if I didn't. Mrs Woodburn, where is Mr Cavendish? I am not going to put up with it any longer. He must be written to, and had back again. The only man that was to be depended upon in Carlingford!" said Lucilla; "and to think he should disappear like this, and never say a word!"

Mrs Woodburn fairly gasped in her companion's face. She could no more tell what this meant, than if she had been a person utterly unacquainted with human motives and ways of working; and, indeed, it was only the tricks of the surface for which she had any real insight. "My brother!" she exclaimed, with something between an impulse of defence and denial, and a quite opposite instinct of confidence. Had he proposed, after all, without telling his sister? Had Lucilla a right to ask the question she uttered so frankly? Had he been prudent for once in his life, and secured this sensible alliance and prop to his position? All these questions rushed at lightning-speed through Mrs Woodburn's mind; but she was not so prompt as Miss Marjoribanks would have been under the circumstances, and all she did was to open her eyes wide, and give a start on her chair, and say, "My brother?"

with a voice which trembled, and was half-extinguished by surprise.

"Yes; Mr Cavendish," said Lucilla. "Do tell me his address. There is not a man in Carlingford who is good for anything, now that he is gone. You must see that as well as I do. As for flirting, I have always said he was the only man that knew anything about it. Do tell me where he is, and I will write to him; or, please, send him word for me, that absolutely he must come back. We are all dying for him, you may say."

Mrs Woodburn had recovered a little, and found a moment to think, but her faculties were not so handy, except in her own particular way, as might have been expected from such a clever woman. She could even at that moment have taken off Miss Marjoribanks to the life, but she was in the most profound bewilderment as to what Lucilla could mean; whether she was really laying herself out to "catch" Mr Cavendish, or whether she was merely talking nonsense without any particular meaning; or whether she was feigning indifference by way of getting information; and the stupidest person in Carlingford would have acquitted herself as well as Mrs Woodburn felt able to do in the emergency. "I should think he would rather hear that some of you were willing to live for him," she said, in a tremulous way; finding nothing better

come to her lips than the echo of an old compliment, which went against her nature, but yet with an instinct of serving her brother so far as it might be in her power.

"Not me," said Lucilla, frankly. "Some people once thought so, you know; but I can't say I ever thought so. There never will be anything about living or dying between him and me. I hope we know better," said Miss Marjoribanks; "besides, if I were so much as to think of that sort of thing I should feel I was swindling papa. Oh no; I assure you I am quite disinterested. I want him for my Thursdays. Do write, and say he must come home."

"I don't like people to be too disinterested," said Mrs Woodburn; "and I don't think Harry would be at all glad to hear it. I wish he would come back, I am sure. I am always bullying him about it. I thought perhaps some of you young ladies had been unkind to him," said the anxious sister, who had recovered her head, and thought it might be possible to get at the secret, if there was a secret, by means like this.

"No," said Miss Marjoribanks; "*I* have not been unkind to him; and there is nobody else I know of," said the candid Lucilla, "unless poor Barbara; and *she* will never be unkind, you know. I will write him a letter if you will give me his address. Is it true

that somebody has left him a great deal of money, and he is going to change his name?"

"His name!" said Mrs Woodburn, with a little cry, like an imprudent woman; and then she recovered herself. "I have not heard of anything of the kind," she said, "and he would be sure to tell me of it; but in Carlingford people know things before they happen. I should be very glad to know that somebody was going to leave him a great deal of money; but I don't know about the name——"

"Oh, I heard it only in a confused sort of way," said Lucilla, "or that he *had* changed his name. I am sure I don't know if it was past or present. Did he ever make any change to be somebody's heir? Oh, I beg your pardon; but you know people do it every day."

Mrs Woodburn had grown quite pale—perhaps because she began to see that there was some method in these questions, perhaps with simple and unreasonable fright at the suggestion. She could not say a word for a moment, so startling was the question; and then there was something in Lucilla's early visit, and in her instant onslaught upon Mr Cavendish, which was alarming. She was so frightened and driven into a corner that she could not tell how to answer. It occurred to her all at once that perhaps Mr Cavendish had opened his heart to Miss Marjoribanks, and given

her an inkling of his secret; and what would Lucilla think if she contradicted her brother? Never was a poor woman in a greater difficulty. All her fun and her mimicry collapsed. She no more noticed the peculiarities of Lucilla's look and manner than if she had been an ordinary inhabitant of Grange Lane. "Changed his name?" she faltered, in a blank sort of interrogative way; and in spite of herself faltered and shook, and conveyed to Lucilla the most perfect assurance that what she supposed was true.

"When it is for a great deal of money there is some sense in it; when it is only for a prettier name it is dreadfully stupid. Don't you think so? As if we all could have pretty names!" said Lucilla. "I should like so much to have a talk with Mr Cavendish. I picked up some very very old friends of his the other day—people who used to know him long ago. I am sure he would be interested if he were to know."

"I don't think it could be him," said Mrs Woodburn, with something like the instinct of despair; "I don't remember any very old friends he has; it is so long a time ago——" and then the poor lady stopped short, as if she had something choking her in her throat. "I don't think it could be he."

"Not such a very long time," said Lucilla, in her easy way. "It is dreadful to give him a character

for being old. Do write him, please, and tell him about those people. He is sure to be interested if you say it is a lady, and a pretty woman, and a widow," continued Miss Marjoribanks. "She says he was once very kind to her when her poor husband was alive."

Mrs Woodburn recovered herself a little as Lucilla spoke. "It must have been some other Mr Cavendish," she said. "Harry was—so much abroad—so long away from home——" At that moment there was a sound in the house of a heavy step, and Mr Woodburn's whistle became audible in the distance. Then the poor woman, who had a secret, fixed haggard eyes upon Miss Marjoribanks. She dared not say, "Don't speak of this before my husband." She dared not utter a word to awaken suspicion on one side or the other. She knew very well that if Mr Woodburn heard of the existence of any old friends of his brother-in-law, he would insist upon having them produced, and "paying them some attention;" and at the same time Mrs Woodburn could not so far confide in Lucilla as to beg her to keep silent. This was what her brother's poltroonery brought upon the unfortunate woman. And when the emergency came she was not as equal to it as she expected to be. Her talents were not of a nature to do her any good in such a strait. She collapsed

entirely, and looked round her in a flutter of fright and despair, as if to find some means of escape.

But this terror all arose from the fact that she did not know Miss Marjoribanks, who was generous as she was strong, and had no intention of going to extremities. Lucilla got up from her chair when she heard Mr Woodburn's whistle coming nearer. "I hear somebody coming," she said, "and I must not stay, for I have quantities of things to do. Only mind you tell Mr Cavendish I have something quite serious to say to him from his old friend; and from me, please to tell him, that it is *impossible* to get on without him," continued Lucilla, as Mr Woodburn entered the room. "There is not a soul that can flirt or do anything. I should write to him myself if I knew his address."

And then, as was natural, Woodburn, with his usual absurdity, as his wife explained afterwards, struck in with some boisterous *badinage*. As for Mrs Woodburn, in her mingled terror and relief, she was too much excited to know what he said. But when Lucilla, serenely smiling, was gone, the mimic, with her nerves strung to desperation, burst into the wildest comic travesty of Miss Marjoribanks's looks and manners, and her inquiries about Harry, and sent her unsuspicious husband into convulsions of laughter. He laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks—the

unconscious simpleton; and all the time his wife could have liked to throw him down and trample on him, or put pins into him, or scratch his beaming, jovial countenance. Perhaps she would have gone into hysterics instead if she had not possessed that other safety-valve, for Mrs Woodburn had not that supreme composure and self-command which belonged to Lucilla's higher organisation. She wrote a long letter that afternoon, and had a dreadful headache all the evening after it, which, considering all things, was to be expected under the circumstances, and was a weak-minded woman's last resource.

No headache, however, disturbed Miss Marjoribanks's beneficent progress. She went home conscious that, if she had not acquired any distinct information, she had at least gained a moral certainty. And besides, she had measured the forces of Mr Cavendish's body-guard, and had found them utterly unequal to any prolonged resistance. All that was wanted was prudence and care, and that good-luck which was as much an endowment in its way as the other qualities by which Lucilla might be said to have secured it. She went home meditating her next step, and with a certain enjoyment in the sense of difficulty and the consciousness of how much skill and power would be required to carry on three different threads of innocent intrigue with the three different persons in the drama, without

ever letting the general web get confused, or confounding one strand with another. She had to frighten the Archdeacon with the idea that Mrs Mortimer might marry the impostor, and she had to keep the widow in the profoundest ignorance of this suggestion, and she had to manage and guide the impostor himself, to save his position, and deliver him from his enemies, and make his would-be persecutor for ever harmless. If by chance she should forget herself for a moment, and say to Mr Beverley what she meant for Mr Cavendish, or betray her mode of dealing with either to the third person interested, then farewell to all her hopes. But when all that was required was skill and self-possession and courage, Miss Marjoribanks knew herself too well to be afraid.

She came in with that sense of having done her duty which is so sweet to a well-regulated mind. But it was not to that internal satisfaction alone that Providence limited Lucilla's reward. There are exceptional cases to be found here and there even in this world, in which virtue finds its just acknowledgment, and disinterested well-doing is recompensed as it deserves. While Miss Marjoribanks was still occupied with the arrangement of her plans she was interrupted by a visitor, who entered with a brow clouded by care, and yet exalted by the sense of a charge and dignity which is not afforded to every woman. It was Mrs

Centum who thus came to unfold to Lucilla the new event which was about to happen in Carlingford. She had a great deal to say first, as was natural, of the dreadful vexation of such a thing happening in holiday-time when the boys were all at home, and when she did not know what to do.

"But you know, Lucilla, it will be delightful for all you young ladies to have the officers," said Mrs Centum; "it keeps a place lively; though, for my part, I always say in six months there will not be a servant in the house that one can depend upon. It is dreadful for servants—especially young ones, and if they are nice-looking, you know; but it is very nice for the young ladies, and for all the picnics and dances and everything——"

"What officers?" said Lucilla, pricking up her ears —for to tell the truth, the very name of officers in a place like Carlingford, where nobody could flirt but Mr Cavendish, was as water in the desert to Miss Marjoribanks's soul.

"Has not the Doctor told you?" said Mrs Centum —"but, to be sure, very few people know as yet. Mr Centum says it must be all on your account, because you give such nice parties—but of course that is only his fun, you know. However, I suppose somebody has told Lord Palmerston of all those great buildings that were meant for the factories, and of Carlingford

being such a healthy place. And so the General is coming to us to-morrow, Lucilla—General Travers, you know, that was in all the papers for something he did in India; Charles used to know him at school. He is quite handsome, and has ever so many medals and things. It is a dreadful addition to one's troubles in holiday-time, you know; but, my dear, I hope you will ask him to your Thursdays, and help us to make Carlingford pleasant to him. It all depends upon him," said Mrs Centum, solemnly;—"if he likes the place, and thinks it will do, and finds nice society—whether it is here or at Hampton that they establish the depot."

"At Hampton!" cried Miss Marjoribanks, naturally excited — "the stupidest, wretchedest little place——"

"That is just what Mr Centum says," said the visitor, with a sigh; "what I am nervous about is the servants, Lucilla; and you know that under-nurse of mine, what a nice steady girl she has always been, and such a comfort—but as soon as the soldiers come it turns their heads. I want you to tell me, if you'll be so very good, Lucilla, how Nancy makes that *paté* that Mr Centum is so fond of. I know it is a good deal to ask; but I am sure you are one to stand by your friends; and if the General should take a dislike to Carlingford through any fault of mine, I never could

forgive myself; and I want you to ask him to your Thursdays, Lucilla—there's a dear."

"Dear Mrs Centum," cried Miss Marjoribanks, "papa must call on the General and ask him to dinner: as for my Thursdays, I always say they are not parties; they are only *evenings*," said Lucilla, sweetly, "and not worth a gentleman's while."

"And about the *paté*, Lucilla," said Mrs Centum, anxiously, "I hope you won't think it too much of me to ask;—you are so clever, you know, and so is Nancy: and what with the noise, and the nursery dinners, and all those big boys home from school——"

Mrs Centum fixed her eyes with true solicitude on Lucilla's face. Miss Marjoribanks was magnanimous, but the *paté* in question was one of the greatest triumphs of the Doctor's table. She thought, and with truth, that it *was* a great deal for any one to ask; but then it is true that genius has duties as well as privileges; and to impress upon mediocrity the benefit of loyally following and copying superior intelligence, is of itself a moral effect of the greatest importance. And besides, the woman who at such a moment produced a live General in Carlingford, and held out hopes of officers, was not a woman to be denied.

"I will write it down for you," said Lucilla, graciously, "if you think your cook will understand; or perhaps Nancy might step in and show her how—if I

can persuade Nancy. Dear Mrs Centum, I hope you will always feel sure that I am ready to do anything for my friends."

"Oh, thank you, dear," cried the grateful woman; "I knew you were not one to mind; and if Nancy would be so very kind—— I am sure you will like the General," added Mrs Centum, with effusion; "he will live here, you know, if the depot comes, and be such an addition! I said to Charles, the moment he told me, That would just be the very thing for Lucilla! And he is quite young-looking, and so nice and pleasant," she added, in the fulness of her enthusiasm and gratitude. As for Miss Marjoribanks, she shook her head, but nevertheless received the assurance with a smile.

"It is not that sort of thing I am thinking of," said Lucilla: "if it had been, I need never have come home; and now, after papa has been so kind about the drawing-room——; but I am always glad to hear of nice new people," said Miss Marjoribanks; "and to meet a man that has been in the world is such a pleasure to papa."

With this benign acknowledgment of the General's merits, Lucilla received Mrs Centum's affectionate leave-takings. To be sure, she knew nothing, and did not occupy herself much at that moment about General Travers. But at the same time Miss Marjoribanks,

with her usual piety, recognised the approval of Providence in this new occurrence, and was naturally both encouraged and exhilarated. It is but in rare cases, as has been said, that the reward of virtue is given so promptly, and with such beautiful discrimination: and there are even people in the world who profess to have no faith in any prompt or visible recompense. But Lucilla was not of that new and heretical school. For her own part, she felt it very natural that her exertions for the good of her kind should thus be recognised and acknowledged, and returned to her plans with that sweet and exhilarating sense of moral harmony, which an approving conscience, and an approving heaven, and a sense of blessings earned and goodness recompensed, are so well calculated to give.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS MARJORIBANKS'S mind had scarcely subsided out of the first exhilarating sense of a great many things to do, and a truly important mission in hand, when little Rose Lake sought her with that confession of family troubles, and prayer for counsel and aid in the extremity, which opened a new way and mode of working to Lucilla. Rose was proud, poor little soul, not only of her exceptional position, and that of her family, as a family of artists, but also with a constitutional and individual pride as one of the natural conservators of domestic honour, who would rather have died than have heard the Lakes lightly spoken of, or upbraided with debt or indecorum, or any other crime. She had been silent as long as she could about Barbara's shortcomings, jealously concealing them from all the world, and attacking them with a violence which made her big elder sister, who was twice as big and six times as strong as she, tremble

before her when they were alone. But little Rose had at length found things come to a point beyond which her experience did not go. Barbara began to have secret meetings with a man whose presence nobody was aware of, and who did not come openly to the house to seek her, and persevered, in spite of all remonstrances, in this clandestine career; and all the prejudices and all the instincts of the young artist rose up against her. A vague presentiment of greater evil behind impelled her to some action, and shame and pride combined at the same time to keep her silent. She could not speak to her father, because the poor man lost his head straightway, and made piteous appeals to her not to make a fuss, and threw the burden back again upon her with a double weight; and besides, he was only a man, though he was her father, and Rose had the pride of a woman in addition to her other pride. In these painful circumstances, it occurred to her to consult Lucilla, who had been, as has been recounted in an early part of this history, a great authority at Mount Pleasant, where her heroic belief in herself led, as was natural, others to believe in her. And then Miss Marjoribanks was one of the people who can keep counsel; and Rose felt, besides, that Lucilla had been injured, and had not revenged herself, and that to put confidence in her would be, to a certain extent, to make

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up for the offence. All these motives, combined with an intolerable sense of having upon her shoulders a burden greater than she could bear, drove the young artist at last to Grange Lane, where Lucilla, as we have said, was still in the state of mental exhilaration and excitement naturally consequent upon having a very important piece of work in hand.

"I don't know what to do," said Rose; "I made up my mind I never would say a word to any one. It is so strange she should have no proper pride! but then it is dreadful to think, what if anything should come of it! though I am sure I don't know what could come of it; but they might run away, or something; and then people are so fond of talking. I thought for a long time, if I only knew some nice old lady; but then I don't suppose there are any nice old ladies in Carlingford," added the Preraphaelist, with a sigh.

"Oh, you little monster!" cried Lucilla, "there is Mrs Chiley, the dearest old——; but never mind, make haste and tell me all the same."

"Lucilla," said Rose, solemnly, "we are not great people like you; we are not rich, nor able to have all we like, and everybody to visit us; but, all the same, we have our Pride. The honour of a family is just as precious whether people live," said the young artist, with a certain severity, "in Grove Street or in Grange Lane."

This exordium had its natural effect upon Miss Marjoribanks; her imagination leaped forward a long way beyond the reality which her companion talked of so solemnly, and she changed colour a little, as even a woman of her experience might be excused for doing in the presence of something terrible and disastrous so near at hand.

"I wish you would not frighten me," said Lucilla; "I am very sorry for you, you dear little Rose. You are only a baby yourself, and ought not to have any bother. Tell me all about it, there's a dear."

But these soothing tones were too much for Rose's composure. She cried, and her cheeks flushed, and her dewy eyes enlarged and lightened when they had thrown off a little part of their oppression in the form of those hot salt tears. Miss Marjoribanks had never seen her look so pretty, and said so to herself, with a momentary and perfectly disinterested regret that there was "nobody" to see her—a regret which probably changed its character before Rose left the house. But in the mean time Lucilla soothed her and kissed her, and took off her hat and shed her pretty curls off her forehead. These curls were not by any means so strong and vehement in their twist as Miss Marjoribanks's own, but hung loosely and softly with the "sweet neglect" of the poet. "You would look very nice if you would take a little pains,"

Lucilla said, in her maternal way. "You must wear your hair just so on Thursday; and now tell me all about it—there's a dear."

"Lucilla, *you know*," said Rose, drying her tears, "she has taken to going out in the evening, and I am sure she meets him every night. I can't be a spy on her, whatever she does, and I can't lock her up, you know, or lock the door, or anything like that. I am not her mother," said the poor little sister, pathetically, with a regretful sob. "And then she has taken to making herself *nice* before she goes out. I don't think she ever cared much for being nice—not at home, you know; but now she has pretty collars and gloves and things, and I can't tell where she gets them," cried Rose, her eyes lighting up passionately. "She has no money to spend on such things. Lucilla, I should die if I thought she would accept them from *him*."

"You dear old Rose, you don't know what you are saying," said the experienced Lucilla; "most likely, if she meets a gentleman, she is engaged to him; and They always give people presents, you know. If you would only tell me who it is."

"Lucilla, do not trifle with me," said Rose; "it is much too serious for that—engaged without papa knowing of it, nor me! You know very well that would be no engagement. I sometimes think she is—

is—fond of him," said the reverent little maiden, whose voice changed and softened under the influence of that supposition; "and then again I think it is only because he is rich," she went on, with new vehemence. "Oh, Lucilla, if you only knew how dreadful it was to have such thoughts—and there is nobody to take care of her but me! Papa cannot be worried, for that would react upon everything. An artist is not just like other people. It is everybody's duty to leave him undisturbed; and then, you know, he is only a man, and does not understand; and if she won't pay any attention to me when I speak to her, oh, Lucilla, tell me, what can I do?"

"Let me think," said Lucilla, gravely. "You know I can't tell all in a moment. It is Mr Cavendish, I suppose, though you won't say so. Now just wait a moment, and let me think."

"I once thought of going to him," said Rose; "perhaps he might be generous, and go away. An artist can do many things that other people can't do. We have an exceptional position," the Preraphaelist went on, faltering a little, and not feeling quite so sure of the fact on that special occasion. "I thought of going and begging of him, if it was on my knees——"

"My dear," said Lucilla, with great seriousness, "if you did, I think it is most likely he would fall in

love with *you*, and that would not mend the matter; and I am sure Barbara would give you poison. I will tell you what we must do. I would not do it for everybody; but you know I was always very fond of you, you dear little Rose. You shall ask me for to-morrow evening to come to tea."

"To come to tea!" echoed poor Rose, in dismay. She had been waiting for Lucilla's advice with a great deal of anxiety; but at the present moment it would be vain to conceal that the proposed expedient seemed to her altogether inadequate for the emergency. The light went out of her face as she opened her eyes wide and fixed them on Lucilla; and for one moment, one desperate moment, Rose was disloyal, and lost faith in the only person who could help her; which, perhaps, under the circumstances, was not a thing to cause much surprise.

"My dear, you may be sure I would not propose it, if I did not feel it was the best thing to do," said Lucilla, with great gravity. "It happens precisely that I want to see Mr Cavendish, and if he is at home he never shows himself, and I have been wondering how I could find him. I shall make him walk home with me," said Miss Marjoribanks, "so you need not be uneasy, Rose, about the trouble I am taking. I am doing it to serve myself as well as you. We shall say eight o'clock, if that is not too late."

"But, Lucilla——" said Rose, with consternation; and then she stopped short, and could not tell what more to say.

"You don't understand it?" said Miss Marjoribanks; "I don't think it was to be expected that you should understand it. A little thing like you has no way of knowing the world. When Barbara knows I am there, she will be sure to bring him to the very door; she will want me to see that he is with her; and you may leave the rest to me," said Lucilla. "For my part, I have something very particular to say to Mr Cavendish. It is my luck," Miss Marjoribanks added, "for I could not think how to get to see him. At eight o'clock to-morrow evening——"

"Yes," said Rose; but perhaps it was still doubtful how far she understood the mode of operations proposed. Lucilla's prompt and facile genius was too much for the young artist, and there was, as she herself would have said, an entire want of "keeping" between her own sense of the position, tragical and desperate as that was, and any state of matters which could be ameliorated by the fact of Miss Marjoribanks coming to tea. It had been Rose's only hope, and now it seemed all at once to fail her; and yet, at the same time, that instinctive faith in Lucilla which came naturally to every one under her influence struggled against reason in Rose's heart. Her red

soft lips fell apart with the hurried breath of wonder and doubt; her eyes, still expanded, and clearer than usual after their tears, were fixed upon Lucilla with an appealing questioning look; and it was just at this moment, when Rose was a great deal too much absorbed in her disappointment and surprise, and lingering hope, to take any notice of strange sounds or sights, or of anybody coming, that Thomas all at once opened the door and showed Mrs Centum into the room.

Now it would have mattered very little for Mrs Centum—who, to be sure, knew Lucilla perfectly well, and would never have dreamed for a moment of identifying such a trifling little person as Rose Lake in any way with Miss Marjoribanks; but then Mrs Centum happened at that precise moment to be bringing the new arrival, the important stranger, who had so much in his power—General Travers himself—to be introduced to Lucilla; and it was not the fault either of Rose or the General if it was on the young mistress of the Female School of Design that the warrior's first glance fell. Naturally the conversation had run upon Miss Marjoribanks on the past evening, for Mrs Centum was full of the enthusiasm and excitement incident to that *paté* which Lucilla had so magnanimously enabled her to produce. "Is she pretty?" General Travers had demanded, as was to

be expected. "We—ll," Mrs Centum had replied, and made a long pause—"would you call Lucilla pretty, Charles?" and Charles had been equally dubious in his response; for, to be sure, it was a dereliction from Miss Marjoribanks's dignity to call her pretty, which is a trifling sort of qualification. But when the General entered the drawing-room, which might be called the centre of Carlingford, and saw before him that little dewy face, full of clouds and sunshine, uncertain, unquiet, open-eyed, with the red lips apart, and the eyes clear and expanded with recent tears—a face which gave a certain sentiment of freshness and fragrance to the atmosphere like the quiet after a storm—he did not understand what his hosts could mean. "I call her very pretty," he said, under his breath, to his interested and delighted chaperone; and we are surely justified in appealing to the readers of this history, as Lucilla, who was always reasonable, afterwards did to herself, whether it could be justly said under all the circumstances, that either Rose or the General were to blame?

The little artist got up hurriedly when she awoke to the fact that other visitors had come into the room, but she was not at all interested in General Travers, whom Rose, with the unconscious insolence of youth, classified in her own mind as an elderly gentleman. Not that he was at all an elderly gentleman; but then

a man of forty, especially when he is a fine man and adequately developed for his years, has at the first glance no great attraction for an impertinent of seventeen. Rose did not go away without receiving another kiss from Lucilla, and a parting reminder. "To-morrow at eight o'clock; and mind you leave it all to me, and don't worry," said Miss Marjoribanks; and Rose, half ashamed, put on her hat and went away, without so much as remarking the admiration in the stranger's eyes, nor the look of disappointment with which he saw her leave the room. Rose thought no more of him than if he had been a piece of furniture; but as for the General, when he found himself obliged to turn to Lucilla and make himself agreeable, the drawback of having thus had his admiration forestalled and drawn away from its legitimate object was such, that he did not find her at all pretty; which, after all, on a first interview at least, is all They think about, as Miss Marjoribanks herself said.

"We must do all we can to make Carlingford agreeable to the General," said Mrs Centum. "You know how much depends upon it, Lucilla. If we can but make him like the place, only think what an advantage to society—and we have such nice society in Carlingford," said the injudicious woman, who did not know what to say.

"Nothing very particular," said Miss Marjoribanks.

"I hope General Travers will like us; but as for the officers, I am not so sure. They are all so light and airy, you know: and to have nothing but flirting men is almost as bad as having nobody that can flirt; which is my position," Lucilla added, with a sigh, "as long as Mr Cavendish is away."

"Lucilla," cried Mrs Centum, a little shocked, "one would think to hear you that you were the greatest coquette possible; and on the contrary she is quite an example to all our young ladies, I assure you, General; and as for flirting——"

"Dear Mrs Centum," said Lucilla, sweetly, "one has always to do one's duty to society. As far as I am concerned, it is quite different. And I don't mean to say that the officers would not be a great acquisition," Miss Marjoribanks continued, with her usual politeness; "but then too many young people are the ruin of society. If we were to run all to dancing and that sort of thing, after all the trouble one has taken——" said Lucilla. Perhaps it was not quite civil; but then it must be admitted, that to see a man look blankly in your face as if he were saying in his mind, "Then it is only *you*, and not that pretty little thing, that is Miss Marjoribanks!" was about as exasperating a sensation as one is likely to meet with. Lucilla understood perfectly well General Travers's look, and for the moment, instead of making herself agreeable,

it was the contrary impulse that moved her. She looked at him, not blankly as he looked at her, but in a calmly considerate way, as she might have looked at Mr Holden the upholsterer, had he proposed a new kind of *tapisserie* to her judgment. "One would be always delighted, of course, to have General Travers," said Miss Marjoribanks, "but I am afraid the officers would not do."

As for Mrs Centum, she was quite incapable of managing such a terrible crisis. She felt it, indeed, a little hard that it should be her man who was defied in this alarming way, while Mr Cavendish and the Archdeacon, the two previous candidates, had both been received so sweetly. To be sure, it was his own fault; but that did not mend matters. She looked from one to the other with a scared look, and grew very red, and untied her bonnet; and then, as none of these evidences of agitation had any effect upon the other parties involved, plunged into the heat of the conflict without considering what she was about to say.

"Lucilla, I am surprised at you," said Mrs Centum, "when you know how you have gone on about Mr Cavendish—when you know what a fuss you have made, and how you have told everybody——"

"By the by, who is Mr Cavendish?" said General Travers, interposing, with that holy horror of a quarrel

between women which is common to the inferior half of creation. "I wonder if he is a fellow one used to meet everywhere. One never could get any satisfaction who he belonged to. He never pretended to be one of the Devonshire Cavendishes, you know. I don't know if he had any family at all, or relations, or that sort of thing. In most cases a man gets on just as well without them, in my opinion. I wonder if this fellow you are talking of is he?"

"Oh no," said Mrs Centum. "I hope you will meet him before you leave Carlingford. He has a sister married here; but we have always understood he was one of the Cavendishes. I am sure Mrs Woodburn always gives herself out for somebody," she continued, beginning to let the interesting suspicion enter her mind; for, to be sure, they were about of a standing, and the banker's wife had sometimes felt a little sore at the idea that her neighbour possessed distinctions of family which were denied to herself. "It is true, none of her relations ever come to see her," said Mrs Centum, and she began to forget the General, and Lucilla's reception of him, in this still more interesting subject. It was the first time that the authenticity of the Cavendishes had been attacked in Carlingford; and, to be sure, what is the good of having fine connections if they cannot be produced? While Mrs Centum pondered a suggestion so interesting, Lucilla,

on her part, also took advantage of the occasion, and descended from the calm heights of dignity on which she had placed herself. And the General, who was a well-bred man, had got over for the moment the unlucky impression made upon him by the fresh face of little Rose Lake.

"Mr Cavendish is very nice," said Miss Marjoribanks. "I am very fond of all my own relations, but I don't care about other people's. Of course he is one of the Cavendishes. I don't see how he can help it, when that is his name. I should think it was sure to be the same. We should be so obliged to you if you would bring him back to Carlingford. I don't know, I am sure, why he is so obstinate in staying away."

"Perhaps somebody has been unkind to him," said the General, feeling it was expected of him.

"I am sure *I* have not been unkind to him," said Lucilla. "He is such a loss to me. If you are going to do us the pleasure of coming on Thursday—Oh, I am sure we shall feel quite honoured, both papa and I—I will show you how badly off I am. It is not a party in the least, and we don't dance," said Miss Marjoribanks, "that is why I am a little uncertain about the officers. It is one of my principles that too many young people are the ruin of society; but it is hard work sometimes, when one is not properly supported," Lucilla added, with a gentle sigh.

"If I can be of any use," said the amused soldier. "I don't pretend to be able to replace Cavendish, if it is Cavendish; but——"

"No," said Miss Marjoribanks, with resignation, "it is not easy to replace him. He has quite a talent, you know; but I am sure it is very kind of you, and we shall be delighted to have such an acquisition," Lucilla continued, after a pause, with a gracious smile; and then she led her guests down-stairs to luncheon, which was every way satisfactory. As for the General, it cannot be doubted that he had the worst of it in this little encounter, and felt himself by no means such a great personage in Carlingford as his hospitable entertainers had persuaded him he should be. Mrs Centum declared afterwards that she could not form the least idea what Lucilla meant by it, she who was generally so civil to everybody. But it is not necessary to say that Miss Marjoribanks knew perfectly well what she was doing, and felt it imperatively necessary to bring down General Travers to his proper level. Carlingford could exist perfectly well without him and his officers; but Lucilla did not mean that the society she had taken so much pains to form should be condescended to by a mere soldier. And then, after all, she was only human, and it was not to be expected she could pass over the blank look with which her visitor turned to herself, after having by evil fortune

cast his eyes upon Rose Lake. At the same time, Miss Marjoribanks, always magnanimous, did not blame Rose, who had no hand whatever in the matter; and if she avenged herself in a lady-like and satisfactory manner, it is not to be supposed that it was simply a sense of offence which actuated Lucilla. She did it, on the contrary, on strictly philosophical principles, having perceived that Mrs Centum was spoiling her General, and that it was absolutely necessary that he should be disabused.

When they left, Mrs Centum was almost afraid to put the question that trembled on her lips. She uttered it at last, faltering, and with a very doubtful expression, for she could not conceal from herself the fact that the General had been snubbed. "How do you like Lucilla?" she said, in the most humble way; and then she turned away her face. She could bear it, whatever it might be. She said to herself that so long as the children were well, and the holidays about over, she could bear anything; and what did it matter to her about the officers?—but at the same time she preferred to avert her face when she received the blow.

"I am sure Miss Marjoribanks is a person for whom I shall always entertain the highest respect," said the General, and he gave a little laugh. "Was that pretty little creature a sister of hers?—or a friend?—or what? I don't know when I have seen anything so pretty,"

said the unsuspecting man; and then Mrs Centum turned round upon him with a kind of horror.

"*That* Lucilla's sister!—why, she has no sister; I told you so; she is an only child, and will have everything. She will be quite an heiress," cried Mrs Centum, "if the old Doctor were to die; though, I am sure, poor dear man, I hope he will not die. There is no other medical man in the town that one can have the least confidence in, except Dr Rider; and then *he* is so young, and can't have much experience with children. Her sister, indeed! It was little Rose Lake, the drawing-master's daughter," said Mrs Centum, with cruel distinctness. The General only said, "Oh!" but it was in a crestfallen tone; for to be snubbed by one lady, and struck with sudden enthusiasm for another, who, after all, was not a lady to speak of, but only a drawing-master's daughter, was rather hard upon the poor man. Thus it was the soldier, who in ordinary circumstances ought to have been the most successful, who began in the most cruel and uncomfortable way his campaign in Carlingford.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISS MARJORIBANKS, except for her habitual walk, did not go out much that day. She was too much occupied with what she had in hand. She could not conceive—for Lucilla naturally took a reasonable view of affairs in general, and did not account for the action of any such unknown quantity as love, for example—why Mr Cavendish should conceal himself so carefully from society in Carlingford, and yet run all the risk of meeting Barbara Lake in the evenings. It seemed to Lucilla inconceivable, and yet it was impossible not to believe it. Mr Cavendish, though she had seen him on the very verge of a proposal, did not present himself to her mind in the aspect of a man who would consider the world well lost for any such transitory passion; neither, as was natural, did Barbara Lake appear to Lucilla the least like a person calculated to call forth that sentiment; but nevertheless it must be true, and the only way to account for it was by think-

ing, after all, what fools *They* were, and what poor judges, and how little to be depended on, when women were concerned. Miss Marjoribanks was determined to lose no more time, but to speak to Mr Cavendish, if it was Mr Cavendish, and she could get the chance, quite plainly of the situation of affairs—to let him know how much she knew, and to spur him up to come forward like a man and brave anything the Archdeacon could do. Had it been any small personal aim that moved Lucilla, no doubt she would have shrunk from such a decided step; but it was, on the contrary, the broadest philanthropical combination of Christian principles, help to the weak and succour to the oppressed, and a little, just a very little, of the equally Evangelical idea of humbling the proud and bringing down the mighty. She was so much occupied with her plans that it was with a little difficulty she roused herself to keep up the conversation with her father at dinner, and be as amusing and agreeable as ordinary; which indeed was more than ordinarily her duty, since Dr Marjoribanks came in, in a fractious and disturbed state of mind, discontented with things in general. The truth was, he had got a letter from Tom Marjoribanks from India, where that unlucky young man had gone. It was all very well and natural and proper to go to India, and Lucilla had felt, indeed, rather satisfied with herself for having helped forward that desirable conclusion,

especially after the Doctor had taken pains to explain to her, not knowing that she had any share in it, that it was the very best thing for Tom to do. For it has been already said that Dr Marjoribanks, though he liked Tom, and thought it very odd that Providence should have given the girl to him, and the boy to his incapable sister-in-law, who did not in the least know how to manage him, had no desire to have his nephew for a son-in-law. Going to India was very right and proper, and the best thing to do; for a man might get on *there*, even at the bar, who would have no chance *here;* but after he had made one step in the right direction, it was only to be expected that all sorts of misfortunes should happen to Tom. He was wrecked, which might have been looked for, and he lost his boxes, with the greater part of his outfit, either at that unhappy moment, or in the Desert, or at an after part of his unlucky career; and the object of the letter which Dr Marjoribanks had just received was to get money to make up for his losses. Tom, who was a very good son, did not want to vex his mother, and accordingly it was his uncle whom he applied to, to sell out a portion of the money he had in the Funds. "She would think I was ruined, or that it was my fault, or at least that I meant to spend all my money," wrote Tom, "and you understand, uncle, that it is not my fault." "Confound him! it is never his fault," said Dr Mar-

joribanks, as if that could possibly be brought against the unfortunate young man as a crime.

"No, papa, it is his luck," said Lucilla; "poor Tom!—but I should not like to take a passage in the same boat with him if I was the other people. Though I am sure he is not a bit to blame."

"I hope he does not mean to go on like this," said the Doctor. "He will soon make ducks and drakes of his five thousand pounds. A young fellow like that ought to mind what he's doing. It is a great deal easier to throw money away than to lay it by."

"Papa, it is his luck," said Miss Marjoribanks; "it is all put into a system in political economy, you know. For my part, I am always the other way. It is very funny before you get used to it; but you know there has to be a balance in everything, and that is how it must be."

"I don't think it at all funny," said Dr Marjoribanks, "unless your good luck and his bad were to be joined together; which is not an expedient I fancy." When he said this the Doctor gave a sharp glance at his daughter, to see if by any chance that might perhaps be what she was thinking of; but naturally the maiden candour and unsuspecting innocence of Lucilla was proof to such glances. She took no notice at all of the implied suspicion. But though it was very absurd for anybody to think that she would have married

him, it was not in Miss Marjoribanks's nature to be disloyal to Tom.

"I think he is quite right about his mother, papa," said Lucilla; "she would never understand it, you know; she would think the world was coming to an end. I would not for anything take a passage in the same boat with him, but he is nice in his way, poor fellow! I wonder what he has ever done to have such dreadful luck—but I hope you are going to do what he asks you:" and with this calm expression of her interest Miss Marjoribanks went up-stairs. When the Doctor became thus aware of his daughter's sentiments, it seemed to him that he was more at liberty to be kind to his nephew. He had never been able to divest himself of a little lurking dread, an inherent idea which was so obstinate that it felt like a prophecy, that somehow or other, after costing her father so much, and making such a difference in the house, Lucilla, who on the whole was a dear production, would fall to Tom's share, with all Dr Marjoribanks's other possessions; and the Doctor saw no reason why he should work and lay up money for a boy whom Providence, with a wonderful want of discrimination, had bestowed, not upon him, but upon Mrs John Marjoribanks. However, when that question was settled and done with, his heart began to relent to Tom the unlucky, who, after all, when the son-in-law hypothesis

was fully dismissed, was his natural born nephew, and, as Lucilla said, very nice in his way, poor fellow! The Doctor began to write him a letter, and softened more and more with every line he wrote; but as for Lucilla, she had something more immediately important to occupy her up-stairs.

The fact was that Miss Marjoribanks had found a shadowy figure in black in the corner of one of the sofas when she came into the drawing-room—a figure with a veil down, and a large shawl, and a tremulous air. 'It was very seldom that Mrs Mortimer took courage to visit her young patroness; and to go out at night, except sometimes to Salem Chapel when there was a meeting, and when the timid woman represented to herself that it was her duty, was a thing unknown to her. But yet, nevertheless, it was Mrs Mortimer who sat waiting for Lucilla. They had not met since that momentous interview in which the widow revealed her history to Miss Marjoribanks's sympathetic ears, and the poor woman had been able to bear no longer the solitude of her cottage, and her garden-walls, and her little pupils, and Mary Jane. To know that something was going on outside that concerned her—to hear the waves, as it were, beating round the walls of her prison, and never to have even so much as a peep at them, what they were about, if the tide was beginning to turn, or the wind to change,

or the lifeboat to appear—was more than Mrs Mortimer, even with all her training to patience, could put up with; and accordingly she had made a frantic rush out, under cover of night, to see if there was anything to see, and hear if there was anything to hear.

"You don't know how dreadful it is to keep staring at the walls all day and never see any change," said the widow. "It is very stupid and silly, but you know I cannot help it. I get to fancy always that something wonderful must be going on on the other side."

"That is because you don't go out enough," said Lucilla. "You know how often I have said you should go out once every day; and then you would see that everything outside was very much the same as everything within."

"Oh Lucilla! don't say so," said Mrs Mortimer; "and besides, *he* has been again, and I could see you had been saying something to him. He spoke as if I understood it all when I did not understand a word of it; and he spoke of him, you know, and was quite solemn, and warned me to think well of it, and not do anything rash—as if I had anything to think about, or was going to do anything! Tell me what you said to him, Lucilla; for I am sure, by the way he spoke, he must have taken him for himself, and perhaps you for me."

"Who did he take for himself, I wonder?" said Lucilla. "As for you and me, dear Mrs Mortimer, we are so different that he could never take us for each other, whatever the circumstances might be."

"Ah, yes, Lucilla! we are different," said the poor widow. "You have all your own people to take care of you, and you are not afraid of anybody; but as for me, I have not a creature in the world who cares what becomes of me." As she made this forlorn statement it was only natural that the poor woman should cry a little. This was no doubt the result of the four garden-walls that closed in so tightly, and the aggravating little pupils; but Miss Marjoribanks felt it was not a state of feeling that could be allowed to go on.

"You ought not to speak like that; I am sure there are a great many people who are interested in you; and you have always Me," said Lucilla, with a certain reproachful tenderness. As for Mrs Mortimer, she raised her head and dried her eyes when Miss Marjoribanks began to speak, and looked at her in a somewhat eager, inquiring way; but when Lucilla uttered those last reassuring words, it is undeniable that the widow's countenance fell a little. She faltered and grew pale again, and only cried the more—perhaps with gratitude, perhaps with disappointment. And when she said, "I am sure you are very kind, Lucilla,"

which was all the poor soul could utter, it was in a very tremulous undecided voice. The fact that she had always the sympathy and co-operation of such a friend as Miss Marjoribanks, did not seem to have the exhilarating effect upon her that it ought to have had. It did not apparently do any more for her than the similar assurance that Lucilla was coming to tea did for Rose Lake. But then, like every other benefactor of the human race, Miss Marjoribanks was aware that the human mind has its moments of unbelief. It was a discouraging experience to meet with; but she never permitted it seriously to interrupt her exertions for the good of her kind.

"You should not have so poor an opinion of your friends," said Lucilla, who after all was giving only a stone when her suppliant asked for bread. "You know how much interested we all are in you; and for me, anything I can do——"

"Oh, Lucilla, you are very kind; nobody could be kinder," cried Mrs Mortimer, with compunction. "It is very nice to have friends. I do not know what I should do without you, I am sure; but then one cannot live upon one's friends; and then one knows, when they go away," said the widow, with more feeling than distinctness of expression, "that they all go away to something of their own, and pity you or forget you; but you always stay there, and have nothing of your

own to go away to. I am not grumbling, but it is hard, Lucilla; and then you are young, and happy, and at home, and I don't think it is possible you can understand."

"My dear," said Miss Marjoribanks, "it is quite easy to understand, and I know exactly what you mean. You want me to tell you all about Mr Beverley, and what I said to him, and what he has in his mind. If he is the something of your own you would like to go away to, I think it is a pity. I am sure he has a temper, and *I* would not marry him for my part. But if you mean *me*, I have nothing to go away to," said Lucilla, with a little scorn. "I should be ashamed not to be enough for myself. When I leave you it is not to enjoy myself, but to think about you and to plan for you; and all that you want to know is about *him!*" said Miss Marjoribanks, piercing through and through the thin armour of her incapable assailant. Naturally all the widow's defences fell before this ruthless response. She cried with a mingled sensation of shame at being found out, and penitence for being so ungrateful, and a certain desolate distress with her own incapacity and want of power to defend herself. It was an acute variety of feminine anguish on the whole. The idea that she, a mature woman, a married woman and widow, who ought to have been done with all these vanities, should have been found

out by a young girl to be thinking about *a gentleman*, struck poor Mrs Mortimer with as sharp a sense of shame as if her wistful preoccupation had been a crime. Indeed the chances are, if it had been a crime, she would not have been nearly so much ashamed of it. She hid her face in her hands and blushed down to the very edge of her black dress and up into the glooms of her widow's veil; and all the self-defence she was capable of was a faint "Oh, Lucilla!" a mere appeal of weakness without reason — a virtual throwing of herself in acknowledged guilt at her judge's feet.

"Thomas is coming with the tea," said Miss Marjoribanks. "Come into my room and take off your bonnet. What is the good of worrying yourself when you know I have taken it into my own hands? Spoiling your eyes with crying, and making everybody uncomfortable never does the least good; and, besides, one never knows what harm one might do one's self," said Lucilla, seriously. "I don't think you gone off at all, for my part; but if you don't take proper care—— I shall give you some rose-water, and you will be all right after you have had a cup of tea."

"Oh, no; it will be best to go home. I am such a poor creature now. I am not good for anything. Let me go home, Lucilla," said poor Mrs Mortimer. But Lucilla would not let her go home; and by the time tea was ready, and Dr Marjoribanks had come up-

stairs, she had so managed to soothe her visitor's nerves, and console her spirits, that the Doctor himself grew complimentary. He was so civil, in fact, that Lucilla felt slightly startled, and on the whole thought it was as well that the Archdeacon was at hand, and affairs in a promising way; for it was doubtful whether even Miss Marjoribanks's magnanimity could have got over any ridiculous exhibition of interest on the part of her father, who certainly was old enough to know better. Even to see him taking Mrs Mortimer's tea to her, and congratulating her upon her improved looks, and felicitating himself and the world in general on the fact that Carlingford agreed with her, was aggravating to his daughter—more aggravating, though it is strange to say so, than even the blank looks of General Travers in the morning, or his transference of the homage intended for herself to little Rose Lake; *that* was no more than a blunder, and Lucilla felt a consolatory conviction that, so far as incivility went, the General had received a very satisfactory set-off. But to see Dr Marjoribanks exerting himself in such an unheard-of way made her open her eyes. If he were still accessible to such influences, nobody could answer for anything that might happen; and the widow was so grateful for his kindness, that at one moment it was all that Lucilla could do to keep her lips shut fast, and restrain herself from a tempting allusion which would

have made an end of Mrs Mortimer. It was the first time that Lucilla's *protégée* had ventured to come thus familiarly and uninvited to her friend's house; and the Doctor, who knew no special reason for the visit, expressed his satisfaction with a warmth which was quite uncalled-for, and hoped that Lucilla might often "have the advantage of her company;" and actually betrayed symptoms of a disposition to "see her home," if Miss Marjoribanks had not already made provision for that emergency. When the visitor had finally departed, under the charge of Thomas and Mary Jane, the father and daughter regarded each other, for the first time, with dubious glances—for, so far as Lucilla was concerned, it was a revelation to her of a new and altogether unsuspected danger; and the Doctor, for his part, was very conciliatory, and showed a certain consciousness of having committed himself, which made matters twenty times worse.

"Really, Lucilla, your friend is a credit to you," said Dr Marjoribanks. "It was a stroke of talent to pick her up, as you did, and make a woman of her—and a pretty woman, too," he added, incautiously; as if he, at his age, had anything to do with that.

"I am so glad you think so, papa," said Lucilla, in her dutiful way. "I don't think myself that she has gone off at all to speak of. In some lights she might pass for being no older than I am—if she was very

well dressed, you know; and it really does not matter what age a woman is if she keeps her looks. I should be very glad to see her nicely married, for my part; she is one of the people who ought to be married," Miss Marjoribanks continued, with an inflexion of compassionate tolerance in her voice. As for the Doctor, he mistook her as usual, and took her tone of pity and kindly patronising disdain for another instance of his daughter's policy and high art; whereas the truth was she was quite in earnest, and meant every word she said. And then Dr Marjoribanks's sense of humour was keener than that of Lucilla. After this the conversation flagged slightly, for Miss Marjoribanks had undeniably received a shock. In the midst of her benevolent preoccupation and care for other people, it had suddenly dawned upon her that her own stronghold might be attacked, and the tables turned upon her in the twinkling of an eye. There are days of discouragement in the most triumphant career, and this was one of those uncomfortable moments. Her faith in herself did not fail her for an instant; but the faith of her natural born subjects—the creatures of her bounty—had visibly failed her. Neither Rose Lake nor Mrs Mortimer had shown that confidence in Lucilla's genius which experience and loyalty both called upon them to show. When Dr Marjoribanks had gone down-stairs to resume the case which he was

writing out for the 'Lancet,' Lucilla passed through one of those moments of sublime despondency which now and then try the spirits of the benefactors of their race. A few tears came to her eyes as she reflected upon this great problem. Without such trials genius would not fully know itself nor be justly aware of its own strength. For no temptation to give up her disinterested exertions had any effect upon the mind of Miss Marjoribanks; and even her sense of pain at the unbelief of her followers was mingled with that pity for their weakness which involves pardon. Even when they wounded her she was sorry for them. It was nature that was in fault, and not the fallible human creatures who had it not in them to believe in the simple force of genius. When Lucilla had shed these few tears over her subjects' weakness and want of faith, she rose up again in new strength from the momentary downfall. It was, as we have said, a sublime moment. The idea of giving them up, and leaving their affairs to their own guidance, never for an instant penetrated into her heroic mind; but she was human, and naturally she felt the prick of ingratitude. When the crisis was over she rose up calmly and lighted her candle, and went to her room with a smile upon her magnanimous lips. As she performed that simple action, Lucilla had lifted up the feeble widow, and taken the family of Lakes, and Mr Cavendish, and even

the burly Archdeacon himself, upon her shoulders. They might be ungrateful, or even unaware of all she was doing for them; but they had the supreme claim of Need upon Strength; and Miss Marjoribanks, notwithstanding the wound they had given her, was loyal to that appeal, and to her own consciousness of superior Power.

At the same time, it would not be just to omit all mention of a consolatory recollection which occurred to Lucilla in this moment of her weakness. At such a crisis the mind of genius may be supported by a matter very trifling in itself. Even at the instant when the moisture sprang to her eyes, Miss Marjoribanks said to herself, "Poor Tom!" and felt that the bitterness, to a certain extent, had evaporated out of her tears. He was a long way off, and Lucilla would have thought it madness indeed to connect herself in any way with the fortunes of her unlucky cousin; yet it gave her a certain support to think, that, amid all the want of faith she was encountering, Tom believed in her, heart and soul. It was an insignificant matter, so far as any practical result was concerned, if, indeed, anything can be called insignificant which gives strength to a great mind in a moment of discouragement. She said "Poor Tom!" and felt as if for the moment she had something to lean on, and was comforted. We mention this fact rather as a contribu-

tion to the history of those phenomena of the human mind, which have as yet escaped the metaphysician, than as an actual circumstance in the life of Miss Marjoribanks. She was a woman of genius, and he only a very simple, unlucky fellow; and yet a sensation of comfort came to Lucilla's heart when she said "Poor Tom!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LUCILLA prepared her toilette the next evening, to take tea with the Lakes, with greater care than she would have spent upon a party of much greater pretensions. She was, to be sure, dressed as usual, in the white dress, *high*, which she had brought into fashion in Carlingford; but then that simple evening toilette required many adjuncts which were not necessary on other occasions, seeing that this time she was going to walk to her destination, and had in her mind the four distinct aims of pleasing Rose, of dazzling Barbara, of imposing upon Mr Cavendish, and, finally, of being, as always, in harmony with *herself*. She was as punctual to the hour and minute of her engagement as if she had been a queen; and, indeed, it was with a demeanour as gracious that she entered the little house in Grove Street, where, naturally, there had been also sundry preparations made for her visit. Mr Lake himself, who had postponed his usual walk, and was taking his

tea an hour later than usual, received his young visitor with all the suavity natural to him; and as for Barbara, she did the honours with a certain suppressed exultation and air of triumph, which proved to Lucilla that her plan was indeed an inspiration of genius. As for Rose, it would be impossible to describe what were her sensations. Her faith still failed her at that momentous hour. She was sceptical of Lucilla, and naturally of all the world, and regarded everybody with jealous scrutiny and expectation and distrust, as was natural to a young conspirator. She was profoundly excited and curious to know what Miss Marjoribanks meant to do; and at the same time she did not believe in Miss Marjoribanks, and was almost disposed to betray and interfere with her, if such treachery had been possible. It was Rose Lucilla specially came to visit, and yet Rose was the only one who was cool to her, and did not seem fully to appreciate her condescension; but then, happily, Miss Marjoribanks was magnanimous, and at the same time had a purpose to support her, which was much more comprehensive and of larger application than anything that had entered into the mind of Rose Lake.

"I am proud to see you in my house, Miss Marjoribanks," said Mr Lake. "I have always considered your excellent father one of my best friends. I am not able to give my children the same advantages, but

I have always brought them up not to have any false pride. We have no wealth; but we have some things which cannot be purchased by wealth," said the drawing-master, with mild grandeur; and he looked round upon the walls of his parlour, which were hung with his own drawings, and where one of Willie's held the place of honour. In all Carlingford there was no other house that enjoyed a similar distinction; and, consequently, it was with a delicious sense of chivalrous deference yet equality that the exceptional man of Grove Street received the young sovereign of Grange Lane.

"I am so glad to come, Mr Lake," said Lucilla. "It is so nice to be among such old friends; and, besides that, you know there never was any voice that suited mine like Barbara's; and that dear old Rose was always my pet at Mount Pleasant. I should have come long ago if anybody had ever asked me," said Miss Marjoribanks. And as for Mr Lake, he was so overpowered by this implied reproach upon his hospitality that he scarcely knew how to reply.

"My dear Miss Marjoribanks, if you have not been asked it has been from no want of—of goodwill," said Mr Lake, anxiously. "I do not know what the girls can have been thinking of. You see Rose's genius takes another line; and Barbara, naturally, has a great many things to think of; but in the future, I hope——"

"Oh, yes; I shall come without being asked," said Lucilla. And when the tea came it was all she could do to keep herself quiet, and remember that she was a visitor, and not take it out of the incapable hands of Barbara, who never gave her father the right amount of sugar in his tea. To tell the truth, Barbara's thoughts were occupied by a very different subject; and even Rose had but little attention to spare for her papa's comforts at that special moment. But Lucilla's larger mind embraced everything. She sat with her very fingers itching to cut the bread and butter for him, and give him a cup of tea as he liked it; and asked herself, with indignation, what was the use of that great creature, with her level eyebrows and her crimson bloom, who could not take the trouble to remember that three lumps was what Mr Lake liked. Miss Marjoribanks had never taken tea with him before; but his second cup, had she dispensed it, would have been exactly to his taste—which was a thing Barbara had not learned to make it in all these years. No wonder that a certain sense of contemptuous indignation arose for one moment, even in the calm and impartial bosom of genius. Perhaps Rose would not have done much better; but then Rose was good for something else, which was always a set-off on the other side. Thus it will be seen that Lucilla had a respect for use, even of a kind which in her own

person she did not much appreciate, as became a person of a truly enlightened mind; but a creature who was of no earthly good irritated her well-regulated spirit; for, to be sure, the possession of a fine contralto (which is, at the same time, not fine enough to be made use of professionally) is not a matter of sufficient moment in this world to excuse a young woman for not knowing how to give her father a comfortable cup of tea.

It was nearly nine o'clock before Mr Lake went out for his walk, and by that time it was almost dark, and the lamp outside was lighted, which was not far from the door. Lucilla had taken a seat near the window, with the view of witnessing everything; and it cannot be denied that she felt a little excited when Barbara went out of the room after her father, leaving Rose alone with her guest. Miss Marjoribanks's heart gave a beat or two the more in the first minute, though before the next had passed it had fallen into its usual measure. There were no candles as yet in the parlour, and Grove Street—or at least the bit of it which lay before the window, lighted by the lamp outside, and relieved against a little square of bluish-green sky which intervened between Miss Hemmings's house and that of old Mr Wrangle on the opposite side—was very clear to the interested spectator. There was nobody visible but an organ-man, who was grinding a popular melody very dolorously out of his box, in

what Rose would have called the middle distance; and beyond, Miss Jane Hemmings looking out of the long staircase window, and three little boys in different attitudes below,—that is, if one did not count a tall figure which, perhaps with the view of listening to the music of the organ, was coming and going in a limited circuit round the light of the lamp.

"How convenient it is to have the lamp so near," said Lucilla. "Oh, don't light any candles, please; it is so nice to sit in the dark. Where is Barbara, I wonder? Let us have some music, and put down that dreadful organ. I hope she has not gone out. And where are you, you sulky little Rose?"

"She has gone up-stairs," said Rose, who began to feel all the enormity of her conduct in thus betraying her sister. "I hate sitting in the dark. I hate being a spy; come in from the window, Lucilla, now you are here——"

"My dear Rose," said Miss Marjoribanks, "I think you forget a little. For my part I do not understand what being a spy means. Barbara knows very well I am here. I should scorn to take an advantage of anybody, for my part. If she does not bring him past the very window, and under my eyes—Ah, yes, that is just what I thought," said Lucilla, with gentle satisfaction. But by this time poor little Rose had roused herself into an innocent fury.

"What is just as you thought?" said Rose, laying an impatient grasp on Miss Marjoribanks's arm. "Come in from the window, Lucilla, this moment—this moment! Oh, me, to think it should be my doing! Oh, Lucilla, don't be so mean and shabby and wretched. I tell you to come in—come in directly! If you do not shut the window, and come and sit here in the corner, I will never, never speak to you again!"

Miss Marjoribanks, as was natural, took no notice of this childish fury. She was sitting just where she had been sitting all the evening, within sight of the street lamp and the organ-grinder, and Miss Jane Hemmings at the staircase window;—just where Barbara had placed her, and where that young woman calculated on finding her, when she made a promenade of triumph up the partially-lighted street by the side of her clandestine suitor. Perhaps Barbara had seen Miss Jane as well, and knew that public opinion was thus watching over her; but at all events she was not at all ashamed of herself, or indignant at being spied upon. On the contrary, it was a kind of apotheosis for Barbara, only second to the grand and crowning triumph which would be accomplished in Carlingford Church under the shadow of that veil of real Brussels, which grew more and more real every day. Thus neither the actors in the drama, nor the principal spectator, were in the smallest degree disturbed by

horror or shame or sense of guilt, excepting always the fanciful little Rose, who suffered for everybody; who could have wished that the earth would open and swallow up Barbara and her lover; who could have slaughtered Lucilla on the spot, and given herself over to any kind of torture for her treachery. Naturally nobody paid any sort of attention to Rose. Barbara, for her part, took her admirer's arm in the twilight with a swelling of exultation, which the gaining of the very highest prize in the department of ornamental art could scarcely have conveyed to the bosom of the little artist; and Lucilla put back her small assailant softly with her hand, and smoothed down her ruffled plumes.

"My dear, it is Miss Hemmings that is spying," said Lucilla; "and poor Barbara would be so disappointed if I were to go away from the window. Have patience just a little longer—there's a dear. It is all exactly as I thought."

And then there followed a pause, which was a terrible pause for Rose. The organ-grinder stopped his doleful ditty, and there was scarcely any sound to be heard in the street except the footsteps approaching and retiring, the measured tread of two people occupied with each other, going now more slowly, now more quickly, as the humour seized them, or as their conversation grew in interest; even the sound of their voices came by times to the auditors—Barbara's with

an occasional laugh or tone of triumph, and the other deeper, with which Rose had but little acquaintance, but which was perfectly known to Lucilla. All this time, while her companion sat panting in the dark corner, Miss Marjoribanks was looking to the joints of her harness, and feeling the edge of her weapons. For, after all, it was no small enterprise upon which she was going forth. She was going to denounce the faithless knight to his face, and take him out of the hands of the enchantress; but then she herself meant to take him in hand, and show him his true dangers, and vindicate his honour. A more disinterested enterprise was never undertaken by any knight-errant. Yet, at the same time, Lucilla could not help entertaining a certain involuntary contempt for the man who had deserted her own standard to put himself under that of Barbara Lake, and who was being paraded up and down here without knowing it, to gratify the vanity of his new sovereign, and make an exhibition of his weakness. Lucilla would have been more than mortal if she had not felt the difference between her own rule, which would have been all for his good, and the purely egotistical sway of Barbara; and even in her magnanimous mind, it was impossible that pity itself should not be mingled with a certain disdain.

She sat quite still for so long that Barbara grew intoxicated with her triumph. "It is perhaps the last

time," Lucilla said to herself, with a movement of compassion; and the breadth of her human sympathy was such that she waited till the very latest moment, and let the deluded young woman have the full enjoyment of her imaginary victory. Then Miss Marjoribanks rose with a certain solemnity, and put on her hat, and gave an unappreciated kiss to Rose, who kept in her corner. "Good-night; I am going," said Lucilla. The words were simple enough, but yet they rang in Rose's ears like the signal of a conspiracy. When the calm leader of the expedition went forth, sensible of the importance of her mission, but tranquil as great minds always are in a moment of danger, Rose got up too and followed, trembling in every limb. She was capable of having thrown herself upon the spears in her own person in a sudden *élan* of indignation and passion; but she was not capable of waiting till the right moment, and meeting her antagonists in reasonable combat. Miss Marjoribanks went out deliberately, without any unnecessary haste, sweeping into the dusky twilight with her virginal white draperies. It was a very ordinary scene, and yet, even in the midst of her excitement, Rose could not help observing involuntarily its pictorial qualities — if only any painter could have transferred to his canvass the subdued musical hum of surrounding life, the fragrance of the mignonette, and

the peaceful stillness of the summer night. The sky shone out green-blue, lambent and wistful, from the vacant space between Miss Hemmings's and Mr Wrangle's, and there were the dusky twilight shadows below, and the yellow gleam of the lamp, and Barbara's exulting triumphant figure, and the white robes of the avenging angel. Rose could not have observed all this if she had not been stilled into a kind of breathless awe by the solemn character of the situation, which struck her as being somehow like one of Millais's pictures. As for the lovers, they had just turned at the moment that Miss Marjoribanks came out, and consequently met her straight in the face, as she stood suave and smiling at the little garden door.

"It *is* Mr Cavendish," said Lucilla; "I am so glad; I have been hoping and trying to see you for ever so long; and as soon as ever I heard you talking I felt sure it was your voice."

This was the greeting she addressed to Barbara Lake's lover. For his part, he stood before her, growing red and growing pale, struck dumb by the unlooked-for meeting, and with such a sense of being ashamed of himself as never before had entered his mind, though, no doubt, he had done worse actions in his day. Even Barbara had not calculated upon this open encounter; and instead of giving him any assistance, as was a woman's duty in such a case, she

only tossed her head, and giggled with an embarrassment which was more pride than shame. As for Mr Cavendish, he would have liked to disappear under the pavement, if it had been possible. For once he and Rose were agreed. If a gulf had opened before him, he would have jumped into it without ever pausing to ask himself why. And yet all the time Miss Marjoribanks was looking as placid as if she had been in her own drawing-room, and expecting his reply to her friendly observations. When he realised that he ought to say something, Mr Cavendish felt that he had as much need to wipe his forehead as ever the Archdeacon had. He turned hot and cold, and felt his mind and his tongue frozen, and could not find a word to say. With a sudden horror he woke up, like one of Comus's revellers, and found himself changed into the likeness of the creature he consorted with. If he had found an ass's head on his shoulders, he could not have felt more startled and horrified than when he heard himself, in the imbecility of the moment, giggle like Barbara, and answer to Lucilla's remark, "Oh! yes, it was my voice."

"I am very sorry to separate you from Barbara," said Miss Marjoribanks; "but she is at home, you know, and I want so much to talk to you. Barbara, good-night; I want Mr Cavendish to walk home with me. Rose, don't stand in the garden and catch cold;

thank you, dear, for such a pleasant evening," said Lucilla, pressing another kiss upon her little friend's unwilling cheek. When she had done this, she put out her hand to Barbara, and passed her, sweeping her white garments through the narrow gateway. She took Mr Cavendish's arm as if he had been a young brother come to fetch her. "Let us go round by the chapel," said Miss Marjoribanks, "I have so much to say to you. Be sure to practise for Thursday, Barbara, and bid your papa good-night for me." This was how she carried off Mr Cavendish finally out of Barbara's very fingers, and under her very eyes.

When the two sisters were left standing together at the door, they could do nothing but stare at each other in the extremity of their amazement. Rose, for her part, remained but a moment, and then, feeling by far the guiltiest and most miserable of the whole party, ran up-stairs to her own room and cried as if her heart would break. Barbara, on the contrary, who was past crying, stood still at the door, and watched Lucilla's white dress disappearing on the way to Grange Lane with indescribable emotions. A young woman cannot call the police, or appeal to the crier, when it is her lover whom she has lost: but to see him carried off by the strong hand—to watch him gradually going away and disappearing from her eyes—to hear his steps withdrawing into the distance—was such a trial as few are

called upon to bear. She stood and looked after him, and could not believe her eyes. And then it was all so sudden—an affair of a moment. Barbara could not realise how the world had turned round, and this revolution had been effected;—one minute she had been leaning on his arm triumphant, making a show and exhibition of him in the pride of her heart, though he did not know it; and the next was not she standing here watching him with a blank countenance and a despairing heart, while Lucilla had pounced upon him and carried him off in her cruel grasp? The blow was so sudden, that Barbara stood speechless and motionless till the two departing figures had vanished in the darkness. Would he come back again to-morrow, or was he gone for ever and ever? Such were the thoughts of the forsaken maiden, as she stood paralysed under this sudden change of fortune, at her father's door. If some cruel spectator had thrown into the fire that Brussels veil with which her imagination had so long played, and Barbara had stood heart-struck, watching the filmy tissue dissolve into ashes before her eyes, her sense of sudden anguish could not have been more acute. Yet, after all, Barbara's pangs were nothing to those of Mr Cavendish, as he felt Miss Marjoribanks's light touch on his arm, and felt his doomed feet turn in spite of himself in the most dangerous direction, and became conscious that he was

being led beyond all possibility of resistance, back to Grange Lane and to his fate.

To be sure it was dark, which was one consolation; but it was not dark enough to conceal Lucilla's white dress, nor the well-known form and lineaments of the young monarch of Grange Lane, in whose company nobody could pass unobserved. Mr Cavendish could have faced danger by sea and land with the average amount of courage; but the danger of the walk down the little street, which afterwards led to St Roque's, and up the embowered stillness of Grange Lane, was more than he was equal to. He could not be sure of making a single step by these garden-walls without meeting somebody who knew him—somebody whose curiosity might ruin him in Carlingford; or even without the risk of encountering in the face that arch-enemy, who would not go away, and whose presence had banished him from the place. It may be supposed that, under these terrible circumstances, Mr Cavendish's thoughts of Barbara, who had got him into this scrape, were far from lover-like. He was a man universally popular among ladies, and who owed a great deal of the social consideration which he prized so highly to this fact; and yet the most gentle sentiment in his mind at that moment, was a "Confound these women!" which he breathed to himself, all low and deep, as he went slowly along by Lucilla's side.

As for Miss Marjoribanks, her thoughts were of a very much more serious description than anything her unlucky cavalier was thinking of, and a minute or two passed in silence before she could make up her mind to speak.

"I have been thinking a great deal about you lately, and wishing very much to see you," said Lucilla. "Did not Mrs Woodburn tell you?—I think I should have written to you had I known your address."

"And I am sure you would have made me the happiest of men," said the victim, with rueful politeness. "What had I done to deserve such a privilege? But my sister did not tell me; she left me to hear it from your own——"

"Yes," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a certain solemnity, interrupting him; "I have been thinking a great deal—and *hearing* a great deal about you, Mr Cavendish." When she had said this Lucilla sighed, and her sigh found a terrible echo in her hearer's bosom. She knew that he turned green in the darkness as he gave an anxious look at her. But he was too much alarmed to give her an opportunity of studying his face.

"*Hearing* of me," he said, and tried to laugh; "what have my kind friends been saying?" and for one moment the sufferer tried to delude himself that

it was some innocent gossip about Barbara which might be circulating in Grange Lane.

'Hush," said Lucilla, "don't laugh, please; for I want to have a very serious talk. I have been hearing about you from some very, very old friends, Mr Cavendish—not anything about *this*, you know," Miss Marjoribanks added, waving her hand in the direction of Grove Street. And then Barbara Lake and everything connected with her vanished like a shadow from the unfortunate man's mind. It was horribly ungrateful on his part, but it was, as Miss Marjoribanks would have said, just what might have been expected, and how They always behave. He had no longer any time or patience for the object which had been giving occupation and interest to his solitude. He woke up in a moment, and gave a passing curse to his folly, and faced the real danger as he best could.

"You must be making a mistake, Miss Marjoribanks," he said, with some bitterness; "it should have been, very, very old enemy. I know who it is. It is that Archdeacon you ladies make such a fuss about. It is he who has been telling lies about me," said Mr Cavendish. He breathed a deep hard breath as he spoke, and the blood came back to his face. Perhaps for the first moment he felt satisfied, and breathed freer after it was over; but at the same time it was very dreadful to him to feel that he was found out,

and that henceforward Grange Lane would shut its doors and avert its countenance. "If you take his word for it, I may give in at once," he continued, bitterly. "A parson will say anything; they are as bad as—as women." This the poor man said in his despair, because he did not know what he was saying; for in reality he knew that women had been his best friends, and that he had still a chance, if the judgment was to rest with them.

"You are very ungrateful to say so," said Miss Marjoribanks, "but it is only because you are excited, I suppose. No, Mr Cavendish, it was not the Archdeacon; on the contrary, it was a lady, and she said nothing but good of you," said Lucilla; and then there was a pause. As for Mr Cavendish, it would be altogether impossible to describe the state of his mind. He was like a man suddenly reprieved, but giddy with the shock, and feeling the halter still round his neck, and knowing that he had himself undermined the ground on which he was standing. It was Lucilla who supported him in the shock of the moment, for all his self-command could not keep him from a momentary shiver and stagger when he found that things were not so bad as he thought.

"A lady, and she said nothing but good!" he muttered, under his breath; and then he made an effort to recover himself. "Pardon me, I cannot guess who

my unknown friend may be. It is very soothing to one's feelings to be spoken well of by a lady," said Mr Cavendish, and he laughed again in a discordant unsteady way. Lucilla regarded him through all these fluctuations with natural pity, and at the same time with the calmness of a knowledge which was aware of all and had nothing more to discover; and at the end Mr Cavendish perceived her calm, and the absence of wonder and curiosity in her face, and began to perceive that he had something very serious to deal with —more serious even than he had at first supposed.

"I am going to tell you all about it," said Miss Marjoribanks, "but in the mean time wait a minute and let me speak to you. I have something very serious to say."

It was for this they stopped short at the foot of Grange Lane just where the land was already parcelled out for St Roque's. What Lucilla was going to say was too important to be spoken while walking, and she withdrew her hand from Mr Cavendish's arm. They were both so much absorbed that they did not see anybody coming, nor indeed had any attention to spare for external affairs. The blood had deserted Mr Cavendish's face, and he was once more green with anxiety and inquietude. He stood facing her, feeling that the crisis of his fate had come, and not knowing whether it was absolute despair or a faint dawning of

hope that possessed him. If he had been the most passionate of lovers, and if she had held in her hands the dreadful alternative between rapture and misery, there could not have been a more rapt and absorbing attention in Mr Cavendish's face.

"I want to tell you, first of all, that you must have confidence in me," said Lucilla; "you—must—have confidence in me. We can do nothing without that. I know everything, Mr Cavendish," Miss Marjoribanks added compassionately—"*everything;* but nobody else knows it. I hope I can arrange everything if it is left in my hands. This is what I wanted to tell you first of all. Before everything, you must have confidence in me."

What Mr Cavendish might have answered to this solemn appeal it would be vain to imagine; for the truth was, he was stopped before he could utter a word. He was stopped and seized by the hand, and greeted with a frankness which was, perhaps, all the more loud and cordial from what appeared to the newcomer the comic character of the situation. "It *is* Cavendish, by Jove!" the intruder exclaimed, waving his hand to some people who were coming on behind him. "I beg a thousand pardons for disturbing you, my dear fellow; but they all talk about you so, that I was determined to make sure it was you. Good heavens, Miss Marjoribanks!" General Travers added,

taking off his hat. It was Mr and Mrs Centum who were coming down behind him—she with a light shawl thrown over her head, tempted out by the beauty of the evening; and Lucilla saw in a moment the consequences of this encounter, and how it would be over all Carlingford before to-morrow morning that she and Mr Cavendish were betrothed at the very least. Miss Marjoribanks had all her wits about her, as ever, fortunately for both.

"Yes, it is me," she said, calmly; "I have been taking tea with the Lakes, and I made Mr Cavendish give me his arm home. He did not like being found out, to be sure, but he could not help himself; and we all know about that," Lucilla added, with a smile, taking once more the unfortunate man's arm. "Oh yes, we all know," said Mrs Centum, with a laugh; but yet, notwithstanding, everybody felt sure that it was all Lucilla's cleverness, and that Barbara Lake was a myth and fiction. And it was thus, with Miss Marjoribanks leaning on his arm, and General Travers, in all the warmth of renewed friendship, guarding him on the other side, that Mr Cavendish, whose head was in a whirl of excitement, and who did not know what he was doing, was led back in triumph past Colonel Chiley's very door, where the Archdeacon was lying in wait to crunch his bones, back from all his aberrations into the very heart of Grange Lane.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr Cavendish was led back to his own house that evening by General Travers, whose claim of acquaintance was too decided to be rejected. He never knew very well what passed between the moment when Miss Marjoribanks began to expound to him the urgent necessity that he should confide in her, and the moment in which he found himself in his own house, admitted eagerly by the surprised and anxious servants, and conducted by the energetic soldier. That he had taken leave of Lucilla at her own door, that he had watched her white dress sweep away into the dark garden with a faint sense that it was his only remaining protector who thus left him, and that after that he had smoked a horrible cigar with Mr Centum, and been accompanied home by the old acquaintance who had turned up at so unlucky a moment,—was all that the poor man was aware of. And yet it is to be supposed that on the whole he behaved himself very much like other people,

since General Travers had no distinct idea that his company was undesirable, or that his cordial recognition was anything but welcome. The General, indeed, took it as quite natural, under the circumstances, that Cavendish should be a little confused. A man who is no longer a very young man, and has a character to support, does not care to be found mooning with the object of his affections on a summer evening, like a boy of twenty; and General Travers was perfectly aware that he had thus a very good joke against Cavendish. "It is worth a man's while to set up a bachelor establishment in the country," the General said. "By Jove! I wish I could do it. It makes a fellow feel Arcadian, and ready for anything;" and for his own part he was very ready to seize upon his former acquaintance, a man who belonged to his club, and had a chance to know what he was talking about. "As for Charlie Centum," the soldier said, "what between business and matrimony, he has grown the greatest guy imaginable; and I can't go off directly, you know; and then there's always this business about the depot. It's immense luck to find you here, Cavendish," General Travers added, with flattering cordiality; and if poor Mr Cavendish was not grateful, it certainly was not his friend's fault. He led the way into his house with a glum countenance and a sinking heart, though fortunately the latter was not visible. It was a very nice house, fitted up with

all that luxury of comfort which a man who has, as Mrs Centum said, "only himself to look to," can afford to collect around him. Mr Cavendish had only himself, and he had made his habitation perfect, though, on the whole, he did not pass a very great deal of his time at home. He had some nice pictures and a good library, though he was not particularly given to the arts; and he had an admirable cellar, as all the gentlemen owned in Carlingford, though, for his own part, he was very moderate in that point, and did not give himself any airs on the subject. Mr Centum, on the contrary, was one of the men who talk about vintages, and raise expectations never to be carried out. And General Travers could not but feel the force of the contrast as he sat deep into the night, and "talked over everything," with the man whom by that time he felt convinced was one of his best friends.

As for Mr Cavendish, it would be very difficult to describe his feelings. He had been knocking about in all sorts of poor places, making clandestine visits to his sister, and hovering round the more than suburban simplicity of Grove Street, and the sense of being once more enveloped and surrounded by all that was pleasant to the eye and comfortable to the outer man was wonderfully consolatory and agreeable. But his mind was in a dreadfully harassed condition all the same. He was preoccupied to the last degree, wondering what

Miss Marjoribanks really knew, and how far he had betrayed himself, and to what extent it would be safe, as she herself said, to confide in Lucilla; and at the same time he was obliged to listen to and show a certain interest in the General's stories, and to make now and then a painful effort of mind to recall some of the mutual friends referred to, whose names and persons had in the mean time slipped out of his memory. All the babble of the club, which General Travers felt must be so refreshing to the ears of a rusticated member, fell as flat upon Mr Cavendish, whose mind was full of other matters, as if it had been the merest old woman's gossip, which, to be sure, it slightly resembled in some points. The gallant General made himself so agreeable that he nearly drove the unfortunate man out of his senses, and, when he had exhausted all other means of aggravation, returned with fresh zest to the sentimental circumstances in which, as he supposed, he had found his companion out.

"Very sensible I call it," said General Travers. "To be candid, I don't call her strictly handsome, you know; she's too big for that—and I don't suppose she's of any family to speak of; though perhaps you don't mind that trifling circumstance; but a woman that will dress well and light up well, and knows how to give a man a capital dinner, by Jove! and no doubt has a pretty little bit of money into the bargain—I

respect your taste, Cavendish," said the friendly critic, with effusion; and somehow this applause irritated its recipient more than all that had gone before.

"I am sure I am much obliged to you," said Mr Cavendish, "though, unfortunately, I don't merit your approbation. Miss Marjoribanks is a great friend of mine, but she wouldn't have me, and I don't mean to ask her. At the same time, she has very good connections; and that is not the way to talk of a girl of twenty. She is worth a dozen of your fast young ladies," said the sufferer, with some heat. He was not in the least in love with Lucilla, and indeed had a certain dread of her at this present moment; but he could not forget that she had once stood by him in his need —and, besides, he was glad of any subject on which he could contradict his visitor. "I daresay her family is better than either yours or mine. Scotch, you know," said Mr Cavendish, trying to laugh. As for the General, he leaned back on his chair with an indulgent air, and stroked his mustache.

"Beg your pardon—meant no offence," he said. "For my part, I don't see that it matters, if a woman is good-looking and has something, you know. For instance, there was a pretty little thing—a charming little thing—Lake, or something like that——"

"Ah!" said Mr Cavendish. It was a frightful want of self-control; but he had been a long time at

full strain, and he could not help it. It did not occur to him, for the moment, that nobody in his senses would have applied the term "little thing" to Barbara; and, after all the slow aggravation that he had been submitting to, the idea of this insolent soldier interfering in Grove Street was beyond his power of endurance. As for the General, the tone of this exclamation was such that he too turned round on his chair, and said, "Yes?" with equally unmistakable meaning, startled, but ready for the emergency, whatever it might be.

Thus the two looked at each other for a second, friends in the ordinary acceptation of the word, and yet, perhaps, on the eve of becoming enemies. Mr Cavendish had, up to that moment, pretty nearly forgotten Barbara Lake. It was a piquant sort of occupation when he had nothing else to do, and when the world, according to his morbid fancy, was on the eve of turning its back upon him—but from the moment when he had said between his teeth "Confound these women!" and had felt the excitement of the approaching crisis, Barbara, and her crimson cheeks, and her level eyebrows, and her contralto, had gone altogether out of his mind. At the same time, it is quite true that a man may feel himself at liberty to forget a woman when other matters of more immediate interest are absorbing his attention, and yet be driven furious by the idea suddenly presented to him that somebody

else, who has nothing earthly to do with it, is about to interfere. Mr Cavendish, however, recovered himself while the General sat staring at him, and began to see how ridiculous his defiance was.

"Well?—go on. I did not say anything," he said, and lighted another cigar. Yet he did not face his companion as a friendly listener should, but began to beat measure to an irritating imaginary air on the table, with a certain savage energy by moments, as if he were beating time on the General's head.

"Then why do you stop a fellow short like that?" said General Travers; "I was going to tell you of some one I saw the other day in the house of your—your friend, you know. She was under Miss Marjoribanks's wing, that was how I saw her—and I hope you are not playing the gay deceiver, my friend;—a little thing, round-faced, hazel-eyed—a little soft rosebud sort of creature," said the General, growing eloquent. "By Jove! Cavendish, I hope you don't mean to make yourself disagreeable. These sort of looks, you know——"

"It was Rose, I suppose," said Mr Cavendish, relieved in a moment; and, to tell the truth, he could not help laughing. The more eloquent and angry the General grew, the more amused and contemptuous grew his entertainer. He was so tickled by the position of affairs, that he actually forgot his anxieties for the moment. "No doubt it was Rose," he repeated, and

laughed; Rose! what anybody could see in that little dragon! And then the contrast between the soldier, who prided himself on his knowledge of the world, and liked to talk of his family and position, to the annoyance of those who had none, and the amusement of those who happen to possess these valuable qualifications—and the mistress of the Female School of Design, filled Mr Cavendish with amusement: perhaps all the more because he himself was in a similar scrape. As for General Travers, he was as much disposed to be angry as, a moment before, Mr Cavendish had been.

"It might be Rose," he said, "or Lily either, for anything I can tell; but there is nothing laughable in it that I can see. You seem to be perfectly *au courant*, at all events—which I hope is quite satisfactory to Miss Marjoribanks," said the soldier; and then he resumed, after a disagreeable little pause, "they tell me that everybody meets at the Doctor's on Thursdays. I suppose I shall see you there. Thursday, ain't it? to-morrow?" He looked as he spoke, with what seemed to his victim an insulting consciousness, in poor Cavendish's face. But, in reality, the General did not mean to be insulting, and knew nothing whatever of the horrible internal pang which rent his companion when it was thus recalled to him that it *was* to-morrow—a fact which, up to this moment, had not occurred to the

unfortunate. To-morrow; and not even to-morrow—to-day—for by this time it was two o'clock in the morning, and the unwelcome intruder was wasting the little time he had for deciding what he should do. Once more his own personal anxieties, which he had put aside for a moment at the sudden dictate of jealousy, surged over everything, and swallowed up all lesser sensations. To-morrow!—and by this time everybody knew that he was in Carlingford, and he could not stay away from the weekly assembly without attracting general attention to himself, and throwing open the flood-gates of suspicion. What was he to do? should he turn his back on the enemy once for all, and run away and break off his connection with Carlingford? or should he dare everything and face the Archdeacon, and put his trust in Lucilla, as that high-minded young woman had invited him to do? With these thoughts in his mind, it may be supposed that Mr Cavendish gave but a very mingled attention to the babble of his visitor, who found the wine and the cigars so good, and perhaps had begun to be a little moved out of his ordinary lucidity by their effect.

"You've got a nice little house, Cavendish," said the General, "but it's too small for a married man, my boy. These women are the very deuce for turning a man out of his comfortable quarters. You'll have to go in for boudoirs and those sort of things; and, by

George! you'll be an ass if you do, with a snug little box like this to retire into," said the philosophical warrior; and poor Cavendish smiled a ghastly smile, with the strongest inclination all the time to take him by the collar and turn him out of doors. But then he *was* a warrior and a general officer, and a member of the same club, and six feet high—all which particulars, not to speak of the sacred rights of hospitality, made it somewhat difficult to carry this idea out.

"Don't you think Centum will be sitting up for you?" he said, mildly; "it's past two o'clock; and it's Thursday morning," the victim added, with a sigh. The last words were an involuntary utterance of his own despair, but fortunately they struck General Travers's vein of humour, which happened to be lively at the moment, and worked the desired but unexpected result. The General laughed loud and long, and declared that he respected a man who was above-board, and meant to look respectable for Miss Marjoribanks's sake; and then he poured a mighty libation to Lucilla, and took an affectionate leave of her supposed lover. The General made a great commotion in the decorous quiet of Grange Lane when he knocked at Mr Centum's door. Though it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, nothing but his inherent dread of a woman would have prevented him from knocking up the banker to share his hilarity; but Mrs Centum, in

her night-cap, peaceably asleep as she was at the moment, daunted the soul of the gallant soldier; and naturally his recollection was not very perfect next day. "I had something very funny to tell you; but, by Jove! I forget what it was," General Travers said next morning when he met his host at breakfast; and thus one bad joke at least was spared. But Mr Cavendish shut his door upon his departing guest, without any sense, poor fellow, of having done or said anything in the least funny. He said, "Thank heaven!" with a kind of groan of relief when his troublesome visitor was gone. And then he went back again into his library, where they had been sitting. Perhaps he had never fully appreciated before the comfort of everything, the handsome house which he had enjoyed so long without thinking anything of it, and all the pleasant luxurious accessories of life. He had been doing without them for a week or two, and he had not liked it; and yet at that moment it seemed to Mr Cavendish that he could rather be content to lose them all at a stroke, to make it known in Carlingford that he was ruined and had lost his fortune, than that Carlingford should find out that he was not, after all, one of the Cavendishes, nor the person it took him for. But, alas! all his fortune could not bring reality to these pretensions, nor hinder the exposure to which he looked

forward with such horror. It is true that he was an adventurer, but he was not a base one; nor had he done anything dishonourable either to gain his fortune or to captivate the good opinion of society, which had become so important to him. But there are actual crimes that would be sooner forgiven to a man than the folly of having permitted himself to be considered one of the Cavendishes, and having set his heart on making a figure in that mild provincial world. Mr Cavendish knew enough of human nature to know that a duchess or a lord-chamberlain would forgive more readily than Mr and Mrs Centum any such imposition upon them, and intrusion into their exclusive circle. And then his sister, who could not run away! For her sake it seemed to him that he had better rush off at once, and sell his house and furniture and horses, and give up Carlingford. As he thought of that, all the advantages of Carlingford came upon him stronger than ever. Perhaps a man who has always been used to be recognised as one of the members of a local aristocracy, would not have seen anything half so precious as Mr Cavendish saw in the fact of being everywhere known and acknowledged as a constituent part of Grange Lane;—recognised by the county people, and by the poor people, and pointed out as he passed by one and another to any stranger who

might happen to be so ignorant as not to know Mr Cavendish. To people who are not used to it, there is a charm in this universal acknowledgment. And then he had more need of it than most men have; and, when Carlingford signed his patent of gentility, and acknowledged and prized him, it did an infinite deal more than it had any intention of doing. To keep its regard and recognition he would have done anything, given up the half or three parts, or even, on emergency, all he had. Perhaps he had an undue confidence in the magnanimity of society, and was too sure that in such a case it would behave with a grandeur worthy of the occasion; but still he was quite right in thinking that it could forgive the loss of his fortune sooner than his real offence. And now it was Thursday morning, the day upon which he must either fight or flee. He too had laughed at Miss Marjoribanks's evenings in his time, and thought of Thursday lightly as Lucilla's day; but there was nothing in the least amusing in the prospect of that assembly now.

When a man has thoughts like these to entertain him, nothing can be more useless than to go to bed, although in ordinary circumstances, at three o'clock in the morning, that is about the only thing one can do. Poor Mr Cavendish, however, was not quite free to act as he thought proper. He had been a long time away

from home, and he did not feel himself in a position to shock his servants' feelings with impunity. He went to his room, accordingly, like a martyr, carrying all his difficulties with him, and these unpleasant companions naturally made a night of it when they had him all to themselves. When sheer fatigue and exhaustion procured him a moment's sleep, it was only getting deeper and deeper into trouble; for then it was the Archdeacon who had planted a heavy foot on his neck, or General Travers, who, with still more fatal force, had found out the way to Grove Street. When Mr Cavendish awoke, he said to himself, "Confound these women!" with more fervour than ever; but, at the same time, he swore a mighty oath to himself that he would horsewhip the fellow who ventured to come in his way. Barbara Lake might be no great things, but at least it was to him, and no one else, that she belonged. Such was the complication that afforded him a little outlet for his temper in the midst of the dreadful difficulties of his position, and the question which was constantly renewing itself in his thoughts, as to whether he should go or stay. The idea of presenting himself in the centre of society in Miss Marjoribanks's drawing-room, and being met by the Archdeacon, and held up to public contempt there and then, with all the world looking on, and even Travers, who would carry the narrative out of Carlingford, was something

too horrible to be contemplated; and yet how was he to escape? He was still in this state of mind, driven backwards and forwards by every new wind, when the morning came, and when Miss Marjoribanks's note was put into his hand.

For the truth was, that, after long consideration, Lucilla had determined that the matter was one which could not be permitted to stand over. She was of too energetic a temperament to let things linger on in an uncertain way when they could be made an end of, and brought to a conclusion; and then, as nobody can predict what sudden and unexpected turn human affairs may take, it was always possible that, if Miss Marjoribanks did not make an end of the business dramatically, and to the satisfaction of everybody concerned, it might be found some fine day to have resolved itself by means of some one of those illegitimate and incomplete expedients which abound in ordinary life. It was with this view that Miss Marjoribanks took the step of writing to Mr Cavendish. She had written in the sacred retirement of her own maiden chamber, when all the world was still; perhaps at the moment when General Travers was, as he would himself have vulgarly called it, "chaffing" Cavendish about the beautiful and disinterested friendship which united him to the young sovereign of Grange Lane. But naturally such poor raillery was far from the virginal thoughts of Lucilla

at that retired and sacred hour; and we may venture to add, that the elevating influence of the maiden's bower in which she composed it, and of that tranquil moment of meditation and solitude, breathed in every line, and gave force to every sentiment of the letter which Mr Cavendish tore open with an excited hand. Perhaps he was too anxious and curious to give it the solemn perusal which it ought to have received.

"My dear Mr Cavendish,—It was very unlucky that we should have been interrupted this evening at such an important moment, when I had so much to say to you. But I think the best thing I can do is to write, feeling quite sure that when you know all, *you cannot possibly mistake* my motives. Everybody has retired, and I am quite alone, and the silence * seems to me full of meaning when I think that the fate of a person for whom I have so great a regard may be hanging upon it. I might be afraid of writing to you so frankly, if I did not feel quite sure that you would appreciate my intention. Dear Mr Cavendish, it is not the Archdeacon who has said anything. *He does*

* It is only justice to Miss Marjoribanks to say that she was not addicted to fine writing; but then she was a person who liked to have everything in keeping, and naturally an emergency such as the present does not come every day, and requires to be treated accordingly.

not know it is you; therefore, of course, he could not say anything directly bearing upon you. But then, you know, if he were to meet you by hazard, as he is sure to do some day—and for my part I rather think he is fond of Grove Street—you would be exposed at once, and everything would be lost, for we all know the prejudices that exist in Carlingford. I have another plan of operations to propose to you, which I feel quite sure is for your good, and also naturally for the good of anybody to whom you may intend to unite your fortunes. I feel quite sure that it is far safer to adopt a bold resolution, and to have it over at once. Come to dinner to-morrow. If you may happen to find an enemy, you will find also an unlooked-for friend; and, so far as I am concerned, you *know* that you may calculate on my support. I do not wonder at your being anxious about it; but if you will only have full confidence in me and a little in yourself, believe me it will be all over in a night. If there had ever been anything between you and me, as these stupid people suppose, I might have felt hesitation in writing to you like this; but when I know a thing to be right, I hope I will never be afraid to do it. I have been called upon to do many things that are not common for girls of my age, and perhaps that is why I made up my mind at once to set this all straight for you. Once more I repeat, dear Mr Cavendish, have confidence in me. Come to-morrow evening

as if nothing had happened; and take my word for it that all will go well.—Your friend,

"LUCILLA MARJORIBANKS.

"*P.S.*—If you would like to come and talk it over with me to-morrow, I shall be at home till twelve o'clock; but unless it will be a satisfaction to your own mind, it is not necessary for me, for I have all my plans laid."

It would be quite out of the question to attempt any explanation of Mr Cavendish's feelings when he read this letter. His utter bewilderment, his terror, his rage, his final helpless sense that it would be utterly hopeless for him, or half-a-dozen men, to enter the field against this curious complication of unknown friends and open enemies and generous protectors, took away from him the last remnant of courage. He did not know what to do or to think. He swallowed his coffee with a sense of despair, and sent the rest of his breakfast away untasted; thus betraying, without intending it, his emotions to his kitchen. "It stands to reason as there's a cause for it," Mr Cavendish's domestics concluded in committee of the whole house; and surely, if ever man had good reason for not eating his breakfast, it was he. When he had gone over it all again till his head had grown utterly confused and his thoughts were

all topsy-turvy, Mr Cavendish took a sudden resolution. He went up-stairs and changed his dress with a certain solemnity. He made a toilette more careful than if he were going, as he once had gone, to propose. It was like Nelson going into gala uniform for a battle. And then he went out to discover, if possible, what was coming to him. The difference was, that in this battle no honour, but only a possible salvage of reputation and fortunate escape, was to be gained.

CHAPTER XXX.

It is possible that some people may think Mr Cavendish's emotions too acute for all the danger to which he was exposed; but no doubt every alarm gets intensified when a man broods on it, and thinks of nothing else for weeks at a time. All that he had to do at the present moment was to walk into Carlingford by the most frequented way, and to go up Grange Lane, where every house was open to him, and where nobody was so great a favourite as he. There were as many chances in his favour that he would not in that friendly neighbourhood encounter his one enemy, as there is for every man who goes into action that the bullet which is predestined to strike somebody will not be directed to him; but then Mr Cavendish had not the excitement of personal conflict, nor the kind of security which is given by sharing a risk with a great many other people. And to see everything smiling and serene around, and yet to know that the most deadly

danger may arrive to you at any innocent opening, or round the first street-corner, is a kind of risk which naturally tells upon the nerves more than a more open peril. Mr Cavendish met Dr Marjoribanks, and the Doctor was good enough to stop his brougham and keep him in conversation for five minutes with his back to the foe, if foe there was approaching; and then he met Mrs Chiley, who all but kissed him, and was so glad to see him again, and so pleased that he was in time to make acquaintance with the Archdeacon, and so sure that Lucilla would be quite happy now he had come back. "Perhaps I ought not to say so, but I *know* she has missed you," said the injudicious old lady; and she took both his hands and held the miserable man in a kind of pillory, from whence he gazed with despairing eyes over her shoulder, feeling sure that now was the fatal moment, and that his enemy *must* be coming. But fortune still favoured him, as it happened. He had the presence of mind to say, "I am going to call on Miss Marjoribanks;" and Mrs Chiley dropped his hands on the instant as if they burned her, and patted him on the arm and sent him away. "She is sure to be in just now, and I am so glad; and, my dear, you need not mind me, for I am both your friends," Mrs Chiley said. But when he was delivered from that danger, something still more formidable awaited the unfortunate man. He could

not believe his eyes at first, nor conceive it possible that Fate would have such a spite against him; but there was no mistaking the crumpled dress, any more than the straight eyebrows and flashing oblique glances that had already found him out. Of all the horrible chances in the world, it was Barbara—Barbara, who had a right to think he had deserted her on the previous night, and with whom his next interview could not be otherwise than stormy—who thus appeared like a lion in his way. When he saw what awaited him, Mr Cavendish lost courage. His heart sank down into unfathomable depths. He did not know what he could say to her to shorten the inevitable interview, nor how he could escape, nor how hinder her from discovering that it was Lucilla he was going to see; and he had no longer any doubt in his mind that while he was thus engaged the Archdeacon must inevitably appear. If he had had time to think of ordinary subjects, he would have been sufficiently annoyed at the idea of an interview with Barbara in broad daylight on the sacred soil of Grange Lane, where all the world could or might be spectators; but such a merely prudential sentiment was entirely swallowed up to-day in much more urgent considerations. He would have been content just now, in the horror of the moment, to plight his troth to Barbara by way of getting rid of her, and leaving his path clear; but he could not stop her or himself from

advancing, and dared not give any vent to the panic which was consuming his soul.

"Oh, I am sure I never thought of seeing you here, Mr Cavendish," said Barbara, with a toss of her head. She would have done a great deal to secure her wavering lover, but she could not be amiable at a moment when she had him at a disadvantage. "Perhaps you are going to see Miss Marjoribanks," said the foolish young woman. To tell the truth, she did not suspect him of any such treachery; but her heart was beating louder than usual, and she had the best position of the two, or thought she had, and chose what she supposed the most aggravating thing to say.

But it is always hard to tell what a man may do when he is in a state of despair. Mr Cavendish looked her in the face with the composure of desperation, though she did not know that. All that he was able to think of was how to get rid of her soonest, and to be able to continue his way. "Yes, I am going to see Miss Marjoribanks," he said, with a face which extremity rendered stolid and impassible. As for poor Barbara, her colour changed in a moment. The very least that she had a right to expect was that he should have asked her pardon, put himself at her feet; and her mingled spite and humiliation and mortification at this response were beyond telling. Her cheeks blazed with sudden rage, her passion was so furious that she

actually did what he wanted and stood out of his way, and made him an imperious sign to pass on and leave her. But even then she did not expect to be taken at her word. When Mr Cavendish took off his hat in that heartless way and passed on, Barbara stood aghast, not able to believe her senses. Had he really passed and left her, she who had done so much for him? Had he actually gone over to her adversary before her very eyes? She stood stock-still when he left her, gazing after him, blazing with rage and despite, and scarcely able to keep herself from shrieking out the torrent of reproaches and vituperations that were in her mind. She made no attempt whatever to hide her wrath or jealous curiosity from any eyes that might be there to see; but to be sure she had, as her sister said, no proper pride. If Mr Cavendish had carried out his intentions, the chances are that Barbara, driven desperate, would have rushed after him, and found some means of breaking in upon his interview with Lucilla; but after all this badgering, he had not the courage to carry out his intentions. He looked down the long sunshiny line of Grange Lane with a sickening sense that any of these doors might open at any moment, and his fate rush out upon him. There was not a soul to be seen, but that only made it all the more likely to poor Mr Cavendish's distempered fancy that somebody was coming. He had not even a single thought at

leisure to give to Barbara, and never asked himself whether or not she was standing watching him. All his senses and faculties were engaged forecasting what might happen to him before he could reach Dr Marjoribanks's house. He was approaching it from the lower end of Grange Lane, and consequently had everything to risk; and when Mr Centum's door opened, and all the nurses and all the children poured out, the unfortunate man felt his heart jump, and drop again, if possible, lower than ever. It was this that drove him, instead of going on to Lucilla, to take refuge in his sister's house, where the door happened to be open. He rushed in there, and took breath, and was safe for the instant. But Barbara, for her part, watching him, divined none of Mr Cavendish's reasons. Her heart too gave a jump, and her wrath cooled down miraculously. No doubt it was a little impatience at being questioned which had made him answer as he did. He had not gone to Lucilla—he had not deserted her standard, who had always met him half-way, and done so much for him. Barbara calmed down as she saw him enter at Mrs Woodburn's door. After having thus witnessed his safe exit, she felt at liberty to go back and return to her own affairs, and prepare her toilette for the evening; for it moved her very little less than Mr Cavendish to know that it was Thursday, and that there was no telling what might happen that night

As for the hero of all this commotion, he went and buried himself in Mrs Woodburn's back drawing-room, and threw himself on the sofa in the dark corner, and wiped his forehead like the Archdeacon. It was not his fault if events had overwhelmed him. If he had not met in succession Dr Marjoribanks and Mrs Chiley and Barbara, he would have gone right to Lucilla without stopping to question himself further—but he could not bear all this accumulation. Panic had seized upon him, and this panic wrought more effectually than all argument. It was so terrible to live under such a shadow, that he felt it must be put an end to. If only he were left at rest for this moment, he felt that he could make up his mind to take the perilous leap at night, and dare everything. "It can't be worse than ruin," he said to himself, and tried not to think that for his sister it might be something even worse than ruin. But the first thing of all was to get a little rest in the mean time, and hide himself, and forget the nightmare that was seated on his shoulders. When Mrs Woodburn came to him in haste, and saw his careful dress and pale looks, she was frightened for the moment. She thought it possible for one second that despair had driven him out of his wits, and that there might be, for anything she could tell, a little bottle of prussic acid in his waistcoat pocket. That was her first idea, and her second was that he was going to

carry out at last his most wise and laudable resolution of proposing to Miss Marjoribanks, and that it was this—naturally a serious and hazardous enterprise—which made him look so pale.

"Harry, if you are going to Lucilla——!" said Mrs Woodburn; "wait and rest yourself a little, and I will get you a glass of wine. Keep still; there's some Tokay," said the anxious sister. "Don't you go and worry yourself. You shall see nobody. I'll bring it you with my own hand."

"Oh, confound the Tokay!" said Mr Cavendish. "I know what Woodburn's Tokay is—if that mattered. Look here, I want to speak to you. I *was* going to Lucilla, but I'm not up to it. Oh, not in the way you think! Don't be a fool like everybody. I tell you she wouldn't have me, and I won't ask her. Read this, which is much more to the purpose," Mr Cavendish added, taking out Miss Marjoribanks's letter. He watched her, while she read it, with that sense of contempt and superiority which a man naturally feels who has advanced much beyond the point in any special matter at which his interlocutor is still stationary. He even smiled at her cry of horror and amazement, and found the agitation she showed ridiculous. "Don't make a row about it," he said, regaining his colour as his sister lost hers. "It's all right. I can't ask Lucilla Marjoribanks to have me after that, but I

mean to put my trust in her, as she says. I was going to ask her to explain; but after all, on thinking of it, I don't see the good of explanations," said Mr Cavendish, with lofty tranquillity. "The fact is, she is right, Nelly, and, stand or fall, we'll have it out to-night."

But Mrs Woodburn was scarcely in a condition to reply, much less to give any advice. "Oh, good heavens! what does she know?" cried the trembling woman. "What do you suppose she can know? She gave me a dreadful fright, coming and asking about you and your name. And then she never was a great friend of mine—and if she should say anything to Woodburn! Oh, Harry, go away, go away, and don't face her. You know you slighted her, and she is laying a snare for us. Oh, Harry, go away! She can't do you much harm, but she could ruin me, and any little peace I have! Woodburn would never—never forgive—he would be frantic, you know. It has always been he that made a fuss about the Cavendishes—and, good heavens! to be in a girl's power, and she one that you have slighted, Harry! Oh, for heaven's sake, for pity's sake, if you care anything for me——"

"Hold your tongue, Nelly," said Mr Cavendish. "Don't make a row. What on earth is the use of heaven's-saking? I tell you I am going to make an end of it. If I were to run away now, it would turn

up again at some other corner, and some other moment. Give me a pen and a bit of paper. I will write a note, and say I am coming. I don't want any explanations. If it's all a mistake, so much the better; but I'm going to face it out to-night."

It was some time before Mrs Woodburn recovered her senses; but in the mean time her brother wrote Lucilla his note, and in sight of his sister's agitation felt himself perfectly composed and serene and manful. It even made him complaisant to feel the difference that there was, when the emergency really arrived at last, between his own manly calm and her womanish panic. But then it was for herself that she was afraid, lest her husband should find out that she was not one of the Cavendishes. "You must have been giving yourself airs on the subject," Mr Cavendish said, as he fastened up his note. "I never was so foolish as that, for my part;" and naturally the more he admired his own steadiness and courage, the steadier and more courageous he grew—or at least so he felt for the moment, with her terror before his eyes.

"If you do go," said Mrs Woodburn at last, "oh, Harry, for goodness' sake, mind that you deny *everything*. If you confess to anything, it will all be proved against you; don't allow a single thing that's said to you. It is a mistaken identity, you know—that is

what it is; there was a case in the papers just the other day. Oh, Harry, for heaven's sake don't be weak!—deny everything; you don't know anything about it—you don't know what they mean—you can't understand——"

"It is I that have to do it, Nelly," said Mr Cavendish, more and more tranquil and superior. "You must let me do it my way;" and he was very kind and reassuring to her in his composure. This was how things ought to be; and it was astonishing how much he gained in his own mind and estimation by Mrs Woodburn's panic. Being the stronger vessel, he was of course superior to all that. But somehow when he had got back to his own house again, and had no longer the spectacle of his sister's terror before him, the courage began to ooze out of Mr Cavendish's finger-points; he tried hard to stimulate himself up to the same point, and to regain that lofty and assured position; but as the evening approached, matters grew rather worse than better. He did not turn and flee, because flight, in the present alarmed and touchy state of public opinion, would have equally been destruction; and nobody could answer for it how far, if he failed to obey her, Miss Marjoribanks's discretion might go. And thus the eventful evening fell, and the sun went down, which was to Mr Cavendish as if it might be the

last sun he should ever (metaphorically) see—while, in the mean time, all the other people dressed for dinner as if nothing was going to happen, and as if it was merely a Thursday like other Thursdays, which was coming to Grange Lane.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LUCILLA waited till twelve o'clock, as she had said, for Mr Cavendish's visit; and so mingled are human sentiments, even in the mind of a person of genius, that there is no doubt she was at once a little disappointed, and that Mr Cavendish gained largely in her estimation by not coming. Her pity began to be mingled by a certain respect, of which, to tell the truth, he was not worthy; but then Miss Marjoribanks did not know that it was circumstances, and not self-regard, or any sense of dignity, that had kept him back. With the truest consideration, it was in the dining-room that Lucilla had placed herself to await his visit; for she had made up her mind that he should not be disturbed *this time* by any untimely morning caller. But as she sat at the window and looked out upon the garden, and was tantalised by fifty successive ringings of the bell, none of which heralded her expected visitor, a gentler sentiment gradually grew in Lucilla's mind.

Perhaps it would not be just to call it positively regret; but yet she could not help a kind of impression that if the Archdeacon had never come to Carlingford, and if Mr Cavendish had never been so weak as to be drawn aside by Barbara Lake, and if everything had gone as might have been expected from first appearances—that, on the whole, it might have been well. After all, he had a great many good qualities. He had yielded to panic for the moment, but (so far as Lucilla knew) he was now girding up his loins to meet the emergency in a creditable way; and if, as has been just said, nothing had come in the way—if there had been no Archdeacon, no Mrs Mortimer, no Barbara—if Mr Chiltern had died, as was to have been expected, and Mr Cavendish been elected for Carlingford—then Lucilla could not help a momentary sense that the arrangement altogether might have been a not undesirable one. Now, of course, all that was at an end. By dexterous management the crisis might be tided over, and the worst avoided; but Lucilla became regretfully conscious that now no fate higher than Barbara was possible for the unfortunate man who might once, and with hope, have aspired to herself. It was very sad, but there was no help for it. A certain tenderness of compassion entered Miss Marjoribanks's bosom as she realised this change. It would be hard if a woman did not pity a man thus shut out by hard fate from

any possibility of ever becoming the companion of her existence—a man who, on the whole, had many capabilities, yet whose highest fortune in life could not mount above Barbara Lake!

This thought filled Lucilla's heart with gentle regret. It was sad, but it was inevitable; and when Mr Cavendish's note was brought to her, in which he said simply, and very briefly, that though not sure whether he understood the meaning of her letter, he should certainly do himself the pleasure of accepting as usual her kind invitation, Miss Marjoribanks's regret grew more and more profound. Such a man, who had been capable of appreciating herself, to think that, having known her, he should decline upon Barbara! The pity was entirely disinterested, for nobody knew better than Lucilla that, under the circumstances, no other arrangement was possible. He might marry the drawing-master's daughter, but Miss Marjoribanks was too well aware of her duty to her friends, and to her position in society, to have given her consent to his marriage with anybody's daughter in Grange Lane. But still it was a pity—nobody could say that it was not a pity—a man so visibly capable of better things.

Lucilla, however, could not afford to waste her morning in unprofitable regrets. An evening so critical and conclusive had to be provided for in many

different ways. Among other things, she had to invite, or rather command, the presence of a guest whom, to tell the truth, she had no particular desire to see. The Archdeacon was only a man when all was said, and might change his mind like other men; and to bring Mrs Mortimer to Grange Lane in the evening, looking interesting, as, to be sure, she could look by times, after that unpleasant exhibition of Dr Marjoribanks's feelings, was naturally a trial to Lucilla. Mr Beverley had drawn back once before, and that when Mrs Mortimer was young, and no doubt a great deal more attractive than at present; and now that she was a widow, forlorn and faded, it would be no wonder if he were to draw back, especially, as Lucilla acknowledged to herself, when he saw the ancient object of his affections in her own society, and among all the fresh young faces of Grange Lane: and if the Archdeacon should draw back, and leave the field open, and perhaps the Doctor, who ought to know better, should step in—when she had got so far, Lucilla rose up and shook out her draperies, as if by way of shaking off the disagreeable idea. "At all events I have to do my duty," she said to herself. And thus it was with that last and most exquisite refinement of well-doing, the thought that she might possibly be going to harm herself in benefiting others, that Miss Marjoribanks heroically put on her hat, and issued forth in the

dinner-hour of the little pupils, to invite her last and most important guest.

This period of suspense had not been by any means a happy or comfortable period for Mrs Mortimer. The poor widow was living in a constant expectation of something happening, whereas her only true policy was to have made up her mind that nothing would ever happen, and shaped herself accordingly to her life. Instead of eating her dinner as she ought to have done at that hour of leisure, and fortifying herself for the weary afternoon's work, she was sitting as usual at the window when Miss Marjoribanks came to the door. And if it was a tedious business looking out of the window when the rain was drenching the four walls of the garden and breaking down the flowers, and reducing all the poor little shrubs to abject misery, it could not be said to be much more cheerful in the sunshine, when pleasant sounds came in over that enclosure—voices and footsteps of people who might be called alive, while this solitary woman was buried, and had nothing to do with life. Such a fate may be accepted when people make up their minds to it; but when, so far from making up one's mind, one fixes one's thoughts upon the life outside, and fancies that every moment the call may come, and one may find one's place again in the active world, the tedium grows more and more insupportable. As for Lucilla, natur-

ally she could not see any reason why Mrs Mortimer should sit at the window—why she could not content herself, and eat her dinner instead.

"There are a great many people in Carlingford who have not nearly such a pleasant look-out," Lucilla said; "for my part, I think it is a very pretty garden. The Westeria has grown quite nice, and there is a little of everything," said Miss Marjoribanks; and, so far as that went, she was no doubt the best judge, having done it all herself.

"Oh, yes, it is very pretty; and I am sure I am very grateful to Providence for giving me such a home," said the widow; but she sighed, poor soul, as she said it: for, to tell the truth, though she was not so young as she once was, it takes some people a long time to find out that they themselves are growing old, and have done with life. And then outside, in that existence which she could hear but could not see, there was one figure which was wonderfully interesting to poor Mrs Mortimer; which is a complication which has a remarkable effect on the question of content or discontent.

"You ought to take a walk every day," said Miss Marjoribanks, "that is what is the matter with you; but, in the mean time, there is something else I want you to do. This is Thursday, you know, and I have always some people on Thursday. It is not a party—

it is only an Evening—and no dress to speak of. Your black silk will look quite nice, and be all that is necessary. Black is very becoming to some people," said Lucilla, reflectively. She looked at Mrs Mortimer with her head a little on one side, and saw in a moment, with the rapid glance of genius, just what she wanted. "And some lace for your head," Miss Marjoribanks added. "I don't think you have gone off at all, and I am sure you will look very nice. It is at nine o'clock."

"This evening, Lucilla!" said Mrs Mortimer, faintly; "but you know I never go out—I am not fit for society. Oh, don't ask me, please! Since poor Edward died——"

"Yes," said Lucilla, "it must have been a great loss, I am sure; though I can't say I mind going into a room alone, as some people do; but you know you can avoid that, if you like, by coming early. Come at eight, and there will be nobody in the drawing-room, and you can choose your own corner. Put it quite back—at the back of your head," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a little anxiety. "I could show you how if I had the lace. I do so want you to look nice. Oh, never mind the fashion. When one has a style of one's own, it is always twenty times better. Put it as you used to wear it before you were married; and then, with that nice black silk——"

"Oh, Lucilla, don't ask me," said the widow. "I shall not know how to talk, nor look, nor anything; and then I know nobody; and then——"

"My dear, you have always *me*," said Lucilla, with tender reproach. "I am so sorry I can't stop any longer. I leave it quite to your own taste about the lace. And you will find people you know, you may be quite sure of that. Remember, not later than nine o'clock; and come at eight if you don't like to come into the room by yourself. Good-bye now. I want you to look very nice to-night," Miss Marjoribanks added, giving her friend an affectionate kiss; "you must, for my sake."

"But, Lucilla——" cried Mrs Mortimer.

It was vain to make any further protest, however, for Lucilla was gone, having, in the first place, communicated her requirements to Mary Jane, who was not likely to forget, nor to let her mistress be late. "And mind she is *nice*," said Miss Marjoribanks, emphatically, as she went out at the door. It was necessary she should be nice; without that the intended *situation* which Lucilla was preparing—the grand finale of her exertions—would fall flat, and probably fail of its effect. For this it was necessary that the widow should look not only pretty, but interesting, and a little pathetic, and all that a widow should look when first dragged back into

society. Miss Marjoribanks gave a momentary sigh as she emerged from the garden door, and could not but feel conscious that in all this she might be preparing the most dread discomfiture and downfall for herself. Even if it passed over as it ought to do, and nobody was charmed but the Archdeacon, who was the right person to be charmed, Lucilla felt that after this she never could have that entire confidence in her father which she had had up to this moment. The incipient sentiment Dr Marjoribanks had exhibited was one that struck at the roots of all faith in him as a father; and every person of sensibility will at once perceive how painful such a suggestion must have been to the mind of a young woman so entirely devoted as was Miss Marjoribanks to the consolation and comfort of her dear papa.

Lucilla was not allowed to spend the rest of this momentous afternoon in maturing her plans, as might have been necessary to a lesser intelligence; and when the refreshing moment came at which she could have her cup of tea before preparing for the fatigues of the evening, it was Mrs Chiley who came to assist at that ceremony. The old lady came in with an important air, and gave Lucilla a long, lingering kiss, as old ladies sometimes do when they particularly mean it. "My dear, I am not going to stay a moment, but I thought you might have

something to tell me," the kind old woman said, arranging herself in her chair with the satisfaction of a listener who expects to be confided in. As for Lucilla, who had no clue to Mrs Chiley's special curiosity, and who had a good many things on her mind just at that moment which she rather preferred not to talk about, she was for once struck with veritable astonishment, and did not know what to say.

"Dear Mrs Chiley, what should I have to tell you?" said Miss Marjoribanks. "You know very well where I should go the very first moment if anything happened;" and by way of staving off more particular questions, she took her old friend a cup of tea.

"Yes, my dear, I hope so," said Mrs Chiley, but at the same time her disappointment was evident. "It is very nice, thank you—your tea is always nice, Lucilla—but it was not that I was thinking of. I can't understand how it is, I am sure. I saw him to-day with my own eyes, and could not help seeing how anxious he was looking! I hope, I do hope, you have not been so cruel as to refuse him, Lucilla—and all for something that is not his fault, poor fellow, or that could be explained, you may be sure."

Miss Marjoribanks grew more and more surprised as she listened. She put away the kettle without

filling the teapot, and left her own cup standing untasted, and went and sat down on the stool by Mrs Chiley's feet. "Tell me whom I have refused this time, for I don't know anything about it," said Lucilla; and then her visitor burst forth.

"It must be all that creature's fault! He told me he was coming here; and to tell the truth, I stood and watched him, for you know how interested I am, my dear; and then a little while after he met *that* Barbara. Oh, Lucilla, why were you ever so foolish as to have her here? I told you how it would end when you brought those artist people about your house. They are all a set of adventurers!" cried Mrs Chiley. "I saw them meet, and I was so disgusted that I did not know what I was doing; but he passed her as nicely as possible. Just a civil word, you know, and then he was past. Just as I would have done myself; for it is always best not to be uncivil to anybody. I could see her standing as if she had been struck with lightning; and naturally, Lucilla, I never thought anything else than that he had come here, and that all was right between you. Oh, my dear, I hope you are sure you have not refused him," Mrs Chiley said, piteously; "anyhow, Lucilla, you need not mind telling *me*. I may be sorry, but I will not blame you, my dear."

"I have not refused anybody," said Lucilla, with a modest innocence that it was a pleasure to see; "but,

dear Mrs Chiley," she continued, raising her drooping eyelids, "I think you make a mistake about Mr Cavendish. My own opinion is that Barbara would make him a very nice wife. Oh, please, don't be angry! I don't mean to say, you know, that I think her quite what one would call *nice*—for one's self. But then the gentlemen have such strange ways of thinking. Many a girl whom we could not put up with is quite popular with Them," said Miss Marjoribanks, with a certain mild wonder at the inexplicable creatures whom she thus condescended to discuss. "I suppose they have a different standard, you know; and for my part, I would advise Mr Cavendish to marry Barbara. I think it is the best thing he could do."

"Lucilla!" cried Mrs Chiley, almost with a shriek of horror. She thought, as was perhaps natural, that there was some pique in what her young companion said; not doing Miss Marjoribanks justice—as indeed few people did—for that perfect truthfulness which it was Lucilla's luck always to be able to maintain. Mrs Chiley thought it was her young friend's maidenly pride and determination not to take up the part of a woman slighted or jilted. "You may refuse him, my dear, if your heart is not with him," said the old lady; "but I would not be so hard upon him as that, poor fellow. You may say what you please, but I always will think him nice, Lucilla. I know I ought

to be on the Archdeacon's side," said Mrs Chiley, putting her handkerchief to her eyes; "but I am an old woman, and I like my old friends best. Oh, Lucilla, it is not kind of you to keep up appearances with me. I wish you would give way a little. It would do you good, my darling; and you know I might be both your grandmothers, Lucilla," she cried, putting her arm round her favourite. As for Miss Marjoribanks, she gave her old friend a close embrace, which was the only thing that even her genius could suggest to do.

"I have always *you*," said Lucilla, with touching eloquence; and then she freed herself a little from Mrs Chiley's arms. "I don't say, perhaps, that everybody will receive her; but I mean to make an effort, for my part; and I shall certainly tell Mr Cavendish so if he ever speaks of it to me. As for Mr Beverley, he is going to be married too. Did not you hear? He told me all about it himself one day," said Miss Marjoribanks; "and I will ask him to-night if I may not tell you who the lady is. It is quite a little romance, and I hope we shall have two marriages, and it will make it quite gay for the winter. When you know all about it," Lucilla added, tenderly, by way of breaking the shock, "I am sure you will be pleased."

But instead of being pleased, Mrs Chiley was speechless for the moment. Her fresh old cheeks grew ashy with dismay and horror. "The Archdeacon too!" she

cried, gasping for breath. "Oh, Lucilla, my dear!—and you?" Then the kind old lady held Miss Marjoribanks fast, and sobbed over her in the despair of the moment. To think, after all the pains that had been taken, and all the hopes and all the speculations, that neither the one nor the other was coming to anything! "If it should be that General, after all—and I cannot abide him," sobbed Lucilla's anxious friend. But Miss Marjoribanks's genius carried her through this trial, as well as through all the others which she had yet encountered on her way.

"Dear Mrs Chiley!" said Lucilla, "it is so good of you to care; but if it had been *that* I was thinking of, I need never have come home at all, you know; and my object in life is just what it has always been, to be a comfort to papa."

Upon which Mrs Chiley kissed her young friend once more with lingering meaning. "My dear, I don't know what They mean," she said, with indignation; "everybody knows men are great fools where women are concerned—but I never knew what idiots they were till now; and you are too good for them, my darling!" said Mrs Chiley, with indignant tenderness. Perhaps Miss Marjoribanks was in some respects of the same way of thinking. She conducted her sympathetic friend to the garden door, when it came to be time for everybody to go and dress, with a certain pathetic ele-

vation in her own person, which was not out of accord with Mrs Chiley's virtuous wrath. To have Mrs Mortimer and Barbara Lake preferred to her did not wound Lucilla's pride—one can be wounded in that way only by one's equals. She thought of it with a certain mild pity and charitable contempt. Both these two men had had the chance of having *her*, and this was how they had chosen! And there can be little wonder if Miss Marjoribanks's compassion for them was mingled with a little friendly and condescending disdain.

It was, however, an ease to Lucilla's mind that she had let Mrs Chiley know, and was so far free to work out her plans without any fear of misconception. And on the whole, her old friend's tender indignation was not disagreeable to her. Thus it was, without any interval of repose to speak of, that her lofty energies went on unwearied to overrule and guide the crisis which was to decide so many people's fate.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Dr Marjoribanks was not a man to take very much notice of trivial external changes; and he knew Lucilla and her constitution, and, being a medical man, was not perhaps so liable to parental anxieties as an unprofessional father might have been; but even he was a little struck by Miss Marjoribanks's appearance when he came into the drawing-room. He said, "You are flushed, Lucilla? is anything going to happen?" with the calmness of a man who knew there was not much the matter—but yet he did observe that her colour was not exactly what it always was. "I am quite well, papa, thank you," said Lucilla, which, to be sure, was a fact the Doctor had never doubted; and then the people began to come in, and there was no more to be said.

But there could be no doubt that Lucilla had more colour than usual. Her pulse was quite steady, and her heart going on at its ordinary rate; but her

admirable circulation was nevertheless so far affected, that the ordinary rose-tints of her complexion were all deepened. It was not so distinctly an improvement as it would have been had she been habitually pale; but still the flush was moderate, and did Miss Marjoribanks no harm. And then it was a larger party than usual. The Centums were there, who were General Travèrs's chaperons, and so were the Woodburns, and of course Mrs Chiley, which made up the number of ladies beyond what was general at Dr Marjoribanks's table. Lucilla received all her guests with the sweetest smiles and all her ordinary ease and self-possession, but at the same time her mind was not free from some excitement. She was on the eve of a crisis which would be the greatest failure or the greatest success of her public life, and naturally she anticipated it with a certain emotion.

Mr Cavendish, for his part, had sufficient sense to come very early, and to get into a dark corner and keep himself out of the way; for though he was screwed up to the emergency, his self-possession was nothing to that of Lucilla. But on the whole, it was perhaps Mrs Woodburn who suffered the most. Her heightened colour was more conspicuous than that of Miss Marjoribanks, because as a general rule she was pale. She was pale, almost white, and had dark eyes and dark hair, and possessed precisely

all the accessories which make a sudden change of complexion remarkable; and the effect this evening was so evident that even her husband admired her for a moment, and then stopped short to inquire, "By George! had she begun to paint?" to which question Mrs Woodburn naturally replied only by an indignant shrug of her white shoulders and aversion of her head. She would not have been sorry, perhaps, for this night only, if he had believed that it was rouge, and not emotion. Of all the people at Dr Marjoribanks's table, she perhaps was the only one really to be pitied. Even Mr Cavendish, if vanquished, would at the most receive only the recompense of his deeds, and could go away and begin over again somewhere else, or bury himself in the great depths of general society, where nobody would be the wiser; but as for his sister, she could not go away. The first result for her would be to give the master to whom she belonged, and for whom she had, with some affection, a great deal of not unnatural contempt, a cruel and overwhelming power over her; and she knew, poor soul, that he was not at all too generous or delicate to make use of such a power. In such a case she would be bound to the rock, like a kind of hapless Andromeda, to be pecked at by all the birds and blown at by all the winds, not to speak of the devouring

monster from whom no hero could ever deliver her; and with all these horrible consequences before her eyes, she had to sit still and look on and do nothing, to see all the hidden meaning of every look and movement without appearing to see it, to maintain ordinary conversation when her ear was strained to the uttermost to hear words of fate on which her whole future depended. No wonder her colour was high; and she could not go into a corner, as Mr Cavendish did, nor keep silent, nor withdraw herself from observation. Neither her pulse nor her heart would have borne the scrutiny to which Miss Marjoribanks's calm organs might have been subjected with perfect security; and the chances are, if the Doctor had by any hazard put his finger on her wrist when he shook hands with her, that instead of handing her over to General Travers to be taken down to dinner, he would have, on the contrary, sent her off to bed.

Fortunately by this time the year was declining, and that happy season had returned in which people once more begin to dine by artificial light; and at the same time it was not absolutely dark in the drawing-room, so that Lucilla had not, as she said, thought it necessary to have the candles lighted. "If there should happen to be a mistake as to who is to take down who, it will only be all the more amusing," said Miss

Marjoribanks, "so long as you do not go off and leave *me*." This was addressed to the Archdeacon, to whom Lucilla was very particular in her attentions at that moment. Mrs Chiley, who was looking on with a great sense of depression, could not help wondering why—"When she knows he is engaged and everything settled," the old lady said to herself, with natural indignation. For her part, she did not see what right a man had to introduce himself thus under false pretences into the confiding bosom of society—when he was as bad as married, or even indeed worse. She was ruffled, and she did not think it worth while to conceal that she was so; for there are limits to human patience, and a visitor who stays six weeks ought at least to have confidence in his entertainers. Mrs Chiley for once in her life could have boxed Lucilla's ears for her uncalled-for civility. "I think it very strange that it is not the General who takes her down-stairs," she said to Mrs Centum. "It is all very well to have a respect for clergymen; but after being here so often, and the General quite a stranger —I am surprised at Lucilla," said the indiscreet old lady. As for Mrs Centum, she felt the neglect, but she had too much proper pride to own that her man was not receiving due attention. "It is not the first time General Travers has been here," she said, reserving the question; and so in the uncertain light, when

nobody was sure who was his neighbour, the procession filed down-stairs.

To enter the dining-room, all brilliant and shining as it was, radiant with light and flowers and crystal and silver, and everything that makes a dinner-table pretty to look upon, was, as Mrs Centum said, "quite a contrast." A close observer might have remarked, as Mrs Woodburn and Lucilla took their places, that both of them, instead of that flush which had been so noticeable a short time before, had become quite pale. It was the moment of trial. Poor Mr Cavendish, in his excitement, had taken just the place he ought not to have taken, immediately under the lamp at the centre of the table. During the moment when the unsuspecting Archdeacon said grace with his eyes decorously cast down, Miss Marjoribanks owned the ordinary weakness of humanity so much as to drop her fan and her handkerchief, and even the napkin which was arranged in a symmetrical pyramid on her plate. Such a sign of human feebleness could but endear her to everybody who was aware of the momentous character of the crisis. When these were all happily recovered and everybody seated, Lucilla kept her eyes fixed upon the Archdeacon's face. It was, as we have said, a terrible moment. When he raised his head and looked round him, naturally Mr Beverley's eyes went direct to the mark like an arrow; he

looked, and he saw at the centre of the table, surrounded by every kind of regard and consideration, full in the light of the lamp, his favourite adventurer, the impostor whom he had denounced the first time he took his place by Miss Marjoribanks's side. The Archdeacon rose to his feet in the excitement of the discovery; he put his hand over his eyes as if to clear them. He said, "Good God!" loud out, with an accent of horror which paralysed the two people lower down than himself. As for Miss Marjoribanks, she was not paralysed—she who had not lost a single glance of his eyes or movement of his large person. Lucilla rose to the height of the position. She put her hand upon his arm sharply, and with a certain energy. "Mr Beverley, Thomas is behind you with the soup," said Miss Marjoribanks. The Archdeacon turned round to see what it was, conscious that somebody had spoken to him, but as indifferent to his companion and to civility as he was to Thomas and the soup. "What?" he said, hoarsely, interrupting his scrutiny for the moment. But when he had met Miss Marjoribanks's eye the Archdeacon sat down. Lucilla did not liberate him for a moment from that gaze. She fixed her eyes upon his eyes, and looked at him as people only look when they mean something. "If you tell me what surprised you so much, perhaps I can explain," said Miss Marjoribanks. She

spoke so that nobody could hear but himself; and in the mean time General Travers at her left hand was making himself excessively agreeable to Mrs Woodburn, and no doubt occupying all her attention; and Lucilla never turned her eyes for a moment from the Archdeacon's face.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr Beverley. "I was confounded by what I saw. Good heavens! it is not possible I can deceive myself. I understand your alarm. I am not going to make a disturbance and break up your party. I can wait," the Archdeacon said, drawing a rapid forcible breath. "Miss Marjoribanks, do you know who that man is?"

"Oh yes," said Lucilla, softening into a smile. "Perfectly, I assure you. He is one of papa's guests, and very much respected in Carlingford; and he is one of my—very particular friends," Miss Marjoribanks added. She laughed as she spoke, a kind of laugh which is only appropriate to one subject, and which is as good, any day, as a confession; and the flush was so obliging as to return at that moment to her ingenuous countenance. "We have known each other a long time," Lucilla went on after that pretty pause; and then she raised her confiding eyes, which had been cast down, once more to the Archdeacon's face. "You can't think how nice he is, Mr Beverley," said Miss Marjoribanks. She clasped her hands together, just

for a moment, as she did so, with an eloquent meaning which it was impossible to mistake. The Archdeacon, for his part, gazed at her like a man in a dream. Whether it was true—or whether he was being made a fool of more completely than ever man before was—or whether he was the victim of an optical or some other kind of delusion,—the poor man could not tell. He was utterly stricken dumb, and did not know what to say. He accepted the soup humbly, which Thomas set before him, though it was a white soup, an effeminate dish, which went utterly in the face of his principles. And then he looked at the innocent young creature at his side in that flutter of happy confusion. It was a terrible position for the Broad-Churchman. After such a tacit confession he could not spring from his seat and hurl the impostor out of the room, as in the first place he had a mind to do. On the contrary, it was with a voice trembling with emotion that he spoke.

"My dear Miss Marjoribanks," said the Archdeacon, "I am struck dumb by what you tell me. Good heavens! that it should have come to this; and yet I should be neglecting my duty if I kept silent. You do not—you cannot know who he is."

"Oh yes," said Lucilla, with another little laugh—"*everything*—and how he used to know Mrs Mortimer, and all about it. He has no secrets from me," said

Miss Marjoribanks. She caught Mr Cavendish's eye at the moment, who was casting a stealthy glance in her direction, and who looked cowed and silenced and unquiet to the most miserable degree; and she gave him a little reassuring nod, which the Archdeacon watched with an inward groan. What was he to do? He could not publicly expose the man who had just received this mark of confidence from his young hostess, who knew everything. Perhaps it was one of the greatest trials of Christian patience and fortitude which the Archdeacon, who was not great, as he himself would have said, in the passive virtues, had undergone in all the course of his life. He was so utterly subdued and confounded that he ate his soup, and never found out what kind of soup it was. That is, he consumed it in large spoonfuls without being aware, by way of occupying his energies and filling up the time.

"You cannot mean it," he said, after a pause. "You must be imperfectly informed. At least let me talk to your father. You must hear all the rights of the story. If you will let me speak half-a-dozen words to—to that person, Miss Marjoribanks, I am sure he will leave the place; he will give up any claim——"

"Oh yes, please talk to him," said Miss Marjoribanks, "it will be so nice to see you friends. Nothing would make me so happy. You know I have heard all about it from you and from Mrs Mortimer already,

so I am sure there cannot be much more to tell; and as for papa, he is very fond of Mr Cavendish," said Lucilla, with an imperceptible elevation of her voice.

"Is it *he* whom you call Mr Cavendish?" said the Archdeacon. He too had raised his voice without knowing it, and several people looked up, who were not at the moment engaged in active conversation of their own. The owner of that name, for his part, also turned his face towards the upper end of the table. He was sick of the suspense and continued endurance, and by this time was ready to rush upon his fate.

"Did any one call me?" he said; and there was a little pause, and the company in general fixed its regard upon those three people with a sense that something remarkable was going on among them, though it could not tell what or why.

"The Archdeacon wants to make your acquaintance," said Miss Marjoribanks. "Mr Cavendish—Mr Beverley. There, you know each other; and when we are gone you can talk to each other if you like," Lucilla added; "but in the mean time *you* are too far off, and *I* want the Archdeacon. He is *so* much liked in Carlingford," she continued, lowering her voice. "You can't think how glad we are to have him back again. I am sure if you only knew him better——" said Miss Marjoribanks. As for the

Archdeacon, words could not give any idea of the state of his mind. He ate his dinner sternly after that, and did not look at anything but his plate. He consumed the most exquisite *plats*, the tenderest wings of chicken and morsels of *paté*, as if they had been his personal enemies. For, to tell the truth, he felt the tables altogether turned upon him, and was confounded, and did not know what it could mean.

It was the General who took up Mr Beverley's abandoned place in the conversation. The gallant soldier talked for two with the best will in the world. He talked of Cavendish, and all the pleasant hours they had spent together, and what a good fellow he was, and how much the men in the club would be amused to hear of his domesticity. It was a kind of talk very natural to a man who found himself placed at table between his friend's sister, and, as he supposed, his friend's future bride. And naturally the Archdeacon got all the benefit. As for Lucilla, she received it with the most perfect grace in the world, and saw all the delicate points of the General's wit, and appreciated him so thoroughly, that he felt half inclined to envy Cavendish. "By Jove! he is the luckiest fellow I know," General Travers said; and probably it was the charms of his intelligent and animated conversation that kept the ladies so long at table. Mrs Chiley, for her part, did not know what

to make of it. She said afterwards that she kept looking at Lucilla until she was really quite ashamed; and though she was at the other end of the table, she could see that the poor dear did not enjoy her dinner. It happened, too, that when they did move at last, the drawing-room was fuller than usual. Everybody had come that evening—Sir John, and some others of the county people, who only came now and then, and without any exception *everybody* in Carlingford. And Lucilla certainly was not herself for the first half-hour. She kept close to the door, and regarded the staircase with an anxious countenance. When she was herself at the helm of affairs, there was a certain security that everything would go on tolerably—but nobody could tell what a set of men left to themselves might or might not do. This was the most dreadful moment of the evening. Mrs Mortimer was in the drawing-room, hidden away under the curtains of a window, knowing nobody, speaking to nobody, and in a state of mind to commit suicide with pleasure; but Miss Marjoribanks, though she had cajoled her into that martyrdom, took no notice of Mrs Mortimer. She was civil, it is true, to her other guests, but there could not be a doubt that Lucilla was horribly pre-occupied, and in a state of mind quite unusual to her. "I am sure she is not well," Mrs Chiley said, who was watching her from afar. "I saw that she did

not eat any dinner"—and the kind old lady got up slowly and extricated herself from the crowd, and put herself in motion as best she could, to go to her young friend's aid.

It was at this moment that Lucilla turned round radiant upon the observant assembly. The change occurred in less than a moment, so suddenly that nobody saw the actual point of revolution. Miss Marjoribanks turned round upon the company and took Mr Cavendish's arm, who had just come up-stairs. "There is a very, very old friend of yours in the corner who wants to see you," said Lucilla; and she led him across the room as a conqueror might have led a captive. She took him through the crowd, to whom she dispensed on every side her most gracious glances. "I am coming directly," Miss Marjoribanks said—for naturally she was called on all sides. What most people remarked at this moment was, that the Archdeacon, who had also come in with the other gentlemen, was standing very sullen and lowering at the door, watching that triumphal progress. And it certainly was not Lucilla's fault if Mrs Chiley and Lady Richmond, and a few other ladies, were thus led to form a false idea of the state of affairs. "I suppose it is all right between them at last," Lady Richmond said, not thinking that Barbara Lake was standing by and heard her. According to appearances, it was all

perfectly right between them. Miss Marjoribanks, triumphant, led Mr Cavendish all the length of the room to the corner where the widow sat among the curtains, and the Archdeacon looked on with a visible passion, and jealous rage, which were highly improper in a clergyman, but yet which were exciting to see. And this was how the little drama was to conclude, according to Lady Richmond and Mrs Chiley, who, on the whole, were satisfied with the conclusion. But, naturally, there were other people to be consulted. There was Mr Beverley, whom Miss Marjoribanks held in leash, but who was not yet subdued; and there was Dr Marjoribanks, who began to feel a little curiosity about his daughter's movements, and did not make them out; and there was Barbara Lake, who had begun to blaze like a tempest with her crimson cheeks and black bold eyes. But by this time Lucilla was herself again, and felt the reins in her hands. When she had deposited Mr Cavendish in safety, she faced round upon the malcontents and upon the observers, and on the world in general. Now that her mind was at rest, and everything under her own inspection, she felt herself ready and able for all.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE Archdeacon stood before the fireplace with Dr Marjoribanks and a host of other gentlemen. Mr Beverley's countenance was covered with clouds and darkness. He stood, not with the careless ease of a man amusing himself, but drawn up to his full height and breadth, a formidably muscular Christian, in a state of repression and restraint, which it was painful, and at the same time pleasing, to see. The Berserker madness was upon him; and yet such are the restraints of society, that a young woman's eye was enough to keep him down—Lucilla's eye, and the presence of a certain number of other frivolous creatures in white muslin, and of some old women, as he irreverently called them, who were less pleasant, but not more imposing. He was an Archdeacon, and a leading man of his party, whose name alone would have conferred importance upon any "movement," and whom his bishop himself—not to speak of the clergy whom he

charged in his visitation addresses like a regiment of cavalry—stood a little in awe of. Yet such are the beneficial restraints of society, that he dared not follow his natural impulses, nor even do what he felt to be his duty, for fear of Miss Marjoribanks, which was about the highest testimony to the value of social influence that could be given. At the same time, it was but natural that under such circumstances the Archdeacon should feel a certain savage wrath at the bond that confined him, and be more indignant than usual at the false and tyrannical conventionalism called society. And it was at this moment, of all times in the world, that General Travers, like a half-educated brute as (according to Mr Beverley's ideas) he was, took the liberty of calling his attention to what the soldier called "a lot of pretty girls." "And everything admirably got up, by Jove!" he added; not having the remotest idea what effect so simple an observation might produce.

"Yes, it is admirably got up," said the Archdeacon, with a snarl of concealed ferocity. "You never said anything more profoundly true. It is all got up, the women, and the decorations, and the gaiety, and all this specious seeming. And these are creatures made in the image of God!" said the Broad-Churchman —"the future wives and mothers of England. It is enough to make the devils laugh and the angels weep!"

It may be supposed that everybody was stricken with utter amazement by this unlooked-for remark. Dr Marjoribanks, for his part, took a pinch of snuff, which, as a general rule, he only did at consultations, or in the face of a difficulty; and as for the unlucky soldier who had called it forth, there can be no doubt that a certain terror filled his manly bosom; for he naturally felt as if he must have said something extraordinary to call forth such a response.

"I never was accused before of saying anything profoundly true," the General said, and he grew pale. "I didn't mean it, I'm sure, if that is any justification. Where has Cavendish vanished to, I wonder?" the soldier added, looking round him, scared and nervous—for it was evident that his only policy was to escape from society in which he was thus liable to commit himself without knowing how.

"Female education is a monstrous mistake," said Mr Beverley—"always has been, and, so far as I can see, always will be. Why should we do our best to make our women idiots? They are bad enough by nature. Instead of counterbalancing their native frivolity by some real instruction——good heavens!" The critic paused. It was not that his emotions were too much for him; it was because the crowd opened a moment, and afforded him a glimpse of a figure in black silk, with the lace for which Miss Marjoribanks

had stipulated falling softly over a head which had not quite lost its youthful grace. He gave a glance round him to see if the coast was clear. Lucilla was out of the way at the other end of the room, and he was free. He made but one stride through the unconscious assembly which he had been criticising so severely, and all but knocked down little Rose Lake, who was not looking at the Archdeacon, though she stood straight in his way. He might have stepped over her head without knowing it, so much was he moved. All the gay crowd gave way before him with a cry and flutter; and Lucilla, for her part, was out of the way!

But there are moments when to be out of the way is the highest proof of genius. Miss Marjoribanks had just had a cup of tea brought her, of which she had great need, and her face was turned in the other direction but yet she was aware that the Archdeacon had passed like a Berserker through those ranks which were not the ranks of his enemies. She felt without seeing it that the "wind of his going" agitated his own large coat-tails and heavy locks, and made a perfect hurricane among the white muslin. Lucilla's heart beat quicker, and she put down her tea, though she had so much need of it. She could not swallow the cordial at such a moment of excitement. But she never once turned her head, nor left off her conversation, nor betrayed the anxiety she felt. Up to this time she had managed

everything herself, which was comparatively easy; but she felt by instinct that now was the moment to make a high effort and leave things alone. And it may be added that nothing but an inherent sense of doing the right thing under the circumstances could have inspired Miss Marjoribanks to the crowning achievement of keeping out of the way.

When Mr Beverley arrived in front of the two people who were seated together in the recess of the window, he made no assault upon them, as his manner might have suggested. On the contrary, he placed himself in front of them, with his back to the company, creating thus a most effectual moral and physical barrier between the little nook where his own private vengeance and fate were about to be enacted, and the conventional world which he had just been denouncing. The Archdeacon shut the two culprits off from all succour, and looked down upon them, casting them into profound shade. "I don't know what combination of circumstances has produced this meeting," he said, "but the time was ripe for it, and I am glad it has happened," and it was with dry lips and the calmness of passion that he spoke.

Mrs Mortimer gave a little cry of terror, but her companion, for his part, sat quite dumb and immovable. The moment had arrived at last, and perhaps he too was glad it had come. He sat still, expecting to see

the earth crumble under his feet, expecting to hear the humble name he had once borne proclaimed aloud, and to hear ridicule and shame poured upon the impostor who had called himself one of the Cavendishes. But it was no use struggling any longer. He did not even raise his eyes, but sat still, waiting for the thunderbolt to fall.

But to tell the truth, the Archdeacon, though a torrent of words came rushing to his lips, felt at a difficulty how to begin. "I don't understand how it is that I find you here with the man who has ruined your prospects," he said, with a slight incoherence; and then he changed the direction of his attack. "But it is you with whom I have to do," he said; "you, sir, who venture to introduce yourself into society with—with your victim by your side. Do you not understand that compassion is impossible in such a case, and that it is my duty to expose you? You have told some plausible story here, I suppose, but nothing can stand against the facts. It is my duty to inform Dr Marjoribanks that it is a criminal who has stolen into his house and his confidence—that it is a conspirator who has ventured to approach his daughter—that it is——"

"A criminal? a conspirator?" said Mr Cavendish, and he looked in his accuser's face with an amazement which, notwithstanding his rage, struck the Archdeacon. If he had called him an impostor, the culprit would

have quailed and made no reply. But the exaggeration saved him. After that first look of surprise, he rose to his feet and confronted the avenger, who saw he had made a blunder without knowing what it was "You must be under some strange mistake," he said. "What do you accuse me of? I know nothing about crime and conspiracy. Either you are strangely mistaken, or you have forgotten what the words mean."

"They are words which I mean to prove," said the Archdeacon; but there can be no doubt that his certainty was diminished by the surprise with which his accusation was received. It checked his first heat, and it was with a slightly artificial excitement that he went on, trying to work himself up again to the same point. "You who worked yourself into a wretched old man's confidence, and robbed an unoffending woman," said Mr Beverley; and then in spite of himself he stopped short; for it was easier to say such things to a woman, who contradicted without giving much reason, than to a man who, with an air of the utmost astonishment, stood regarding his accuser in the face.

"These are very extraordinary accusations," said Mr Cavendish. "Have you ever considered whether you had any proof to support them?" He was not angry to speak of, because he had been entirely taken by surprise, and because at the same time he was unspeak-

ably relieved, and felt that the real danger, the danger which he had so much dreaded, was past and over. He recovered all his coolness from the moment he found out that it was not a venial imposition practised upon society, but a social crime of the ugliest character, of which he was accused. He was innocent, and he could be tranquil on that score. "As for robbing Mrs Mortimer," he added, with a little impatience, "she knows, on the contrary, that I have always been most anxious and ready to befriend her——"

"To befriend——Her!" cried the Archdeacon, restored to all his first impetuosity. He could not swear, because it was against his cloth and his principles; but he said, "Good heavens!" in a tone which would have perfectly become a much less mild expletive. "It is better we should understand each other thoroughly," he said. "I am not in a humour for trifling. I consider it is *her* fortune which enables you to make an appearance here. It is *her* money you are living upon, and which gives you position, and makes you presume as—as you are doing—upon my forbearance. Do you think it possible that I can pass over all this and let you keep what is not yours? If you choose to give up everything, and retire from Carlingford, and withdraw all your pretensions——. It is not my part," said Mr Beverley, with solemnity, taking breath, "to deal harshly with a penitent sinner. It is my duty, as

a clergyman, to offer you at least a place of repentance. After *that*——"

But he was interrupted once more. Mrs Mortimer made her faint voice heard in a remonstrance. "Oh, Charles, I always told you—I had no right to anything!" cried the terrified widow; but that was not what stopped the Archdeacon. It was because his adversary laughed that he stopped short. No doubt it was the metallic laugh of a man in great agitation, but still Mr Beverley's ear was not fine enough at that moment to discriminate. He paused as a man naturally pauses at the sound of ridicule, still furious, yet abashed, and half conscious of a ludicrous aspect to his passion—and turned his full face to his antagonist, and stood at bay.

"It is a modest request, certainly," Mr Cavendish said. "Give up all I have and all I am, and perhaps you will forgive me! You must think me a fool to make such a proposal; but look here," said the accused, energetically; "I will tell you the true state of affairs, if for once you will listen. I do it, not for my sake, nor for your sake, but for the sake of—of the women involved," he added hastily; and it was well for him that, instead of looking at the shrinking widow beside him as he said so, his eye had been caught by the eager eye of his sister, who was watching from her corner. With that

stimulus he went on, calming himself down, and somehow subduing and imposing upon the angry man by the mere act of encountering him fairly and openly. "I will tell you what are the actual circumstances, and you can see the will itself if you will take the trouble," said the defendant, with a nervous moderation and self-restraint, in which there was also a certain thrill of indignation. "The old man you speak of might have left his money to a more worthy person than myself, but he never meant to leave it to his grand-niece; and she knew that. She was neither his companion nor his nurse. There was nothing between them but a few drops of blood. For my part, I gave him—— but, to be sure, it would not interest you to know how I spent my youth. You came upon the scene like—a man in a passion," Mr Cavendish said, with an abrupt laugh, which this time was more feeble, and proved that his composure was giving way, "and misjudged everything, as was natural. You are doing the same again, or trying to do it. But you are a clergyman, and when you insult a man——"

"I am ready to give him satisfaction," said the Broad-Churchman, hotly; and then he made a pause, and that sense of ridicule which is latent in every Englishman's mind, came to the Archdeacon's aid. He began to feel ashamed of himself, and at the same time

his eye caught his own reflection in a mirror, and the clerical coat which contrasted so grotesquely with his offer of "satisfaction." Mr Beverley started a little, and changed his tone. "This has lasted long enough," he said, in his abrupt imperious way. "*This* is not the place nor the time for such a discussion. We shall meet elsewhere," the Archdeacon added, austerely, with a significance which it is impossible to describe. His air and his words were full of severe and hostile meaning, and yet he did not know what he meant any more than Mr Cavendish did, who took him at his word, and retired, and made an end of the interview. Whatever the Archdeacon meant, it was his adversary who was the victor. *He* went off, threading his way through the curious spectators with a sense of relief that almost went the length of ecstasy. He might have been walking on his head for anything he knew. His senses were all lost and swallowed up in the overwhelming and incredible consciousness of safety. Where were they to meet elsewhere? With pistols in a corner of Carlingford Common, or perhaps with their fists alone, as Mr Beverley was Broad-Church? When a man has been near ruin and has escaped by a hairbreadth, he may be permitted to be out of his wits for a few minutes afterwards. And the idea of fighting a duel with a dignitary of the Church so tickled Mr Cavendish, that he had not the prudence to keep

it to himself. "You will stand by me if he calls me out?" he said to General Travers as he passed; and the air of utter consternation with which the warrior regarded him, drove Mr Cavendish into such agonies of laughter, that he had to retire to the landing-place and suffocate himself to subdue it. If any man had said to him that he was hysterical, the chances are that it was he who would have called that man out, or at least knocked him down. But he had to steal downstairs afterwards and apply to Thomas for a cordial more potent than tea; for naturally, when a man has been hanging over an abyss for ever so long, it is no great wonder if he loses his head and balance when he suddenly finds himself standing on firm ground, and feels that he has escaped.

As for the Archdeacon, when the other was gone, he sat down silently on his abandoned chair. He was one of the men who take pride in seeing both sides of a question; and to tell the truth, he was always very candid about disputed points in theology, and ready to entertain everybody's objection; but it was a different thing when the matter was a matter of fact. He put down his face into his hands, and tried to think whether it was possible that what he had just heard might be the true state of the case. To be sure, the widow who was seated half-fainting by his side had given him the same account often enough, but somehow it was more

effective from the lips of a man who confronted him than from the mild and weeping woman whom he loved better than anything else in the world, but whose opinion on any earthly (or heavenly) subject had not the weight of a straw upon him. He tried to take that view of it; and then it occurred to him that nothing was more ludicrous and miserable than the position of a man who goes to law without adequate reason, or without proof to maintain his cause. Such a horrible divergence from everything that was just and right might be, as that the well-known and highly-esteemed Archdeacon Beverley might be held up for the amusement and edification of the country in a 'Times' leader, which was a martyrdom the Archdeacon would have rather liked than otherwise in a worthy cause, but not for a wretched private business connected with money. He sighed as he pondered, feeling, as so many have felt, the difficulties which attend a good man's progress in this life—how that which is just is not always that which is expedient, and how the righteous have to submit to many inconveniences in order that the adversary may have no occasion to blaspheme. In this state of mind a man naturally softens towards a tender and wistful sympathiser close at hand. He sighed once more heavily, and lifted his head, and took into his own a soft pale hand which was visible near him among the folds of black silk.

"So you too have been brought into it, Helen," the Archdeacon said, pathetically; "I did not expect to see you here."

"It was Lucilla," said Mrs Mortimer, timidly; "it was not any wish of mine. Oh, Charles! if you would let me speak. If you will but forget all this, and think no more about it; and I will do my best to make you a——" Here the poor woman stopped short all at once. What she meant to have said was, that she would make him a good wife, which nature and truth and the circumstances all prompted her to say—as the only possible solution to the puzzle. But when she had got so far, the poor widow stopped, blushing and tingling all over, with a sense of shame, more overwhelming than if she had done a wicked action. It was nothing but pure honesty and affection that prompted her to speak; and yet, if it had been the vilest sentiment in human nature, she would not have been so utterly ashamed. "That was not what I meant to say!" she cried, with sharp and sudden wretchedness; and was not the least ashamed of telling a downright lie instead.

But, to tell the truth, the Archdeacon was paying no particular attention. He had never loved any other woman; but he was a little indifferent as to what innocent nonsense she might please to say. So that her confusion and misery, and even the half offer of

herself which occasioned these feelings, were lost upon him. He kept her hand and caressed it in the midst of his own thoughts, as if it was a child's head he was patting. "My poor Helen," he said, coming back to her when he found she had stopped speaking, "I don't see why you should not come, if this sort of thing is any pleasure to you; but afterwards——" he said, reflectively. He went to that sort of thing often himself, and rather liked it, and did not think of any afterwards; but perhaps the case of a weak woman was different, or perhaps it was only that he happened to be after his downfall in a pathetic and reflective state of mind.

"Afterwards?" said Mrs Mortimer. She did not take the word in any religious or philosophical, but in its merest matter-of-fact meaning, and she was sadly hurt and wounded to see that he had not even noticed what she said, much as she had been ashamed of saying it. She drew away her hand with a quick movement of despite and mortification, which filled Mr Beverley with surprise. "Afterwards I shall go back to my little house and my school, and shut myself in, and never, never come back again, you may be sure," said the widow, with a rush of tears to her eyes. Why they did not fall, or how she kept herself from fainting—she who fainted so easily—she never, on reviewing the circumstances, could tell; and Miss Marjoribanks always

attributed it to the fact that *she* was absent, and there was no eau-de-cologne on the table. But whatever the cause might be, Mrs Mortimer did not faint; and perhaps there never was anything so like despair and bitterness as at that moment in her mild little feminine soul.

"Never come back again?" said the Archdeacon, rousing up a little; and then he put out his large hand and took back the other, as if it had been a pencil or a book that he had lost. All this, let it be known, was well in the shadow, and could not be seen by the world in general to teach the young people a bad lesson. "Why should not you come back? I am going away too," said Mr Beverley; and he stopped short, and resisted the effort his prisoner made to withdraw. Oddly enough at that moment his Rectory rose suddenly before him as in a vision—his Rectory, all handsome and sombre, without a soul in it, room after room uninhabited, and not a sound to be heard, except that of his own foot or his servant's. It was curious what connection there could be between that and the garden, with its four walls, and the tiny cottage covered with Westeria. Such as it was, it moved the Archdeacon to a singular, and, considering the place and moment, rather indecorous proceeding. Instead of contenting himself with the resisting hand, he drew the widow's arm within his as they sat together. "I'll tell you what

we must do, Helen," he said, confidentially — "we must go back to Basing together, you and I. I don't see the good of leaving you by yourself here. You can make what alterations you like when you get to the Rectory; and I shall let that—that person alone, if you wish it, with his ill-gotten gear. He will never come to any good," said the Archdeacon, with some satisfaction; and then he added in a parenthesis, as if she had expressed some ridiculous doubt on the subject, "Of course I mean that we should be married before we go away." It was in this rapid and summary manner that the whole business was settled. Naturally his companion had nothing to say against such a reasonable arrangement. She had never contradicted him in her life about anything but one thing; and that being set aside, there was no possible reason why she should begin now.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THIS was how the crisis came to an end, which had been of so much interest to the parties immediately affected. Mrs Woodburn had one of her nervous attacks next morning, and was very ill, and alarmed Dr Marjoribanks; but at her very worst moment the incorrigible mimic convulsed her anxious medical adviser and all her attendants by a sudden adoption of the character of Mrs Mortimer, whom she must have made a careful study of the previous night. "Tell him to tell him to go down-stairs," cried the half-dead patient; "I want to speak to him, and he is not to hear;—if he were not so thoughtless, he would offer him some lunch at least," Mrs Woodburn said, pathetically, with closed eyes and a face as pale as death. "She never did anything better in her life," Dr Marjoribanks said afterwards; and Mr Woodburn, who was fond of his wife in his way, and had been crying over her, burst into such an

explosion of laughter that all the servants were scandalised. And the patient improved from that moment. She was perfectly well and in the fullest force a week afterwards, when she came to see Lucilla, who had also been slightly indisposed for a day or two. When Thomas had shut the door, and the two were quite alone, Mrs Woodburn hugged Miss Marjoribanks with a fervour which up to that moment she had never exhibited. "It was only necessary that we should get into full sympathy with each other as human creatures," she said, lifting her finger like the Archdeacon; and for all the rest of that autumn and winter Mrs Woodburn kept society in Carlingford in a state of inextinguishable laughter. The odd thing was that Miss Marjoribanks, who had been one of her favourite characters, disappeared almost entirely from her repertory. Not quite altogether, because there were moments of supreme temptation which the mimic could not resist; but as a general rule Lucilla was the only woman in Carlingford who escaped the universal critic. No sort of acknowledgment passed between them of the obligations one had to the other, and, what was still more remarkable, no discussion of the terrible evening when Lucilla had held the Archdeacon with her eye, and prevented the volcano from exploding. Perhaps Mrs Woodburn, for her part, would

have been pleased to have had such an explanation, but Miss Marjoribanks knew better. She knew it was best not to enter upon confidences which neither could ever forget, and which might prevent them meeting with ease in the midst of the little world which knew nothing about it. What Lucilla knew, she knew, and could keep to herself; but she felt at the same time that it was best to have no expansions on the subject. She kept it all to herself, and made the arrangements for Mrs Mortimer's marriage, and took charge of everything. Everybody said that nothing could be more perfect than the bride's toilette, which was as nice as could be, and yet not like a *real* bride after all; a difference which was only proper under the circumstances; for she was married in lavender, poor soul, as was to be expected. "You have not gone off the least bit in the world, and it is quite a pleasure to see you," Lucilla said, as she kissed her *that* morning—and naturally all Carlingford knew that it was owing to her goodness that the widow had been taken care of and provided for, and saved up for the Archdeacon. Miss Marjoribanks, in short, presided over the ceremony as if she had been Mrs Mortimer's mother, and superintended the wedding breakfast, and made herself agreeable to everybody. And in the mean time, before the marriage took place, most people in Carlingford availed themselves

of the opportunity of calling on Mrs Mortimer. "If she should happen to be the future bishop's lady, and none of us ever to have taken any notice of her," somebody said, with natural dismay. Lucilla did not discourage the practical result of this suggestion, but she felt an instinctive certainty in her mind that *now* Mr Beverley would never be bishop of Carlingford, and indeed that the chances were Carlingford would never be elevated into a bishopric at all.

It was not until after the marriage that Mr Cavendish went away. To be sure, he was not absolutely present at the ceremony, but there can be no doubt that the magnificent *parure* which Mrs Mortimer received the evening before her marriage, "from an old friend," which made everybody's mouth water, and which she herself contemplated with mingled admiration and dismay, was sent by Mr Cavendish. "Do you think it could be from *him;* or only from him?" the bride said, bewildered and bewildering. "I am sure he might have known I never should require anything so splendid." But Lucilla, for her part, had no doubt whatever on the subject; and the perfect good taste of the offering made Miss Marjoribanks sigh, thinking once more how much that was admirable was wasted by the fatal obstacle which prevented Mr Cavendish from aspiring to anybody higher than Barbara Lake. As for the Archdeacon, he too found it very

easy to satisfy his mind as to the donor of the emeralds. He put them away from him severely, and did not condescend to throw a second glance at their deceitful splendour. "Women are curiously constituted," said Mr Beverley, who was still at the height of superiority, though he was a bridegroom. "I suppose those sort of things give them pleasure—things which neither satisfy the body nor delight the soul."

"If it had been something to eat, would it have pleased you better?" said Lucilla, moved for once in her life to be impertinent, like an ordinary girl. For really when a man showed himself so idiotic as to despise a beautiful set of emeralds, it went beyond even the well-known tolerance and compassionate good-humour with which Miss Marjoribanks regarded the vagaries of "the gentlemen." There is a limit in all things, and this was going too far.

"I said, to satisfy the body, Miss Marjoribanks," said the Archdeacon, "which is an office very temporarily and inadequately performed by something to eat. I prefer the welfare of my fellow-creatures to a few glittering stones—even when they are round Her neck," Mr Beverley added, with a little concession to the circumstances. "Jewellery is robbery in a great town where there is always so much to be done, and so little means of doing it; to secure health to the people, and education——"

"Yes," said Miss Marjoribanks, who knew in her heart that the Archdeacon was afraid of her. "It is so nice of you not to say any of those dreadful sanitary words—and I am sure you could make something very nasty and disagreeable with that diamond of yours. It is a beautiful diamond; if I were Helen I should make you give it me," said Lucilla, sweetly; and the Archdeacon was so much frightened by the threat that he turned his ring instinctively, and quenched the glitter of the diamond in his closed hand.

"It was a present," he said, hastily, and went away to seek some better occupation than tilting with the womankind, who naturally had possession of the bride's little house and everything in it at that interesting moment. It was the last evening of Lucilla's reign, and she was disposed to take the full good of it. And though Mrs Mortimer's *trousseau* was modest, and not, as Lydia Brown repeated, like that of a *real* bride, it was still voluminous enough to fill the room to overflowing, where it was all being sorted and packed under Miss Marjoribanks's eye.

"It is a very nice diamond indeed," said Lucilla; "if I were you I should certainly make him give it to me—rings are no good to a gentleman. They never have nice hands, you know—though indeed when they have nice hands," said Miss Marjoribanks, reflectively, "it is a great deal worse, for they keep always thrust-

ing them under your very eyes. It is curious why They should be so vain. They talk of women!" Lucilla added, with natural derision; "but, my dear, if I were you I would make him give it me; a nice diamond is always a nice thing to have."

"Lucilla," said the widow, "I am sure I don't know how to thank you for all you have done for me; but, dear, if you please, I would not talk like that! The gentlemen laugh, but I am sure they don't like it all the same;" for indeed the bride thought it her duty, having won the prize in her own person, to point out to her young friend how, to attain the same end, she ought to behave.

Miss Marjoribanks did not laugh, for her sense of humour, as has been said, was not strong, but she kissed her friend with protecting tenderness. "My dear, if that had been what I was thinking of I need never have come home," said Lucilla; and her superiority was so calm and serene, that Mrs Mortimer felt entirely ashamed of herself for making the suggestion. The widow was simple-minded, and, like most other women, it gratified her to believe that here and there, as in Miss Marjoribanks's case, there existed one who was utterly indifferent to the gentlemen, and did not care whether they were pleased or not; which restored a little the balance of the world to the widow-bride, who felt with shame that she cared a great deal, and

was quite incapable of such virtue. As for Lucilla herself, she was not at that moment in conscious enjoyment of the strength of mind for which her friend gave her credit. On the contrary, she could not help a certain sense of surprised depression as she superintended the packing of the boxes. The man had had it in his power to propose to her, and he was going to be married to Mrs Mortimer! It was not that Lucilla was wounded or disappointed, but that she felt it as a wonderful proof of the imperfection and weakness of human nature. Even in the nineteenth century, which has learnt so much, such a thing was possible! It filled her with a gentle sadness as she had the things put in, and saw the emeralds safely deposited in their resting-place. Not that she cared for the Archdeacon, who had thus disposed of himself; but still it was a curious fact that such a thing could be.

Altogether it must be admitted that at this special moment Miss Marjoribanks occupied a difficult position. She had given the Archdeacon to understand that Mr Cavendish was a "*very* particular friend;" and even when the danger was past, Lucilla scorned to acknowledge her pious prevarications. During all this interval she continued so gracious to him that everybody was puzzled, and Mrs Woodburn even insisted on her brother, after all, making his proposal, which would be better late than never.

"I am sure she is fond of you," said the softened mimic, "and that sort of thing doesn't matter to a woman as it does to a man;" for it has been already said that Mrs Woodburn, notwithstanding her knack of external discrimination, had very little real knowledge of character. And even at moments, Mr Cavendish himself, who ought to have known better, was half tempted to believe that Lucilla meant it. The effect upon Dr Marjoribanks was still more decided. He thought he saw in his daughter the indications of that weakness which is sometimes so surprising in women, and it disturbed the Doctor's serenity; and he actually tried to snub Lucilla on sundry occasions, with that wonderful fatuity which is common to men.

"I hope when this marriage is over people will recover their senses. I hear of nothing else," Dr Marjoribanks said one day at dessert, when they were alone. He took some chestnuts as he spoke, and burned his fingers, which did not improve his temper. "That sort of rubbish, I suppose, is much more interesting than attending to your natural duties," the Doctor added, morosely, which was not a kind of address which Miss Marjoribanks was used to hear.

"Dear papa," said Lucilla, "if I attended to my duties ever so much I could not keep you from burning your fingers. There are some things that people *must* do for themselves," the dutiful daughter added,

with a sigh. Nobody could doubt who knew Lucilla that she would have gladly taken the world on her shoulders, and saved everybody from those little misadventures; but how could she help it if people absolutely would not take care of themselves?

The Doctor smiled grimly, but he was not satisfied. He was, on the contrary, furious in a quiet way. "I don't need at this time of day to be told how clever you are, Lucilla," said her father; "and I thought you had been superior to the ordinary folly of women——"

"Papa, for heaven's sake!" cried Miss Marjoribanks. She was really alarmed this time, and she did not hesitate to let it be apparent. "I do not mean to say that I always do precisely what I ought to do," said Lucilla; "nobody does that I know of; but I am sure I never did anything to deserve *that*. I never was superior, and I hope I never shall be; and I know I never pretended to it," she said, with natural horror; for the accusation, as everybody will perceive, was hard to bear.

The Doctor laughed again, but with increased severity. "We understand all that," he said. "I am not in the secret of your actions, Lucilla. I don't know what you intend, or how far you mean to go. The only thing I know is that I see that young fellow Cavendish a great deal oftener in the house and about it than I care to see him; and I have had occasion to

say the same thing before. I know nothing about his means," said Dr Marjoribanks; "his property may be in the Funds, but I think it a great deal more likely that he speculates. I have worked hard for my money, and I don't mean it to go in that way, Lucilla. I repeat, I am not in the secret of your proceedings——"

"Dear papa! as if there was any secret," said Lucilla, fixing her candid eyes upon her father's face. "I might pretend I did not understand you if there was anything in what you say, but I never go upon false pretences when I can help it. I am very fond of Mr Cavendish," she continued, regretfully, after a pause. "There is nobody in Carlingford that is so nice; but I don't see whom he can marry except Barbara Lake." Miss Marjoribanks would have scorned to conceal the unfeigned regret which filled her mind when she uttered these words. "I am dreadfully sorry, but I don't see anything that can be done for him," she said, and sighed once more. As for the Doctor, he forgot all about his chestnuts, and sat and stared at her, thinking in his ignorance that it was a piece of acting, and not knowing whether to be angry or to yield to the amusement which began to rise in his breast.

"He may marry half-a-dozen Barbara Lakes," said Dr Marjoribanks, "and I don't see what reason we

should have to interfere: so long as he doesn't want to marry you——"

"That would be impossible, papa," said Lucilla, with pensive gravity. "I am sure I am very, very sorry. She has a very nice voice, but a man can't marry a voice, you know; and if there was anything that I could do—— I am not sure that he ever wished for *that* either," Miss Marjoribanks added, with her usual candour. "It is odd, but for all that it is true." For it was a moment of emotion, and she could not help giving utterance to the surprise with which this consideration naturally filled her mind.

"What is odd, and what is true?" said Dr Marjoribanks, growing more and more bewildered. But Lucilla only put aside her plate and got up from her chair.

"Not any more wine, thank you," she said. "I know you don't want me any more, and I have so much to do. I hope you will let me invite Barbara here when they are married, and pay her a little attention; for nobody likes her in Grange Lane, and it would be so hard upon *him*. The more I think of it, the more sorry I am," said Lucilla; "he deserved better, papa; but as for me, everybody knows what is my object in life."

Thus Miss Marjoribanks left the table, leaving her father in a singular state of satisfaction and surprise.

He did not believe a word of what she had been saying, with that curious perversity common to the people who surrounded Lucilla, and which arose not so much from doubt of her veracity as from sheer excess of confidence in her powers. He thought she had foiled him in a masterly manner, and that she was only, as people say, amusing herself, and had no serious intentions; and he laughed quietly to himself when she left him, in the satisfaction of finding there was nothing in it. Miss Marjoribanks, for her part, went on tranquilly with the arrangements for the marriage; one by one she was disembarrassing herself from the complications which had grown round her during the first year of her reign in Carlingford; and now only the last links of the difficulty remained to be unrolled.

The explanation she had with Mr Cavendish himself was in every way more interesting. It happened pretty late one evening, when Lucilla was returning with her maid from the widow's little cottage, which was so soon to be deserted. She was just at that moment thinking of the Westeria which had grown so nicely, and of all the trouble she had taken with the garden. Nobody could tell who might come into it now, after she had done so much for it; and Miss Marjoribanks could not but have a momentary sense that, on the whole, it was a little ungrateful on the part of Mrs Mortimer, when everybody had taken such

pains to make her comfortable. At this moment, indeed, Lucilla was slightly given to moralising, though with her usual wisdom she kept her meditations to herself. She was thinking with a momentary vexation of all the plants that had been put into the beds, and of so much time and trouble lost — when Mr Cavendish came up to her. It was a cold evening, and there was nothing in common between this walk and the walk they had taken together from Grove Street to Grange Lane on an earlier occasion. But this time, so far from being reluctant to accompany her, Mr Cavendish came to her side eagerly. The maid retired a little behind, and then the two found themselves in that most perfect of all positions for mutual confidence — a street not too crowded and noisy, all shrouded in the darkness, and yet twinkling with the friendly lights of an autumn evening. Nothing could have been more perfect than their isolation from the surrounding world, if they thought proper to isolate themselves; and yet it was always there to be taken refuge in if the confidence should receive a check, or the mind of the chance companions change.

"I have been trying to catch a glimpse of you for a long time," said Mr Cavendish, after they had talked a little in the ordinary way, as everybody was doing in Grange Lane, about the two people henceforward

to be known in Carlingford as "the Beverleys." "But you are always so busy serving everybody. And I have a great deal to say to you that I don't know how to say."

"Then don't say it, please," said Lucilla. "It is a great deal better not. It might be funny, you know; but I am not disposed to be funny to-night. I am very glad about Mrs Mortimer, to be sure, that she is to be settled so nicely, and that they are going to be married at last. But, after all, when one thinks of it, it is a little vexatious. Just when her house was all put to rights, and the garden looking so pretty, and the school promising so well," said Lucilla; and there was a certain aggrieved tone in her voice.

"And it is you who have done everything for her, as for all the rest of us," said Mr Cavendish, though he could not help laughing a little; and then he paused, and his voice softened in the darkness by Lucilla's side. "Do not let us talk of Mrs Mortimer," he said. "I sometimes have something just on my lips to say, and I do not know whether I dare say it. Miss Marjoribanks——"

And here he came to a pause. He was fluttered and frightened, which was what she, and not he, ought to have been. And at the bottom of his heart he did not wish to say it, which gave far more force to his hesitation than simply a doubt whether he might dare.

Perhaps Lucilla's heart fluttered too, with a sense that the moment which once would not have been an unwelcome moment, had at last arrived. Her heart, it is true, was not *very* particularly engaged; but still she was sensible of all Mr Cavendish's capacities, and was "very fond" of him, as she said; and her exertions on his behalf had produced their natural effect, and moved her affections a little. She made an involuntary pause for the hundredth part of a minute, and reckoned it all up again, and asked herself whether it were possible. There was something, in the first place, becoming and suitable in the idea that she, who was the only person who knew his secret, should take him and it together and make the best of them. And Lucilla had the consciousness that she could indeed make a great deal of Mr Cavendish. Nobody had ever crossed her path of whom so much could be made; and as for any further danger of his real origin and position being found out and exposed to the world, Miss Marjoribanks was capable of smiling at that when the defence would be in her own hands. She might yet accept him, and have him elected member for Carlingford, and carry him triumphantly through all his difficulties. For a small part—nay, even for the half of a minute—Lucilla paused, and made a rapid review of the circumstances, and reconsidered her decision. Perhaps if Mr Cavendish had been really in

earnest, that which was only a vague possibility might have become, in another minute, a fact and real. It was about the first time that her heart had found anything to say in the matter; and the fact was that it actually fluttered in her reasonable bosom, and experienced a certain *malaise* which was quite new to her. Was it possible that she could be in love with Mr Cavendish? or was it merely the excitement of a final decision which made that unusual commotion far away down at the bottom of Lucilla's heart?

However that might be, Miss Marjoribanks triumphed over her momentary weakness. She saw the possibility, and at the same moment she saw that it could not be; and while Mr Cavendish hesitated, she, who was always prompt and ready, made up her mind.

"I don't know what I have done in particular, either for her or the rest of you," she said, ignoring the other part of her companion's faltering address, "except to help to amuse you; but I am going to do something very serious, and I hope you will show you are grateful, as you say—though I don't know what you have to be grateful about—by paying great attention to me. Mr Cavendish, I am going to give you good advice," said Lucilla; and, notwithstanding her courage, she too faltered a little, and felt that it was rather a serious piece of business that she had taken in hand.

"Advice?" Mr Cavendish said, like an echo of her voice; but that was all he found time to say.

"We are such old friends, that I know you won't be vexed," said Lucilla; "and then we understand each other. It is so nice when two people understand each other; they can say quantities of things that strangers cannot say. Mr Cavendish, you and Barbara are in love," said Lucilla, making a slight pause, and looking in his face.

"Miss Marjoribanks!" cried the assaulted man, in the extremity of his amazement and horror. As for Lucilla, she came a little closer to him, and shook her head in a maternal, semi-reproving way.

"Don't say you are not," said Miss Marjoribanks; "you never could deceive *me*—not in anything like that. I saw it almost as soon as you met. They are not rich, you know, but they are very nice. Mr Lake and Rose," said Lucilla, with admirable prudence, keeping off the difficult subject of Barbara herself, "are the two very nicest people I know; and everybody says that Willie is dreadfully clever. I hope you will soon be married, and that you will be very happy," she continued, with an effort. It was a bold thing to say, and Lucilla's throat even contracted a little, as if to prevent the words from getting utterance; but then she was not a person, when she knew a thing was right, to hesitate about doing it; and in Miss Marjori-

banks's mind duty went before all, as has already been on several occasions said.

After this a horrible silence fell upon the two—a silence which, like darkness, could be felt. The thunderbolt fell upon the victim's unprotected head without any warning. The idea that Lucilla would talk to him about Barbara Lake was the very last that could have entered Mr Cavendish's mind. He was speechless with rage and mortification. He took it for an insult inflicted upon him in cold blood, doing Lucilla as much injustice as the other people who took the candid expression of her sentiments for a piece of acting. He was a gentleman, notwithstanding his doubtful origin, and civilised down to his very finger-tips; but he would have liked to have knocked Miss Marjoribanks down, though she was a woman. And yet, as she was a woman, he dared not for his life make any demonstration of his fury. He walked along by her side down into the respectable solitude of Grange Lane, passing through a bright bit of George Street, and seeing askance, by the light from the shop windows, his adviser walking beside him, with the satisfaction of a good conscience in her face. This awful silence lasted until they reached Dr Marjoribanks's door.

"Thank you for coming with me so far," said Lucilla, holding out her hand. "I suppose I must not ask you to come in, though papa would be delighted to see you.

I am afraid you are very angry with me," Miss Marjoribanks added, with a touch of pathos; "but you may be sure I would always stand by *you;* and I said it because I thought it was for the best."

"On the contrary, I am much obliged to you," said Mr Cavendish, with quiet fury, "and deeply touched by the interest you take in my happiness. You may be sure I shall always be grateful for it; and for the offer of your support," said the ungrateful man, with the most truculent meaning. As for Miss Marjoribanks, she pressed quite kindly the hurried hand with which he touched hers, and went in, still saying, "Good-night." She had done her duty, whatever might come of it. He rushed home furious; but she went to a little worsted-work with a mind at peace with itself and all men. She was gentler than usual even to the maids, who always found Miss Marjoribanks a good mistress—but she felt a little sad in the solitude of her genius. For it is true that to be wiser and more enlightened than one's neighbours is in most cases a weariness to the flesh. She had made a sacrifice, and nobody appreciated it. Instead of choosing a position which pleased her imagination, and suited her energies, and did not go against her heart, Lucilla, moved by the wisest discretion, had decided, not without regret, to give it up. She had sacrificed her own inclination, and a sphere in which her abilities would

have had the fullest scope, to what she believed to be the general good; and instead of having the heroism acknowledged, she was misunderstood and rewarded with ingratitude. When Miss Marjoribanks found herself alone in the solitude of her drawing-room, and in the still greater solitude, as we have said, of her genius, she felt a little sad, as was natural. But at the same moment there came into Lucilla's mind a name, a humble name, which has been often pronounced in the pages of this history, and it gave her once more a certain consolation. A sympathetic presence seemed to diffuse itself about her in her loneliness. There are moments when the faith of a very humble individual may save a great soul from discouragement; and the consciousness of being believed in once more came with the sweetest and most salutary effect upon Lucilla's heart.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was the very day after the marriage, and two or three days after this conversation, that Mr Cavendish left Carlingford. He went to spend the winter in Italy, which had long been "a dream" of his, as he explained to some of the young ladies—most of whom had the same "dream," without the enviable power of carrying it out. He made very brief and formal adieux to Lucilla, to the extreme amazement of all the surrounding world, and then disappeared, leaving —just at that moment after the excitement of the marriage was over, when Grange Lane stood most in need of somebody to rouse its drooping spirits—a wonderful blank behind him. Lucilla said much less about her feelings on this occasion than she was in the habit of doing, but there could be no doubt that she felt it, and felt it acutely. And the worst of it was, that it was she who was universally blamed for the sudden and unexplained departure of the most popular man in Carlingford. Some people thought he

had gone away to escape from the necessity of proposing to her; and some of more friendly and charitable disposition believed with Mrs Chiley that Lucilla had refused him; and some, who were mostly outsiders and of a humble class, were of opinion that Miss Marjoribanks had exercised all her influence to send Mr Cavendish out of the way of Barbara Lake. It was with this impression that Rose made her way one of those foggy autumn mornings through the fallen leaves with which the garden was carpeted, to see if any explanation was to be got from Lucilla. The art-inspectors from Marlborough House had just paid their annual visit to Carlingford, and had found the Female School of Design in a condition which, as they said in their report, "warranted the warmest encomiums," and Rose had also won a prize for her veil in the exhibition at Kensington of ornamental art. These were triumphs which would have made the little artist overwhelmingly happy, if they had not been neutralised by other circumstances; but as it was, they only aggravated the difficulties of the position in which she found herself. She came to Lucilla in a bonnet—a circumstance which of itself was solemn and ominous; for generally that portentous article of dress, which was home-made, and did not consist with cheerful dispositions, was reserved by Rose for going to church; and her soft cheeks were pale, and the hazel eyes more dewy than usual, though

it was rain, and not dew, that had been falling from them during those last painful days.

"I am ashamed to ask you such a question," said Rose; "but I want you to tell me, Lucilla, if you know why Mr Cavendish has gone away. She will not come and ask you herself, or rather I would not let her come; for she is so passionate, one does not know what she might not do. You have behaved a little strange, Lucilla," said the straightforward Rose. "If he cared for her, and she cared for him, you had no right to come and take him away."

"My dear, I did not take him away," said Miss Marjoribanks. "I had to talk to him about some—business; that was all. It is disgraceful of Barbara to bother you about it, who are only a baby and oughtn't to know anything——"

"Lucilla!" cried Rose, with flashing eyes, "I am seventeen, and I will not put up with it any longer. It is all your fault. What right had you to come and drag us to your great parties? We are not as rich as you, nor as fine, but we have a rank of our own," cried the little artist. "You have a great deal more money, but we have some things that money cannot buy. You made Barbara come and sing, and put things into her head; and you made me come, though I did not want to. Why did you ask *us* to your parties, Lucilla? It is all your fault!"

Lucilla was in a subdued state of mind, as may have been perceived, and answered quite meekly. "I don't know why you should all turn against me like this," she said, more sadly than surprised. "It is unkind of you to say it was my fault. I did not expect it from you; and when I have so many vexations——" Miss Marjoribanks added. She sat down as she spoke, after being repulsed by Rose, with an air of depression which was quite unusual to her; for to be blamed and misunderstood on all sides was hard for one who was always working in the service of her fellow-creatures, and doing everything for the best.

As for Rose, her heart smote her on the instant. "Have *you* vexations, Lucilla?" she said, in her innocence. It was the first time such an idea had entered into her mind.

"I don't think I have anything else," said Lucilla; though even as she said it she began to recover her spirits. "I do all I can for my friends, and they are never pleased; and when anything goes wrong it is always my fault."

"Perhaps if you were not to do so much——" Rose began to say, for she was in her way a wise little woman; but her heart smote her again, and she restrained the truism, and then after a little pause she resumed her actual business. "I am ashamed to ask you, but do you know where Mr Cavendish is, Lucilla?"

said Rose. "She is breaking her heart because he has gone away."

"Did he never go to say good-bye nor anything?" asked Miss Marjoribanks. She was sorry, for it was quite the contrary of the advice she had given, but still it would be wrong to deny that Mr Cavendish rose higher in Lucilla's opinion when she heard it. "I don't know any more than everybody knows. He has gone to Italy, but he will come back, and I suppose she can wait," Miss Marjoribanks added, with perhaps a touch of contempt. "For my part, I don't think she will break her heart."

"It is because you do not know her," said Rose, with some indignation—for at seventeen a broken heart comes natural. "Oh, Lucilla, it is dreadful, and I don't know what to do!" cried the little artist, changing her tone. "I am a selfish wretch, but I cannot help it. It is as good as putting an end to my Carèer; and just after my design has been so successful—and when papa was so proud—and when I thought I might have been a help. It is dreadful to think of one's self when her heart is breaking; but I shall have to give up everything; and I—I can't help feeling it, Lucilla," cried Rose, with a sudden outburst of tears.

All this was sufficiently unintelligible to Miss Marjoribanks, who was not the least in anxiety about Barbara's breaking heart. "Tell me what is the

matter, and perhaps we can do something," said Lucilla, forgetting how little her past exertions had been appreciated; and Rose, with equal inconsistency, dried her tears at the sound of Miss Marjoribanks's reassuring voice.

"I know I am a wretch to be thinking of myself," she said. "She cannot be expected to stay and sacrifice herself for us, after all she has suffered. She has made up her mind and advertised in the 'Times,' and nothing can change it now. She is going out for a governess, Lucilla."

"Going for a — what?" said Miss Marjoribanks, who could not believe her ears.

"For a governess," said Rose, calmly; for though she had been partly brought up at Mount Pleasant, she had not the elevated idea of an instructress of youth which might have been expected from a pupil of that establishment. "She has advertised in the 'Times,'" Rose added, with quiet despair, "with no objections to travel. I would do anything in the world for Barbara, but one can't help thinking of one's self sometimes, and there is an end of my Career." When she had said this she brushed the last tear off her eyelashes, and sat straight up, a little martyr and heroic victim to duty. "Her eye, though fixed on empty space, beamed keen with honour;" but still there was a certain desperation in the com-

posure with which Rose regarded, after the first outburst, the abandonment of all her hopes.

"She is a selfish thing," said Lucilla, indignantly; "she always was a selfish thing. I should like to know what she can teach anybody? If I were you and your papa, I certainly would not let her go away. I don't see any reason in the world why you should give in to her and let her stop your—your Career, you know; why should you? I would not give in to her for one moment, if I were your papa and you."

"Why should I?" said Rose; "because there is nobody else to do anything, Lucilla. Fleda and Dreda are such two little things; and there are all the boys to think of, and poor papa. It is of no use asking why. If I don't do it, there will be nobody to do it," said Rose, with big tears coming to her eyes. Her Career was dear to her heart, and those two tears welled up from the depths; but then there would be nobody else to do it—a consideration which continually filters out the people who are good for anything out of the muddy current of the ordinary world.

"And your pretty drawings, and the veil, and the School of Design!" cried Lucilla. "You dear little Rose, don't cry. It never can be permitted, you know. She cannot teach anything, and nobody will have her.

She is a selfish thing, though she is your sister; and if I were your papa and you——"

"It would be no good," said Rose. "She will go, whatever anybody may say. *She* does not care," said the little martyr, and the two big tears fell, making two big round blotches upon the strings of that bonnet which Lucilla had difficulty in keeping her hands off. But when she had thus expressed her feelings, Rose relented over her sister. "She has suffered so much here; how can any one ask her to sacrifice herself to us?" said the young artist, mournfully. "And I am quite happy," said Rose—"quite happy; it makes all the difference. It is her *heart*, you know, Lucilla; and it is only my Career."

And this time the tears were dashed away by an indignant little hand. Barbara's heart, if she had such an organ, had never in its existence cost such bitter drops. But as for Lucilla, what could she do? She could only repeat, "If I was your papa and you," with a melancholy sense that she was here balked and could do no more. For even the aid of Miss Marjoribanks was as nothing against dead selfishness and folly, the two most invincible forces in the world. Instead of taking the business into her own hands, and carrying it through triumphantly as she had hitherto been in the habit of doing, Lucilla could only minister to the sufferer, and keep up her courage, and mourn over

the Career thus put in danger. Barbara's advertisement was in the newspapers, and her foolish mind was made up; and the hope that nobody would have her was a forlorn hope, for somebody always does have the incapable people, as Miss Marjoribanks was well aware. And the contralto had been of some use in Grange Lane and a little in Grove Street, and it would be difficult, either in the one sphere or the other, to find any one to fill her place. It was thus amid universal demolition that Christmas approached, and Miss Marjoribanks ended the first portion of her eventful career.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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