PHŒBE, JUNIOR.

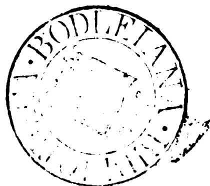
A Last Chronicle of Carlingford.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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CHAPTER I.

THE PASTOR'S PROGRESS.

MISS PHŒBE TOZER, the only daughter of the chief deacon and leading member of the Dissenting connection in Carlingford, married, shortly after his appointment to the charge of Salem Chapel, in that town, the Reverend Mr. Beecham, one of the most rising young men in the denomination. The marriage was in many ways satisfactory to the young lady's family, for Mr. Beecham was himself the son of respectable people in a good way

of business, and not destitute of means; and the position was one which they had always felt most suitable for their daughter, and to which she had been almost, it may be said, brought up. It is, however, scarcely necessary to add that it was not quite so agreeable to the other leading members of the congregation. I should be very sorry to say that each family wished that preferment for its own favourite daughter; for indeed there can be no doubt, as Mrs. Pigeon asserted vigorously, that a substantial grocer, whose father before him had established an excellent business, and who had paid for his pew in Salem as long as anyone could recollect, and supported every charity, and paid up on all occasions when extra expense was necessary, was in every way a more desirable son-in-law than a poor minister as was always dependent on pleasing the chapel folks, and might have to turn out any day. Notwithstanding, however, the evident superiority of the

establishment thus attained by Maria Pigeon, there is a certain something attached to the position of the clerical caste, even among such an independent body as the congregation at Salem Chapel, which has its own especial charms, and neither the young people who had been her companions nor the old people who had patronized and snubbed her, felt any satisfaction in seeing Phœbe thus advanced over them to the honours and glories inalienable from the position of minister's wife. All her little airs of bridal vanity were considered as so many offensive manifestations of delight and exultation in her rise in life. Her *trousseau*, though pronounced by all competent judges not half so abundant or fine as Maria Pigeon's, still called forth comments which nobody ventured to indulge in, in respect to the grocer's blooming bride. A grocer's lady has a right to anything her parents can afford; but to see a minister's wife swelling herself up, and

trying to ape the quality, filled the town with virtuous indignation. The sight of young Mrs. Beecham walking about with her card-case in her hand, calling on the Miss Hemmingses, shaking hands with Mrs. Rider the doctor's wife, caused unmitigated disgust throughout all the back streets of Carlingford; and "*that* Phœbe a-sweeping in as if the chapel belonged to her," was almost more than the oldest sitters could bear. Phœbe, it must be added, felt her elevation to the full, and did not spare her congregation. Sometimes she would have the audacity to walk from the vestry to the pew, as if she were an office-bearer, instead of coming in humbly by the door as became a woman. She would sit still ostentatiously until everyone had gone, waiting for her husband. She quite led the singing, everybody remarked, paying no more attention to the choir than if it did not exist; and once she had even paused on her way to her seat, and turned down the gas,

which was blazing too high, with an air of proprietorship that nobody could endure.

"Does Salem belong to them Tozers, I should like to know?" said Mrs. Brown. "Brown would never be outdone by him in subscriptions, you may be sure, nor Mr. Pigeon neither, if the truth was known. I never gave my money to build a castle for the Tozers."

Thus the whole congregation expressed itself with more or less eloquence, and though the attendance never diminished, everybody being too anxious to see "what they would do next," the feeling could not be ignored. Phœbe herself, with a courage which developed from the moment of her marriage, took the initiative.

"It never answers," she said, solemnly, "to marry one of the flock; I knew it, Henery, and I told you so; and if you would be so infatuated, and marry me when I told you not, for your own interests—"

"They're all jealous of you, my pet, that's what it is," said Mr. Beecham, and laughed. He could bear the annoyance in consideration of that sweet consciousness of its cause which stole over all his being. Phœbe laughed, too, but not with so delicious a gratification. She felt that there were people, even in Salem, who might be jealous of him.

"The end of it all is, we must not stay here," she said. "You must find another sphere for your talents, Henery, and I'm sure it will not be difficult. If you get put on that deputation that is going down to the North, suppose you take a few of your best sermons, dear. That can never do any harm—indeed it's sure to do good, to some poor benighted soul at least, that perhaps never heard the truth before. And likewise, perhaps, to some vacant congregation. I have always heard that chapels in the North were very superior to here. A different class of society, and better altogether. These Pigeons and

Browns, and people are not the sort of society for you."

"Well, there's truth in that," said Mr. Beecham, pulling up his shirt-collar. "Certainly it isn't the sort of thing one was accustomed to." And he lent a serious ear to the suggestion about the sermons. The consequence was that an invitation followed from a chapel in the North, where indeed Mrs. Phœbe found herself in much finer society, and grew rapidly in importance and in ideas. After this favourable start, the process went on for many years by which a young man from Homerton was then developed into the influential and highly esteemed pastor of an important flock. Things may be, and probably are, differently managed now-a-days. Mr. Beecham had unbounded fluency and an unctuous manner of treating his subjects. It was eloquence of a kind, though not of an elevated kind. Never to be at a loss for what you have to say is a prodigious advantage to all men in all posi-

tions, but doubly so to a popular minister. He had an unbounded wealth of phraseology. Sentences seemed to melt out of his mouth without any apparent effort, all set in a certain cadence. He had not, perhaps, much power of thought, but it is easy to make up for such a secondary want when the gift of expression is so strong. Mr. Beecham rose, like an actor, from a long and successful career in the provinces, to what might be called the Surrey side of congregational eminence in London; and from thence attained his final apotheosis in a handsome chapel near Regent's Park, built of the whitest stone, and cushioned with the reddest damask, where a very large congregation sat in great comfort and listened to his sermons with a satisfaction, no doubt increased by the fact that the cushions were soft as their own easy-chairs, and that carpets and hotwater pipes kept everything snug under foot.

It was the most comfortable chapel in the whole connection. The seats were

arranged like those of an amphitheatre, each line on a slightly higher level than the one in front of it, so that everybody saw everything that was going on. No dimness or mystery was wanted there; everything was bright daylight, bright paint, red cushions, comfort and respectability. It might not be a place very well adapted for saying your prayers in, but then you could say your prayers at home—and it was a place admirably adapted for hearing sermons in, which you could not do at home; and all the arrangements were such that you could hear in the greatest comfort, not to say luxury. I wonder, for my own part, that the poor folk about did not seize upon the Crescent Chapel on the cold Sunday mornings, and make themselves happy in those warm and ruddy pews. It would be a little amusing to speculate what all the well-dressed pewholders would have done had this unexpected answer to the appeal which Mr. Beecham believed himself to make every

Sunday to the world in general, been literally given. It would have been extremely embarrassing to the Managing Committee and all the office-bearers, and would have, I fear, deeply exasperated and offended the occupants of those family pews; but fortunately this difficulty never did occur. The proletariat of Marylebone had not the sense or the courage, or the profanity, which you will, to hit upon this mode of warming themselves. The real congregation embraced none of the unwashed multitude. Its value in mere velvet, silk, lace, trinkets, and furs was something amazing, and the amount these comfortable people represented in the way of income would have amounted to a most princely revenue. The little Salems and Bethesdas, with their humble flocks, could not be supposed to belong to the same species; and the difference was almost equally marked between such a place of worship as the Crescent Chapel and the parish churches, which are like the nets

in the Gospel, and take in all kinds of fish, bad and good. The pew-holders in the Crescent Chapel were universally well off; they subscribed liberally to missionary societies, far more liberally than the people in St. Paul's close by did to the S. P. G. They had everything of the best in the chapel, as they had in their houses. They no more economized on their minister than they did on their pew-cushions, and they spent an amount of money on their choir which made the singing-people at St. Paul's gnash their teeth. From all this it will be seen that the atmosphere of the Crescent Chapel was of a very distinct and individual kind. It was a warm, luxurious, air, perfumy, breathing of that refinement which is possible to mere wealth. I do not say there might not be true refinement besides, but the surface kind, that which you buy from upholsterers and tailors and dressmakers, which you procure ready made at schools, and which can only be kept up at a very high cost,

abounded and pervaded the place. Badly dressed people felt themselves out of place in that brilliant sanctuary; a muddy footprint upon the thick matting in the passages was looked at as a crime. Clean dry feet issuing out of carriage or cab kept the aisles unstained, even on the wettest day. We say cab, because many of the people who went to the Crescent Chapel objected to take out their own carriages or work their own horses on Sunday; and there were many more who, though they did not possess carriages, used cabs with a freedom incompatible with poverty. As a general rule, they were much better off than the people at St. Paul's, more universally prosperous and well-to-do. And they were at the same time what you might safely call well-informed people—people who read the newspapers, and sometimes the magazines, and knew what was going on. The men were almost all liberal in politics, and believed in Mr. Gladstone with enthusiasm; the women often "took

an interest" in public movements, especially of a charitable character. There was less mental stagnation among them probably than among many of their neighbours. Their life was not profound nor high, but still it was life after a sort. Such was the flock which had invited Mr. Beecham to become their pastor when he reached the climax of his career. They gave him a very good salary, enough to enable him to have a handsome house in one of the terraces overlooking Regent's Park. It is not a fashionable quarter, but it is not to be despised in any way. The rooms were goodsized and lofty, and sometimes have been known to suffice for very fine people indeed, a fact which the Beechams were well aware of; and they were not above the amiable weakness of making it known that their house was in a line with that of Lady Cecilia Burleigh. This single fact of itself might suffice to mark the incalculable distance between the Reverend Mr. Beecham of the Cresent

Chapel, and the young man who began life as minister of Salem in Carlingford. And the development outside was not less remarkable than the development within.

It is astonishing how our prejudices change from youth to middle age, even without any remarkable interposition of fortune; I do not say dissipate, or even dispel, which is much more doubtful—but they change. When Mr. and Mrs. Beecham commenced life, they had both the warmest feeling of opposition to the Church and everything churchy. All the circumstances of their lives had encouraged this feeling. The dislike of the little for the great; the instinctive opposition of a lower class towards the higher, intensified that natural essence of separatism, that determination to be wiser than one's neighbour, which in the common mind lies at the bottom of all dissent. In saying this we no more accuse Dissenters in religion than Dissenters in politics, or in art, or in criticism. The first dissenter

in most cases is an original thinker, to whom his enforced departure from the ways of his fathers is misery and pain. Generally he has a hard struggle with himself before he can give up, for the superlative truth which has taken possession of him, all the habits, the pious traditions of his life. He is the real Nonconformist — half martyr, half victim of his convictions. But that Nonconformity which has come to be the faith in which a large number of people are trained is a totally different business, and affects a very different kind of sentiments. Personal and independent conviction has no more to do with it than it has to do with the ardour of a Breton peasant trained in deepest zeal of Romanism, or the unbounded certainty of any other traditionary believer. For this reason we may be allowed to discuss the changes of feeling which manifested themselves in Mr. and Mrs. Beecham without anything disrespectful to Nonconformity. Not being persons of original

mind, they were what their training and circumstances, and a flood of natural influences, made them. They began life, feeling themselves to be of a hopelessly low social caste, and believing themselves to be superior to their superiors in that enlightenment which they had been brought up to believe distinguished the connection. The first thing which opened their minds to a dawning doubt whether their enlightenment was, in reality, so much greater than that of their neighbours, was the social change worked in their position by their removal from Carlingford. In the great towns of the North, Dissent attains its highest social elevation, and Chapel people are no longer to be distinguished from Church people except by the fact that they go to Chapel instead of Church, a definition so simple as to be quite overwhelming to the unprepared dissenting intelligence, brought up in a little Tory borough, still holding for Church and Queen. The amazing difference which

this made in the sentiments of Mrs. Phœbe Beecham, *née* Tozer, it is quite impossible to describe. Her sudden introduction to "circles" which Mrs. Pigeon had never entered, and to houses, in which Mr. Brown, the dairyman, would have humbly waited at the area-door, would have turned the young woman's head, had she not felt the overpowering necessity of keeping that organ as steady as possible, to help her to hold her position in the new world. Phœbe was a girl of spirit, and though her head went round and round, and everything felt confused about her, she did manage desperately to hold her own and to avoid committing herself; but I cannot attempt to tell how much her social elevation modified her sectarian zeal. Phœbe was only a woman, so that I am free to assign such motives as having a serious power over her. Let us hope Mr. Beecham, being a man and a pastor, was moved in a more lofty, intellectual, and spiritual way.

But however, that may be, the pair went

conjugally together in this modification of sentiment, and by the time they reached the lofty eminence of the Crescent Chapel, were as liberal-minded Nonconformists as heart could desire. Mr. Beecham indeed had many friends in the Low, and even some in the Broad Church. He appeared on platforms, to promote various public movements, along with clergymen of the Church. He spoke of "our brethren within the pale of the Establishment" always with respect, sometimes even with enthusiasm. "Depend upon it, my dear Sir," he would even say sometimes to a liberal brother, "the Establishment is not such an unmitigated evil as some people consider it. What should we do in country parishes where the people are not awakened? They do the dirty work for us, my dear brother — the dirty work." These sentiments were shared, but perhaps not warmly, by Mr. Beecham's congregation, some of whom were hot Voluntaries, and gave their ministers

a little trouble. But the most part took their Nonconformity very quietly, and were satisfied to know that their chapel was the first in the connection, and their minister justly esteemed as one of the most eloquent. The Liberation Society held one meeting at the Crescent Chapel, but it was not considered a great success. At the best, they were no more than lukewarm Crescent-Chapelites, not political dissenters. Both minister and people were Liberal, that was the creed they professed. Some of the congregations Citywards, and the smaller chapels about Hampstead and Islington, used the word Latitudinarian instead; but that, as the Crescent Chapel people said, was a word always applied by the bigoted and ignorant to those who held in high regard the doctrines of Christian charity. They were indeed somewhat proud of their tolerance, their impartiality, their freedom from old prejudices. "That sort of thing will not do now-a-days," said Mr.

Copperhead, who was a great railway contractor and one of the deacons, and who had himself a son at Oxford. If there had been any bigotry in the Crescent, Mr. Copperhead would have had little difficulty in transferring himself over the way to St. Paul's Church, and it is astonishing what an effect that fact had upon the mind of Mr. Beecham's flock.

Mr. Beecham's house was situated in Regent's Park, and was constructed on the ordinary model of such houses. On the ground-floor was a handsome dining-room, a room which both Mr. and Mrs. Beecham twenty years before would have considered splendid, but which now they condescended to, as not so large as they could wish, but still comfortable. The drawing-room above was larger, a bright and pleasant room, furnished with considerable "taste." Behind the dining-room, a smaller room was Mr. Beecham's study, or the library, as it was sometimes called. It was lined with book-cases containing a very fair collection of books, and orna-

mented with portraits (chiefly engravings) of celebrated ministers and laymen in the connection, with a bust of Mr. Copperhead over the mantelpiece. This bust had been done by a young sculptor whom he patronized, for the great man's own house. When it was nearly completed, however, a flaw was found in the marble, which somewhat detracted from its perfection. The flaw was in the shoulder of the image, and by no means serious; but Mr. Copperhead was not the man to pass over any such defect. After a long and serious consultation over it, which made the young artist shake in his shoes, a solution was found for the difficulty.

"Tell you what, Sir," said Mr. Copperhead; "I'll give it to the minister. It'll look famous in his little study. Works of art don't often come his way; and you'll get a block of the best, Mr. Chipstone—the very best, Sir, no expense spared—and begin another for me."

This arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to all parties, though I will not

say that it was not instrumental in bringing about certain other combinations which will be fully discussed in this history. The Beechams were mightily surprised when the huge marble head, almost as large as a Jupiter, though perhaps not otherwise so imposing, arrived at the Terrace; but they were also gratified.

"It is quite like receiving us into his own family circle," Mrs. Beecham said with a glance at her daughter, Phœbe, junior, who, with all her pink fingers outspread, was standing in adoration before that image of wealth and fabulous luxury.

"What a grand head it is," cried the young enthusiast, gazing rapt upon the complacent marble whisker so delightfully curled and bristling with realistic force.

"It looks well, I must say, it looks well," said Mr. Beecham himself, rubbing his hands, "to receive such a token of respect from the leading member of the flock." And certainly no more perfect representation of a bell-wether, ever adorned any shepherd's sanctuary.

CHAPTER II.

THE LEADING MEMBER.

MR. COPPERHEAD, to whom so much allusion has been made, was a well-known man in other regions besides that of the Crescent chapel. His name, indeed, may be said to have gone to the ends of the earth, from whence he had conducted lines of railway, and where he had left docks, bridges, and light-houses to make him illustrious. He was one of the greatest contractors for railways and other public works in England, and, by consequence, in the world. He had no more than a very ordinary education, and no manners to speak of; but at the same

time, he had that kind of faculty which is in practical work what genius is in literature, and, indeed, in its kind is genius too, though it neither refines nor even (oddly enough) enlarges the mind to which it belongs. He saw the right track for a road through a country with a glance of his eye; he mastered all the points of nature which were opposed to him in the rapidest survey, though scientifically he was great in no branch of knowledge. He could rule his men as easily as if they were so many children; and, indeed, they were children in his hands. All these gifts made it apparent that he must have been a remarkable and able man; but no stranger would have guessed as much from his appearance or his talk. There were people, indeed, who knew him well, and who remained incredulous and bewildered, trying to persuade themselves that his success must be owing to pure luck, for that he had nothing else to secure it. The cause of this, perhaps, was that he

knew nothing about books, and was one of those jeering cynics who are so common under one guise or another. Fine cynics are endurable, and give a certain zest often to society, which might become too civil without them; but your coarse cynic is not pleasant. Mr. Copperhead's eye was as effectual in quenching emotion of any but the coarsest kind as water is against fire. People might be angry in his presence—it was the only passion he comprehended; but tenderness, sympathy, sorrow, all the more generous sentiments, fled and concealed themselves when this large, rich, costly man came by. People who were brought much in contact with him became ashamed of having any feelings at all; his eye upon them seemed to convict them of humbug. Those eyes were very light grey, prominent, with a jeer in them which was a very powerful moral instrument. His own belief was that he could "spot" humbug wherever he saw it, and that nothing could escape him;

and, I suppose, so much humbug is there in this world that his belief was justified. But there are few more awful people than those ignoble spectators whose jeer arrests the moisture in the eye, and strangles the outcry on their neighbour's lip.

Mr. Copperhead had risen from the ranks; yet not altogether from the ranks. His father before him had been a contractor, dealing chiefly with canals and roads, and the old kind of public works; a very rough personage indeed, but one to whose fingers gold had stuck, perhaps because of the clay with which they were always more or less smeared. This ancestor had made a beginning to the family, and given his son a name to start with. *Our* Mr. Copperhead had married young, and had several sons, who were all in business, and all doing well; less vigorous, but still moderately successful copies of their father. When, however, he had thus done his duty to the State, the first Mrs. Copperhead having died, he did the only

incomprehensible action of his life—he married a second time, a feeble, pretty, pink-and-white little woman, who had been his daughter's governess; married her without rhyme or reason, as all his friends and connections said. The only feasible motive for this second union seemed to be a desire on Mr. Copperhead's part to have something belonging to him which he could always jeer at, and in this way the match was highly successful. Mrs. Copperhead the second was gushing and susceptible, and as good a butt as could be imagined. She kept him in practice when nobody else was at hand. She was one of those naturally refined but less than half-educated, timid creatures who are to be found now and then painfully earning the bread which is very bitter to them in richer people's houses, and preserving in their little silent souls some fetish in the shape of a scrap of gentility, which is their sole comfort, or almost their sole comfort. Mrs. Copperhead's fetish

was the dear recollection that she was "an officer's daughter;" or rather this had been her fetish in the days when she had nothing, and was free to plume herself on the reflected glory. Whether in the depths of her luxurious abode, at the height of her good fortune, she still found comfort in the thought, it would be hard to tell. Everybody who had known her in her youth thought her the most fortunate of women. Her old school companions told her story for the encouragement of their daughters, as they might have told a fairy tale. To see her rolling in her gorgeous carriage, or bowed out of a shop where all the daintiest devices of fashion had been placed at her feet, filled passers-by with awe and envy. She could buy whatever she liked, festoon herself with finery, surround herself with the costliest knick-knacks; the more there were of them, and the costlier they were, the better was Mr. Copperhead pleased. She had everything that heart could desire.

Poor little woman! What a change from the governess-chrysalis who was snubbed by her pupil and neglected by everybody! and yet I am not sure that she did not—so inconsistent is human nature—look back to those melancholy days with a sigh.

This lady was the mother of Clarence Copperhead, the young man who was at Oxford, her only child, upon whom (of course) she doted with the fondest folly; and whom his father jeered at more than at anyone else in the world, more even than at his mother, yet was prouder of than of all his other sons and all his possessions put together. Clarence, whom I will not describe, as he will, I trust, show himself more effectually by his actions, was like his mother in disposition, or so, at least, she made herself happy by thinking; but by some freak of nature he was like his father in person, and carried his mouse's heart in a huge frame, somewhat hulking and heavy-shouldered, with the

same roll which distinguished Mr. Copperhead, and which betrayed something of the original navvy who was the root of the race. He had his father's large face too, and a tendency towards those demonstrative and offensive whiskers which are the special inheritance of the British Philistine. But instead of the large goggle eyes, always jeering and impudent, which lighted up the paternal countenance, Clarence had a pair of mild brown orbs, repeated from his mother's faded face, which introduced the oddest discord into his physiognomy generally. In the family, that is to say among the step-brothers and step-sisters who formed Mr. Copperhead's first family, the young fellow bore no other name than that of the curled darling, though, indeed, he was as far from being curled as anyone could be. He was not clever; he had none of the energy of his race, and promised to be as useless in an officc as he would have been in a cutting or a yard full of men. I am

not sure that this fact did not increase secretly his father's exultation and pride in him. Mr. Copperhead was fond of costly and useless things; he liked them for their cost, with an additional zest in his sense of the huge vulgar use and profit of most things in his own life. This tendency, more than any appreciation of the beautiful, made him what is called a patron of art. It swelled his personal importance to think that he was able to hang up thousands of pounds, so to speak, on his walls, knowing all the time that he could make thousands more by the money had he invested it in more useful ways. The very fact that he could afford to refrain from investing it, that he could let it lie there useless, hanging by so many cords and ribbons, was sweet to him. And so also it was sweet to him to possess a perfectly useless specimen of humanity, which had cost him a great deal, and promised to cost him still more. He had plenty of useful sons as he had of useful money.

The one who was of no use was the apex and glory of the whole.

But these three made up a strange enough family party, as may be supposed. The original Copperheads, the first family, who were all of the same class and nature, would have made a much noisier, less peaceable household; but they would have been a much jollier and really more harmonious one. Mr. Copperhead himself somewhat despised his elder sons, who were like himself, only less rich, less vigorous, and less self-assertive. He saw, oddly enough, the coarseness of their manners, and even of their ways of thinking; but yet he was a great deal more comfortable, more at his ease among them, than he was when seated opposite his trembling, deprecating, frightened little wife, or that huge youth who cost him so much and returned him so little. Now and then, at regular periodical intervals, the head of the family would go down to Blackheath to dine and spend the night

with his son Joe, the second and the favourite, where there were romping children and a portly, rosy young matron, and loud talk about City dinners, contracts, and estimates. This refreshed him, and he came home with many chuckles over the imperfections of the family.

"My sons buy their wives by the hundred-weight," he would say jocularly at breakfast the day after; "thirteen stone if she is a pound, is Mrs. Joe. Expensive to keep up in velvet and satin, not to speak of mutton and beef. Your mother comes cheap," he would add aside to Clarence, with a rolling laugh. Thus he did not in the least exempt his descendants from the universal ridicule which he poured on all the world; but when he sat down opposite his timid little delicate wife, and by his University man, who had very little on the whole to say for himself, Mr. Copperhead felt the increase in gentility as well as the failure in jollity. "You are a couple of ghosts after Joe and his belongings, you two.

Speak louder, I say, young fellow. You don't expect me to hear that penny-whistle of yours," he would say, chuckling at them, with a mixture of pride and disdain. They amused him by their dullness and silence, and personal awe of him. He was quite out of his element between these two, and yet the very fact pleasantly excited his pride.

"I speak as gentlemen generally speak," said Clarence, who was sometimes sullen when attacked, and who knew by experience that his father was rarely offended by such an argument.

"And I am sure, dear, your papa would never wish you to do otherwise," said anxious Mrs. Copperhead, casting a furtive, frightened glance at her husband. He rolled out a mighty laugh from the head of the table where he was sitting. He contemplated them with a leer that would have been insulting, had he not been the husband of one and the father of the other. The laugh and the look called

forth some colour on Mrs. Copperhead's cheek, well as she was used to them; but her son was less susceptible, and ate his breakfast steadily, and did not care.

"A pretty pair you are," said Mr. Copperhead. "I like your gentility. How much *fois gras* would you eat for breakfast, I wonder, my lad, if you had to work for it? Luckily for you, I wasn't brought up to talk, as you say, like a gentleman. I'd like to see you managing a field of navvies with that nice little voice of yours —ay, or a mob before the hustings, my boy. You're good for nothing, you are; a nice delicate piece of china for a cupboard, like your mother before you. However, thank Heaven, we've got the cupboard," he said with a laugh, looking round him; "a nice big 'un, too, well painted and gilded; and the time has come, through not talking like a gentleman, that I can afford you. You should hear Joe. When that fellow talks, his house shakes. Confounded bad style of house,

walls like gingerbread. How the boards don't break like pie-crust under Mrs. Joe's fairy foot, I can't make out. By Jove, ma'am, one would think I starved you, to see you beside your daughter-in-law. Always had a fine healthy appetite, had Mrs. Joe."

There was nothing to answer to this speech, and therefore a dead silence ensued. When the master of the house is so distinctly the master, silence is apt to ensue after his remarks. Mrs. Copperhead sipped her tea, and Clarence worked steadily through his breakfast, and the head of the family crumpled the *Times*, which he read at intervals. All sorts of jokes had gone on at Joe's table the morning before, and there had been peals of laughter, and Mrs. Joe had even administered a slap upon her husband's ruddy cheek for some pleasantry or other. Mr. Copperhead, as he looked at his son and his wife, chuckled behind the *Times*. When they thought he was occupied they

made a few gentle remarks to each other. They had soft voices, with that indescribable resemblance in tone which so often exists between mother and son. Dresden china; yes, that was the word; and to see his own resemblance made in that delicate *pâte*, and elevated into that region of superlative costliness tickled Mr. Copperhead, and in the most delightful way.

"How about your ball?" was his next question, "or Clarence's ball, as you don't seem to take much interest in it, ma'am? You are afraid of being brought in contact with the iron pots, eh? You might crack or go to pieces, who knows, and what would become of me, a wretched widower." Mr. Copperhead himself laughed loudly at this joke, which did not excite any mirth from the others, and then he repeated his question, "How about the ball?"

"The invitations are all sent out, Mr. Copperhead; ninety-five—I—I mean a hundred and thirty-five. I—I beg your

pardon, they were in two lots," answered the poor woman nervously. "A hundred and thirty-eight—and there is—a few more—"

"Take your time, ma'am, take your time, we'll get at the truth at last," said her husband; and he laid down his paper and looked at her. He was not angry nor impatient. The twinkle in his eye was purely humorous. Her stumblings amused him, and her nervousness. But oddly enough, the most furious impatience could not have more deeply disconcerted her.

"There are a few more—some old friends of mine," she went on, confused. "They were once rather—kind—took an interest; that is—"

"Oh, the baronet and his daughters," said Mr. Copperhead, "by all means let's have the baronet and his daughters. Though as for their taking an interest—if you had not been a rich man's wife, ma'am, living in a grand house in Portland Place—"

"It was not now," she said, hurriedly. "I do not suppose that anyone takes an interest—in me now—"

Mr. Copperhead laughed, and nodded his head. "Not many, ma'am, I should think—not many. You women must make up your minds to that. It's all very well to take an interest in a pretty girl; but when you come to a certain age—Well, let's proceed, the baronet—"

"And his two girls—"

"Ah, there's two girls! that's for you, Clarence, my boy. I thought there must be a motive. Think that fellow a good *parti*, eh? And I would not say they were far wrong if he behaves himself. Make a note of the baronet's daughter, young man. Lord, what a world it is!" said Mr. Copperhead, reflectively. "I should not wonder if you had been scheming, too."

"I would not for the world!" cried the poor little woman, roused for once. "I would not for anything interfere with

a marriage. That is the last thing you need fear from me. Whether it was a girl I was fond of, or a girl I disliked—so long as she was Clarence's choice. Oh, I know the harm that is done by other people's meddling — nothing, nothing, would induce me to interfere."

Mr. Copperhead laid down his paper, and looked at her. I suppose, however little a man may care for his wife, he does not relish the idea that she married him for anything but love. He contemplated her still with amused ridicule, but with something fiercer in his eyes. "Oh—h!" he said, "you don't like other people to interfere? not so much as to say, it's a capital match, eh? You'll get so and so, and so and so, that you couldn't have otherwise—carriages perhaps, and plenty of money in your pocket (which it may be you never had in your life before) and consideration, and one of the finest houses in London, let us say in Portland Place. You don't like that amount of good ad-

vice, eh? Well, I do—I mean to interfere with my son, to that extent at least—you can do what you like. But as you're a person of prodigious influence, and strong will, and a great deal of character, and all that," Mr. Copperhead broke out with a rude laugh. "I'm afraid of you, I am—quite afraid."

Fortunately, just at this moment, his brougham came round, and the great man finished his coffee at a gulp, and got up. "You look out for the baronet's daughters, then—" he said, "and see all's ready for this ball of yours; while I go and work to pay the bills, that's my share. You do the ornamental, and I do the useful, ha, ha! I'll keep up my share."

It was astonishing what a difference came upon the room the moment he disappeared. Somehow it had been out of harmony. His voice, his look, his heavy person, even his whiskers, had been out of character. Now the air seemed to flutter after the closing of the door like

water into which something offensive has sunk, and when the ripples of movement were over the large handsome room had toned down into perfect accord with its remaining inhabitants. Mrs. Copperhead's eyes were rather red—not with tears, but with the inclination to shed tears, which she carefully restrained in her son's presence. He still continued to eat steadily—he had an admirable appetite. But when he had finished everything on his plate, he looked up and said, "I hope you don't mind, mamma; I don't suppose you do; but I don't like the way my father speaks to you."

"Oh, my dear!" cried the mother, with an affected little smile, "why should I mind? I ought to know by this time that it's only your papa's way."

"I suppose so—but I don't like it," said the young man, decisively. He did not notice, however, as, after second thoughts he returned to the game-pie, that his mother's eyes were redder than ever.

CHAPTER III.

MR. COPPERHEAD'S BALL.

THIS ball was an event, not only in Mr. Copperhead's household, but even in the connection itself, to which the idea of balls, as given by leading members of the flock, was somewhat novel. Not that the young people were debarred from that amusement, but it was generally attained in a more or less accidental manner, and few professing Christians connected with the management of the chapel, had gone the length of giving such an entertainment openly and with design. Mr. Copperhead, however, was in a position to triumph over all such prejudices. He

was so rich that any community would have felt it ought to extend a certain measure of indulgence to such a man. Very wealthy persons are like spoilt children, their caprices are allowed to be natural, and even when we are angry with them we excuse the vagaries to which money has a right. This feeling of indulgence goes a very great way, especially among the classes engaged in money-making, who generally recognise a man's right to spend, and feel the sweetness of spending more acutely than the hereditary possessors of wealth. I do not believe that his superior knowledge of the best ways of using money profitably ever hinders a money-making man from lavish expenditure; but it gives him a double zest in spending, and it makes him, generally, charitable towards the extravagances of persons still richer than himself. A ball, there was no doubt, was a worldly-minded entertainment, but still, the chapel reflected, it is almost impossible not to be a little

worldly-minded when you possess such a great share of the world's goods, and that, of course, it could not be for himself that Mr. Copperhead was doing this, but for his son. His son, these amiable casuists proceeded, was being brought up to fill a great position, and no doubt society did exact something, and as Mr. Copperhead had asked all the chief chapel people, his ball was looked upon with very indulgent eyes. The fact that the minister and his family were going, staggered some of the more particular members a little, but Mr. Beecham took high ground on the subject and silenced the flock. "The fact that a minister of religion is one of the first persons invited, is sufficient proof of the way our friend means to manage everything," said the pastor. "Depend upon it, it would be good for the social relations of the country if your pastors and teachers were always present. It gives at once a character to all the proceedings." This, like every other

lofty assertion, stilled the multitude. Some of the elder ladies, indeed, groaned to hear, even at the prayer-meetings, a whisper between the girls about this ball and what they were going to wear; but still it was Christmas, and all the newspapers, and a good deal of the light literature which is especially current at that season, persistently represented all the world as in a state of imbecile joviality, and thus, for the moment, every objection was put down.

To nobody, however, was the question, what to wear, more interesting than to Phœbe, junior, who was a very well-instructed young woman, and even on the point of dress had theories of her own. Phœbe had, as her parents were happy to think, had every advantage in her education. She had possessed a German governess all to herself, by which means, even Mr. Beecham himself supposed, a certain amount of that philosophy which Germans communicate by their very touch,

must have got into her, besides her music and the language which was her primary study. And she had attended lectures at the ladies college close by, and heard a great many eminent men on a great many different subjects. She had read, too, a great deal. She was very well got up in the subject of education for women, and lamented often and pathetically the difficulty they lay under of acquiring the highest instruction; but at the same time she patronized Mr. Ruskin's theory that dancing, drawing, and cooking, were three of the higher arts which ought to be studied by girls. It is not necessary for me to account for the discrepancies between those two systems, in the first place because I cannot, and in the second place, because there is in the mind of the age some ineffable way of harmonizing them which makes their conjunction common. Phœbe was restrained from carrying out either to its full extent. She was not allowed to go in for the Cambridge examinations be-

cause Mr. Beecham felt the connection might think it strange to see his daughter's name in the papers, and, probably, would imagine he meant to make a schoolmistress of her, which he thanked Providence he had no need to do. And she was not allowed to educate herself in the department of cooking, to which Mrs. Beecham objected, saying likewise, thank Heaven, they had no need of such messings; that she did not wish her daughter to make a slave of herself, and that Cook would not put up with it. Between these two limits Phœbe's noble ambition was confined, which was a "trial" to her. But she did what she could, bating neither heart nor hope. She read Virgil at least, if not Sophocles, and she danced and dressed though she was not allowed to cook.

As she took the matter in this serious way, it will be understood that the question of dress was not a mere frivolity with her. A week before the ball she stood in front of the large glass in her

mother's room, contemplating herself, not with that satisfaction which it is generally supposed a pretty young woman has in contemplating her own image. She was decidedly a pretty young woman. She had a great deal of the hair of the period, nature in her case, as (curiously, yet very truly) in so many others, having lent herself to the prevailing fashion. How it comes about I cannot tell, but it is certain that there does exist at this present moment, a proportion of golden-haired girls which very much exceeds the number we used to see when golden hair had not become fashionable—a freak of nature which is altogether independent of dyes and auriferous fluids, and which probably has influenced fashion unawares. To be sure the pomades of twenty years ago are, heaven be praised! unknown to this generation, and washing also has become the fashion, which accounts for something. Anyhow, Phœbe, junior, possessed in perfection, the hair of the period. She had, too, the

complexion which goes naturally with those sunny locks—a warm pink and white, which, had the boundaries between the pink and the white been a little more distinct, would have approached perfection too. This was what she was thinking when she looked at herself in her mother's great glass. Mrs. Beecham stood behind her, more full-blown and more highly-coloured than she, but very evidently the rose to which this bud would come in time. Phœbe looked at her own reflection, and then at her mother's, and sighed such a profound sigh as only lungs in the most excellent condition could produce.

"Mamma," she said, with an accent of despair, "I am too pink, a great deal too pink! What am I to do?"

"Nonsense, my pet," said Mrs. Beecham; "you have a lovely complexion;" and she threw a quantity of green ribbons which lay by over her child's hair and shoulders. A cloud crossed the blooming countenance of Phœbe, junior. She disembarrassed her-

self of the ribbons with another sigh.

"Dear mamma," she said, "I wish you would let me read with you now and then, about the theory of colours, for instance. Green is the complementary of red. If you want to bring out my pink and make it more conspicuous than ever, of course you will put me in a green dress. No, mamma, dear, not that—I should look a fright; and though I daresay it does not matter much, I object to looking a fright. Women are, I suppose, more ornamental than men, or, at least, everybody says so; and in that case it is our duty to keep it up."

"You are a funny girl, with your theories of colour," said Mrs. Beecham. "In my time, fair girls wore greens and blues, and dark girls wore reds and yellows. It was quite simple. Have a white tarlatan, then; every girl looks well in that."

"You don't see, mamma," said Phœbe, softly, suppressing in the most admirable manner the delicate trouble of not being

understood, " that a thing every girl looks well in, is just the sort of thing that no girl looks *very* well in. White shows no invention. It is as if one took no trouble about one's dress."

" And neither one ought, Phœbe," said her mother. " That is very true. It is sinful to waste time thinking of colours and ribbons, when we might be occupied about much more important matters."

" That is not my opinion at all," said Phœbe. " I should like people to think I had taken a great deal of trouble. Think of all the trouble that has to be taken to get up this ball !"

" I fear so, indeed ; and a great deal of expense," said Mrs. Beecham, shaking her head. " Yes, when one comes to think of that. But then, you see, wealth has its duties. I don't defend Mr. Copperhead—"

" I don't think he wants to be defended, mamma. I think it is all nonsense about wasting time. What I incline to, if you won't be shocked, is black."

"Black!" The suggestion took away Mrs. Beecham's breath. "As if you were fifty! Why, I don't consider myself old enough for black."

"It is a pity," said Phœbe, with a glance at her mother's full colours; but that was really of so much less importance. "Black would throw me up," she added seriously, turning to the glass. "It would take off this pink look. I don't mind it in the cheeks, but I am pink all over; my white is pink. Black would be a great deal the best for both of us. It would tone us down," said Phœbe, decisively, "and it would throw us up."

"But for you, a girl under twenty, my dear—"

"Mamma, what does it matter? The question is, am I to look my best? which I think is my duty to you and to Providence; or am I just," said Phœbe, with indignation, "to look a little insipidity—a creature with no character—a little girl like everybody else?"

The consequence of this solemn appeal was that both the Phœbes went to Mr. Copperhead's ball in black; the elder in velvet, with Honiton lace (point, which Phœbe, with her artistic instincts, would have much preferred, being unattainable); the younger in tulle, flounced to distraction, and largely relieved with blue. And the consequence of this toilette, and of the fact that Phœbe did her duty by her parents and by Providence, and looked her very best, was that Clarence Copperhead fell a hopeless victim to her fascinations, and scarcely could be induced to leave her side all night. The ball was about as remarkable a ball as could have been seen in London. The son of the house had contemplated with absolute despair the list of invitations. He had deprecated the entertainment altogether. He had said, "We know nobody," with a despairing impertinence which called forth one of his father's roars of laughter. And though Mr. Copperhead had done all he

could to assume the position of that typical Paterfamilias who is condemned to pay for those pleasures of his family which are no pleasure to him, yet common-sense was too much for him, and everybody felt that he was in reality the giver and enjoyer of the entertainment. It was Mr., not Mrs. Copperhead's ball. It was the first of the kind which had ever taken place in his house; the beginning of a new chapter in his social existence. Up to this moment he had not shown any signs of being smitten with that craze for "Society," which so often and so sorely affects the millionaire. He had contented himself hitherto with heavy and showy dinners, costing Heaven knows how much a head (Mr. Copperhead knew, and swelled visibly in pride and pleasure as the cost increased), which he consumed in company with twenty people or so of kindred tastes to himself, who appreciated the cost and understood his feelings. On such people, however, his Dresden china was thrown

away. Joe and Mrs. Joe were much more in their way than the elegant University man and the well-bred mother, who was "a poor little dowdy," they all said. Therefore the fact had been forced upon Mr. Copperhead that his circle must be widened and advanced, if his crowning glories were to be appreciated as they deserved.

The hunger of wealth for that something above wealth which the bewildered rich man only discovers the existence of when he has struggled to the highest pinnacle of advancement in his own way, began to seize this wealthy neophyte. To be sure, in this first essay, the company which he assembled in his fine rooms in Portland Place, to see all his fine things and celebrate his glory, was not a fine company, but they afforded more gratification to Mr. Copperhead than if they had been ever so fine. They were people of his own class, his old friends, invited to be dazzled, though standing out to the utmost of their power, and refusing, so far as in them lay, to admit how much dazzled they

were. It was a more reasonable sort of vanity than the commoner kind, which aims at displaying its riches to great personages, people who are not dazzled by any extent of grandeur, and in whose bosoms no jealousy is excited towards the giver of the feast. Mr. Copperhead's friends had much more lively feelings; they walked about through the great rooms, with their wives on their arms, in a state of semi-defiance, expressing no admiration, saying to each other, "This must have cost Copperhead a pretty penny," as they met in doorways; while the ladies put their flowery and jewelled heads together and whispered, "Did you ever see such extravagance? And what a dowdy *she* is with it all!" This was the under-current of sentiment which flowed strong in all the passages, and down the rapids of the great staircase; a stream of vigorous human feeling, the existence of which was as deeply gratifying to the entertainer as the sweetest flattery. The lords and the ladies who

might have been tempted to his great house would not have had a thought to spare for Mr. Copperhead; but the unwilling applause of his own class afforded him a true triumph.

Amid this throng of people, however, there could be little doubt that the one young lady who attracted his son was the least eligible person there, being no other than Phœbe Beecham, the pastor's daughter. Almost the only other utterly ineligible girl was a pale little maiden who accompanied Sir Robert Dorset and his daughters, and who was supposed to be either their governess or their humble companion. The Dorsets were the only people who had any pretensions to belong, to "society," in all those crowded rooms. They were distantly related to Mrs. Copperhead, and had been, she gratefully thought, kind to her in her youth, and they had no particular objection to be kind to her now that she was rich, though the Baronet, as Mr. Copperhead always

called him, winced at so rampant a specimen of wealth, and "the girls," did not see what good it was to keep up relations with a distant cousin, who though so prodigiously rich was of no possible use, and could neither make parties for them, nor chaperon them to the houses of the great. When they had received her present invitation, they had accepted it with surprise and hesitation. Chance only had brought them to London at that time of the year, the most curious time surely to choose for a ball, but convenient enough as affording a little amusement at a season when little amusement was ordinarily to be had. Sir Robert had consented to go, as a man with no occupation elsewhere might consent to go to the Cannibal Islands, to see how the the savages comported themselves. And little Ursula May, another poor relative on the other side of the house, whom they had charitably brought up to town with them, might go too, they decided, to such a gathering. There was

no Lady Dorset, and the girls were "girls," only by courtesy, having passed the age to which that title refers. Such good looks as they had were faded, and they were indifferently dressed. This last circumstance arose partly from the fact that they never dressed very well, and partly because they did not think it necessary to put themselves to much trouble for poor Mrs. Copperhead's ball. Their little companion, Ursula, was in a white frock, the sort of dress which Phœbe had rebelled against. She was all white and had never been to a ball before. This little party, which represented the aristocracy at the Copperheads' ball, went to the entertainment with a little expectation in their minds: What sort of people would be there? Would they be "frights?" They were not likely to be interesting in any other way, the Miss Dorsets knew; but to little Ursula a ball was a ball, and meant delight and glory she was aware, though she did not quite know how. The expec-

tations of the party, however, were strangely disappointed. Instead of being "a set of frights," Mrs. Copperhead's guests were found to be resplendent in toilette. Never, even under a ducal roof, had these ladies found themselves in such a gorgeous assembly, and never before, perhaps, even at the Duchess's grandest receptions, had they been unable to discover a single face they knew. Sir Robert was even more appalled by this discovery than his daughters were. He put up his glass and peered more and more wistfully into the crowd. "Don't know a soul," he repeated at intervals. Poor Sir Robert! he had not thought it possible that such an event could happen to him within the four seas. Accordingly the Dorsets clung, somewhat scared, to Mrs. Copperhead's side, and Ursula along with them, who looked at the crowd still more wistfully than Sir Robert did, and thought how nice it would be to know somebody. Unfortunately the Miss Dorsets were not attractive in personal appearance. Clar-

ence Copperhead, though he was not indifferent to a baronet, was yet not sufficiently devoted to the aristocracy to do more than dance once, as was his bounden duty, with each of the sisters. "It seems so strange not to know anyone," these ladies said. "Isn't it?" said Clarence. "*I* don't know a soul." But then he went off and danced with Phœbe Beecham, and the Miss Dorsets stood by Mrs. Copperhead, almost concealing behind them the slight little snow-white figure of little Ursula May.

Clarence was a very well-behaved young man on the whole. He knew his duty and did it with a steady industry, working off his dances in the spirit of his navvy forefather. But he returned between each duty dance to the young lady in black, who was always distinguishable among so many young ladies in white, and pink, and green, and blue. The Miss Dorsets and Ursula looked with interest and something like envy at that young lady in black.

She had so many partners that she scarcely knew how to manage them all, and the son of the house returned to her side with a pertinacity that could not pass unremarked. "Why should one girl have so much and another girl so little?" Ursula said to herself; but, to be sure, she knew nobody, and the young lady in black knew everybody. On the whole, however, it became evident to Ursula that a ball was not always a scene of unmixed delight.

"It is very kind of you to remember what old friends we are," said Phœbe. "But, Mr. Clarence, don't be more good to me than you ought to be. I see your mother looking for you, and Mr. Copperhead might not like it. Another time, perhaps, we shall be able to talk of old days."

"There is no time like the present," said the young man, who liked his own way. I do not mean to say that it was right of Phœbe to dance with him, espe-

cially dances she had promised to other people. But he was the personage of the evening, and that is a great temptation. Mr. Copperhead himself came up to them more than once, with meaning in his eyes.

"Don't be too entertaining, Miss Phœbe, he said; for he saw no reason why he should not speak plainly in his own house, especially to the minister's daughter. "Don't be too entertaining. This is Clarence's ball, and he ought to be civil to other people too."

"Oh, please go away!" cried Phœbe, after this admonition. But Clarence was sullen, and stood his ground.

"We are going to have our waltz out," he said. "It is not my ball a bit—let him entertain his people himself. How should I know such a set of guys? I know nobody but you and the Dorset girls, who are in society. Parents are a mistake," said the young man, half rebellious, half sullen, "they never understand. Perhaps you don't feel that, but I should

think girls must see it sometimes as well as men."

"Girls don't use such strong expressions," said Phœbe, smiling, as they flew off in the uncompleted waltz. She danced very well, better than most of the ladies present, and that was the reason Clarence assigned to his mother for his preference of her. But when Mr. Copperhead saw that his remonstrance was unheeded by the young people, he went up to Mrs. Beecham, with a rich man's noble frankness and courage. "I am delighted to see you here, ma'am, and I hope you have remarked how well Miss Phœbe is entertaining my boy. Do you see them dancing? She's been away from you a long time, Mrs. Beecham, as girls will when they get hold of somebody that pleases them. Shouldn't you like me to go and fetch her back?" Mrs. Beecham, with cheeks which were very full blown indeed, and required a great deal of fanning, called back her child to her side at the end of

that dance. She scolded Phœbe behind her fan, and recalled her to a sense of duty. "A pastor's daughter has to be doubly particular," she said, "what if your poor papa was to get into trouble through your thoughtlessness?"

"I was not thoughtless, mamma; forgive me for answering back;" said Phœbe, very meekly; and she showed no signs of sulkiness, though Clarence was carried off and kept from approaching her again.

Unfortunately, however, when Clarence was removed from Phœbe, he fell into still greater peril. The eldest Miss Dorset and her mother, both of them with equally benevolent intentions introduced him simultaneously to Ursula May. "The poor little girl has not danced once," Mrs. Copperhead, who had recollections of standing by herself for a whole evening unnoticed, whispered in his ear, and Miss Dorset spoke to him still more plainly. "We brought her," she said, "but I cannot get her partners, for I don't know

anybody." And what could Clarence do but offer himself? And Ursula, too, was a good dancer, and very pretty—far prettier than Phœbe.

"Confound him! there he is now for ever with that girl in white," said his father to himself, with great rage. Dozens of good partners in pink and blue were going about the room. What did the boy mean by bestowing himself upon the two poor ones, the black and the white. This disturbed Mr. Copperhead's enjoyment, as he stood in the doorway of the ball-room, looking round upon all the splendour that was his, and feeling disposed, like Nebuchadnezzar, to call upon everybody to come and worship him. He expanded and swelled out with pride and complacency, as he looked round upon his own greatness, and perceived the effect made upon the beholders. When that effect did not seem sufficiently deep, he called here and there upon a lingerer for applause. "That's considered a very fine

Turner," he said, taking one of them into a smaller room. "Come along here, you know about that sort of thing—I don't. I should be ashamed to tell you how much I gave for it; all that money hanging there useless, bringing in nothing! But when I do buy anything I like it to be the very best that is to be had."

"I'd as soon have a good chromo," said the person addressed; "which costs a matter of a five pound note, and enough too, to hang up against a wall. But you can afford it, Copperhead. You've the best right of any man I know to be a fool if you like."

The great man laughed, but he scarcely liked the compliment. "I am a fool if you like," he said, "the biggest fool going. I like a thing that costs a deal, and is of no use. That's what I call luxury. My boy, Clarence, and my big picture, they're dear; but I can afford 'em, if they were double the price."

"If I were you," said his friend, "I

wouldn't hang my picture in this little bit of a hole, nor let my boy waste his time with all the riff-raff in the room. There's Smith's girl and Robinson's niece, both of them worth a cool hundred thousand; and you leave him to flourish about all over the place with a chit in a white frock, and another in a black one. I call that waste, not luxury, for my part."

"I don't want to sell either the boy or the picture," said the rich man, with a laugh. But nevertheless he was annoyed that his son should be such an ass. Miss Smith and Miss Robinson were as fine as their milliners could make them. The first of these ladies had an emerald locket almost as big as a warming-pan, and Miss Robinson's pearls were a little fortune in themselves; but the chosen objects of that young idiot's attentions wore nothing but trumpery twopenny-halfpenny trinkets, and gowns which had been made at home for all Mr. Copperhead knew. Confound him! the father breathed hotly to himself.

Thus it will be seen that unmixed pleasure is not to be had in this world, even in the midst of envious friends and the most splendid entertainment which money could supply.

CHAPTER IV.

A COUNTRY PARTY.

"VERY funny, now," said Sir Robert. "I don't know that such a thing ever happened to me before. Give you my word for it, I didn't know a single soul, not one; and there must have been a couple of hundred or so there. Jove! I never thought there were as many people in England that I didn't know."

"How could you know Mr. Copperhead's friends?" said Sophy Dorset. "What I wonder is, that she should have asked us. Not but that it was amusing enough, once in a way, just to see how such people look."

"They looked very much like other people, my dear. Finer, though. I haven't seen so many jewels at an evening party for ages. Very much like other people. Fatter, perhaps, the men, but not the women. I notice," said Sir Robert, who himself was spare, "that City men generally have a tendency to fat."

"They are so rich," said Miss Dorset, with gentle disgust.

She was the quiet one, never saying much. Sophy, who was lively, conducted the conversation. They were all seated at breakfast, later than usual, on the morning after the Copperheads' ball. It was a hazy morning, and the party were seated in a large sitting-room in the "very central" locality of Suffolk Street, looking down that straight little street upon the stream of carriages and omnibuses in the foggy distance. It was not for pleasure that this country party had come to London. Sir Robert's second son, who was in India, had sent his eldest children home to the

care of his father and sisters. They were expected at Portsmouth daily, and the aunts, somewhat excited by the prospect of their charge, had insisted upon coming to town to receive them. As for Ursula May, who was a poor relation on the late Lady Dorset's side, as Mrs. Copperhead had been a poor relation on Sir Robert's, London at any season was a wonder and excitement to her, and she could not sufficiently thank the kind relations who had given her this holiday in her humdrum life. She was the daughter of a poor clergyman in the little town of Carlingford, a widower with a large family. Ursula was the eldest daughter, with the duties of a mother on her much burdened hands; and she had no special inclination towards these duties, so that a week's escape from them was a relief to her at any time. And a ball! But the ball had not been so beatific as Ursula hoped. In her dark blue serge dress, close up to the throat and down to the wrists, she did not look

so pale as she had done in her snow-white garments on the previous night; but she was at the best of times a shadowy little person, with soft, dark brown hair, dark brown eyes, and no more colour than the faintest of wild rose tints; but the youthfulness, and softness, and roundness of the girl showed to full advantage beside the more angular development of the Miss Dorsets, who were tall, and had lost the first smooth curves of youth. To Ursula, not yet twenty, these ladies looked very mature, almost aged, being one of them ten, and the other eight years older than herself. She looked up to them with great respect; but she felt, all the same—how could she help it?—that in some things, though the Miss Dorsets were her superiors, it was best to be Ursula May.

"Poor Clara!" said Sir Robert. "She was always a frightened creature. When I recollect her, a poor little governess, keeping behind backs at the nursery parties —and to see her in all her splendour now!"

"She would keep behind backs still, if she could," said Miss Dorset.

"Think of that, Ursula," cried Sophy; "there is an example for you. She was a great deal worse off than you are; and to see her now, as papa says! You may have a house in Portland Place too, and ask us to balls, and wear diamonds. Think of that! Though last night you looked as frightened as she."

"Don't put such demoralizing ideas into the child's head. How it is that girls are not ruined," said Miss Dorset, shaking her head, "ruined! by such examples, I cannot tell? They must have stronger heads than we think. As poor as Cinderella one day, and the next as rich as the Queen—without any merit of theirs, all because some chance man happens to take a fancy to them."

"Quite right," said Sir Robert; "quite right, my dear. It is the natural course of affairs."

Miss Dorset shook her head. She went

on shaking her head as she poured out the tea. She was not given to eloquence, but the subject inspired her.

"Don't think of it, Ursula; it is not the sort of thing that good girls ought to think of," and the elder sister made signs to Sophy, who was reckless, and did not mind the moral effect of the suggestion.

"Poor Mrs. Copperhead! I shall never have a house in Portland Place, nor any diamonds, except Aunt Mary's old brooch. I shall live and die an old maid, and nobody will waste a thought upon me," said Sophy, who made this prophecy at her ease, not expecting it to come true; "but I don't envy poor Clara, and if you marry such a man as Mr. Copperhead, though I shall admire you very much, Ursula, I shan't envy you."

"Is young Mr. Copperhead as bad as his father?" said Ursula, simply.

She was so far from thinking what meaning could be attached to her words, that she stopped and looked, wondering,

from one to another when they laughed.

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Sir Robert; "not so bad, either!"

Poor Ursula was extremely serious. She turned with relief to Miss Dorset, who was serious too.

"My dear, we don't know much about Clarence; he is a heavy young man. I don't think he is attractive. Have you had a letter from the Parsonage this morning?" said Anne Dorset, with a very grave face; and as it turned out that Ursula had a letter, Miss Dorset immediately plunged into discussion of it. The girl did not understand why the simple little epistle should be so interesting, nor did she perceive yet what the laughter was about. To tell the truth, Ursula, who was not clever, had thought young Mr. Copperhead very *nice*. He had asked her to dance when nobody else did; he had talked to her as much as he could have talked to Sophy Dorset herself. He had rehabilitated her in her own eyes after the

first disappointment and failure of the evening, and she was prepared to think, whatever might be said about the father, that the son was "very kind" and very agreeable. Why should they laugh? Ursula concluded that there must be some private joke of their own about Clarence (what a pretty, interesting, superior name Clarence was!) which she could not be permitted to know.

"If you talk like that," said Anne Dorset to Sophy, "you will set her little head afloat about good matches, and spoil her too."

"And a very good thing," said Sophy. "If you had put the idea into my head, I should not be Sophy Dorset now. Why shouldn't she think of a good match? Can she live there for ever in that dreadful Parsonage, among all those children whom she does not know how to manage? Don't be absurd, Anne; except an elder daughter like you here and there, you know, girls must marry if they are to be of any con-

sequence in the world. Let them get it into their heads; we can't change what is the course of nature, as papa says."

"Oh, Sophy! it is so unwomanly."

"Never mind; when a man chuckles and jeers at me because I am unmarried, I think it is unmanly; but they all do it, and no one finds any fault."

"Not all, surely; not near *all*."

"Don't they? Not to our faces, perhaps; but whenever they write, whenever they speak in public. When men are so mean, why should we train girls up to unnatural high-mindedness? Why, that is the sort of girl who ought to make a good marriage; to 'catch' somebody, or have somebody 'hooked' for her. She is pretty, and soft, and not very wise. I am doing the very best thing in the world for her, when I laugh at love and all that nonsense, and put a good match into her mind."

Miss Dorset turned away with a sigh, and shook her head. It was all she could

do. To encounter Sophy in argument was beyond her power, and if it had not been beyond her power, what would have been the good of it? Sophy had a story which, unfortunately, most people knew. She had been romantic, and she had been disappointed. Five or six years before, she had been engaged to a clergyman, who, finding that the good living he was waiting for in order to marry was not likely to come through Sir Robert's influence, intimated to his betrothed his serious doubt whether they were likely to be happy together, and broke off the engagement. He married somebody else in six months, and Sophy was left to bear the shame as she might. To be sure, a great many people were highly indignant with him at the moment; his sin, however, was forgotten long ago, so far as he was concerned; but nobody forgot that Sophy had been jilted, and she did not forget it herself, which was worse. Therefore Miss Dorset attempted no argument with her

sister. She shook her gentle head, and said nothing. Anne was the elder sister born, the maiden-mother, who is a clearly defined type of humanity, though rare, perhaps, like all the finer sorts. She resolved in her own mind to take private means for the fortification and preservation of Ursula, whose position, as elder sister of a motherless family, interested her specially as being like her own; but Anne owned within herself that she had never been so young as little Ursula May.

Ursula, for her part, thought very little about the question which had thus moved her cousins. She thought Mr. Clarence Copperhead was very nice, and that if she had but known as many people, and had as many partners as that young lady in black, she would have enjoyed the ball very much. After all, now that it was over, she felt that she had enjoyed it. Three dances were a great deal better than none at all, and to have that pretty white frock given to her by Sir Robert was no

small matter. Besides, for in this as in other things the uses of adversity are sometimes sweet, the pretty dress, which no doubt would have been torn and crumpled had she danced much, was almost quite fresh now, and would do very well at Carlingford if there should be any balls there — events which happened occasionally, though Ursula had never been lucky enough to go to any of them. And Cousin Sophy had given her a set of Venetian beads and Cousin Anne a bracelet. This good fortune was quite enough to fill her mind with satisfaction, and prevent any undue meditation upon good matches or the attentions of Clarence Copperhead. Ursula was as different as possible from Phœbe Beecham. She had no pretensions to be intellectual. She preferred the company even of her very smallest brothers and sisters to the conversation of her papa, though he was known to be one of the most superior men in the diocese. Even when her elder

brother Reginald, of whom she was very fond, came home from college, Ursula was more than indifferent to the privileged position of elder sister, by which she was permitted to sit up and assist at the talks which were carried on between him and his father. Reginald was very clever too; he was making his own way at the university by means of scholarships, the only way in which a son of Mr. May's was likely to get to the university at all, and to hear him talk with his father about Greek poetry and philosophy was a very fine thing indeed; how Phœbe Beecham, if the chance had been hers, would have prized it! but Ursula did not enjoy the privilege. She preferred a pantomime, or the poorest performance in a theatre, or even Madame Tussaud's exhibition. She preferred even to walk about the gay streets with Miss Dorset's maid, and look into the shop-windows and speculate what was going to be worn next season. Poor little girl! with such innocent and frivolous

tastes, it may be supposed she did not find her position as elder sister and house-keeper a very congenial one. Her father was no more than Incumbent of St. Roque, an old perpetual curacy merged in a district church, which was a poor appointment for an elderly man with a family; he was very clever and superior, but not a man who got on, or who did much to help his children to get on; and had Ursula been of the kind of those who suffer and deny themselves by nature, she would have had her hands full, and abundant opportunity afforded her to exercise those faculties. But she was not of this frame of mind. She did what she was obliged to do as well as time and opportunity permitted; but she did not throw herself with any enthusiasm into her duties. To keep seven children in good condition and discipline in a small house, on a small income, is more, it must be allowed, than most girls of twenty are equal to; only enthusiasm and self-devotion could make such a

task possible, and these qualifications poor little Ursula did not possess. Oh! how glad she was to get away from it all, from having to think of Janey and Johnny, and Amy and little Robin. She was not anxious about how things might be going on in her absence, as kind Miss Dorset thought she must be. The happiness of escaping was first and foremost in her thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

SELF-DEVOTION.

"MR. COPPERHEAD'S manner is not pleasant sometimes, that is quite true. We must make allowances, my dear. Great wealth, you know, has its temptations. You can't expect a man with so much money and so many people under him to have the same consideration for other people's feelings. He says to this man go and he goeth, and to that man come and he cometh."

"That is all very well," said Phœbe; "but he has no right, that I can think of, to be rude to mamma and me."

"He was not exactly rude, my dear,"

said Mrs. Beecham. "We must not say he was rude. Clarence ought to have divided his attentions more equally, we must admit, and his father was annoyed—for the moment. I have no doubt he has forgotten all about it long ago, and will be as pleasant as ever next time we meet."

"I am quite sure of it," said the pastor, "and at the worst it was but his manner—only his manner. In short, at the committee meeting yesterday nothing could have been nicer. He even went out of his way to send, as it were, a kind message to Phœbe. 'I needn't ask if Miss Phœbe enjoyed herself,' he said. Depend upon it, my dear, if there was a temporary annoyance it is both forgotten and forgiven, so far as Mr. Copperhead is concerned."

"Forgiven!" Phœbe said to herself; but she thought it wiser to say nothing audible on the subject. Her father and mother, it was evident, were both disposed to extend any amount of toleration

to the leading member. It was he who was the best judge as to what he had a right to be annoyed about. The family party were in Mr. Beecham's study, where the large bust of Mr. Copperhead stood on the mantelpiece, the chief decoration. How could anyone be so wicked as to rebel against the influence of so great a personage? Phœbe had her own ideas, but she was wise and kept them to herself.

"And now," said Mrs. Beecham, solemnly, "what is to be done, my dear, about this letter from my good papa?"

Phœbe was standing in front of a bookcase, apparently looking for a book. She said nothing; but it was easy to perceive by the erectness of her shoulders, and the slight movement that ran through her, that her attention was fully engaged.

"Ah, yes indeed, what about it?" the pastor said. He put down the pen, which he had been holding in his hand by way of symbol that, amiable as he was, his attention to his womankind was an en-

croachment upon time which might be more usefully employed. But this was a serious question ; he had no suggestion to offer, but he sat and twiddled his thumbs, and looked at his wife with interest suddenly aroused.

"There is a great deal to be thought of," said Mrs. Beecham, "it is not a simple matter of family devotion. Of course if I had no other ties, nor other duties, everything would be easy. I should go at once to my poor suffering mamma."

Mrs. Beecham was a clever woman, but she had not been able to get it out of her mind, owing to the imperfections of her education in youth, that it was a vulgar thing to say father and mother. "But in the present circumstances," she continued, her husband having given his assent to this speech, "it is clear that I cannot do what I wish. I have you to think of, my dear, and the children, and the duties of my position. On the other

hand, of course I could not wish, as poor mamma's only daughter, to have my sister-in-law called in. She is not the kind of person; she is underbred, uneducated. Of course she would be thinking of her own children, and what would be best for them. My parents have done all that ought to be expected from them for Tom. Considering all things, what they have to dispose of ought to go to Phœbe and Tozer. But Mrs. Tom would not see that."

"It is very true, my dear; I don't suppose she would," said Mr. Beecham, with an anxious air.

"Mrs. Tom," said his wife, with some heat, "would think her own had the first claim. She maintained it to my very face, and after that what have we to expect? It's us that are Tozers," she said; "as for you, Phœbe, you belong to another family. I put it in my own language of course, not in her vulgar way."

"It is a very serious question alto-

gether," said the pastor, with some solemnity. "I don't see how you can get away, and I don't know what is to be done."

"Whatever is to be done, I won't leave poor mamma in the hands of Mrs. Tom," cried Mrs. Beecham, "not whatever it costs me. "She's capable of anything that woman is. To have her in the same town is bad enough, but in the same house nursing poor mamma! You and I would never see a penny of the money, Henery, nor our children—not a penny! besides the vexation of seeing one's own parents turned against one. I know very well how it would be."

Mr. Beecham ceased twiddling his thumbs. The crisis was too serious for that indulgence. "The position is most difficult," he said, "I see it all. It is easy to see it for that matter, but to decide what are we to do is not easy. To go back to Carlingford after so many changes, would it be good for you?"

"It would kill me," said Mrs. Beecham, with energy, "you know it would kill me. Envy drove us out, and envy would bring me to the grave. I don't deceive myself, that is what I see before me, if I tear myself from all my duties and go. But on the other hand——"

"Listen, mamma!" cried Phœbe, turning round suddenly, "if grandmamma is ill, and you are afrad to leave her alone, why not send me?"

Both her parents turned towards Phœbe, as she spoke; they listened to her with wonder and consternation, yet with admiring looks. Then they looked at each other consulting, alarmed. "You!" said Mrs. Beecham, and "You!" echoed the pastor, repeating in his great astonishment what his wife said.

"Yes, indeed, me—why not me? it would be only my duty," said Phœbe, with great composure. "And there is nothing to keep me from going. I almost think I should like it—but anyhow, mamma,

if you think it necessary, whether I like it or not—"

"Phœbe, my darling, you are the best child in the world," cried her mother, rising up, and going to her hastily. She gave her a kiss of maternal enthusiasm, and then she looked at her husband. "But should we take advantage of it?" she said.

"You see, my dear," said Mr. Beecham, hesitating, "you might find many things different from what you are used to. Your grandpapa Tozer is an excellent man—a most excellent man—"

"Yes, yes," said his wife, with some impatience. She was as conscious as he was of the great elevation in the social scale that had occurred to both of them since they left Carlingford, and knew as well as he did that the old people had remained stationary, while the younger ones had made such advances; but still she did not like to hear her husband criticize her father. What there was to be

said, she preferred to say herself. "Yes, yes," she said, "Phœbe knows there is a difference; they are old-fashioned folks, and don't live quite as we live. Some things would strike you very strangely, my dear, some things you would not like; and then Phœbe may be, for anything I can tell, at a turning point in her own life."

"If you mean about the Copperheads, mamma, dismiss that from your mind," said Phœbe. "There is no sort of hurry. We may be thrown together in after-life, and of course no one can tell what may happen, but in the meantime there is nothing of the sort in my mind—nor in anyone else's. Do not think of that for a moment. I am at no turning-point. I am quite ready and quite willing to go wherever you please."

Once more the parent pair looked at each other. They had been very careful not to bring their children into contact since they were children, with the homelier

circumstances of the life in which they themselves had both taken their origin. They had managed this really with great skill and discretion. Instead of visiting the Tozers at Carlingford, they had appointed meetings at the sea-side, by means of which the children were trained in affectionate acquaintance with their grandparents, without any knowledge of the shop. And Mr. Tozer, who was only a butterman at Carlingford, presented all the appearance of an old Dissenting minister out of it—old-fashioned, not very refined perhaps, as Mrs. Beecham allowed, but very kind, and the most doting of grandfathers. The wisp of white neckcloth round his neck, and his black coat, and a certain unction of manner all favoured the idea. Theoretically, the young people knew it was not so, but the impression on their imagination was to this effect. Mrs. Tozer was only "grandmamma." She was kind too, and if rather gorgeous in the way of ribbons, and

dressing generally in a manner which Phœbe's taste condemned, yet she came quite within the range of that affectionate contempt with which youth tolerates the disadvantages of its seniors. But the butterman's shop! and the entire cutting off from everything superior to the grocers and poulterers of Carlingford—how would Phœbe support it? This was what Mr. and Mrs. Beecham asked each other with their eyes—and there was a pause. For the question was a tremendous one, and neither knew in what way to reply.

"Phœbe, you are a very sensible girl—" said her father at last, faltering.

"I beg your pardon, papa. I don't think you are treating me as if I were sensible," said Phœbe. "I know well enough that grandpapa is in business—if that is what you are afraid of—"

"Has been in business," said Mrs. Beecham. "Your grandpapa has retired for some time To be sure," she added, turning to her husband, "it is only Tom

that has the business, and as I consider Mrs. Tom objectionable, Phœbe need not be brought in contact—"

"If Phœbe goes to Carlingford," said the pastor, "she must not be disagreeable to anyone. We must make up our minds to that. They must not call her stuck up and proud."

"Henery," said Mrs. Beecham, "I can put up with a great deal; but to think of a child of mine being exposed to the tongues of those Browns and Pigeons and Mrs. Tom, is more than I can bear. What I went through myself, you never knew, nor any one breathing — the looks they gave me, the things they kept saying, the little nods at one another every time I passed! Was it my fault that I was better educated, and more refined like than they were? In Mr. Vincent's time, before you came, Henery, he was a very gentleman-like young man, and he used to come to the —— High Street constantly to supper.

It wasn't my doing. I never asked him—no more than I did you!"

"Your father used to ask me," said Mr. Beecham, doubtfully. "It was very kind. A young pastor expects it in a new place; and a great many things arise, there is no doubt, in that way."

"Not by my doing," said the lady; "and when we were married, Henery, the things I did to please them! Thank Heaven, they know the difference now; but if they were to set themselves, as I could quite expect of them, against my child—"

"Mamma," said Phœbe, tranquilly, "I think you forget that it is me you are talking of. I hope I know what a pastor's daughter owes to herself. I have had my training. I don't think you need be frightened for me."

"No; I think Phœbe could manage them if anyone could," said her father, complacently.

She smiled with a gracious response to

this approval. She had a book in her hand, which of itself was a proof of Phœbe's pretensions. It was, I think, one of the volumes of Mr. Stuart Mill's "Dissertations." Phœbe was not above reading novels or other light literature, but this only in the moments dedicated to amusement, and the present hour was morning, a time not for amusement, but for work.

"Phœbe don't know Carlingford, nor the folks there," said Mrs. Beecham, flushed by the thought, and too much excited to think of the elegances of diction. She had suffered more than her husband had, and retained a more forcible idea of the perils; and in the pause which ensued, all these perils crowded into her mind. As her own ambition rose, she had felt how dreadful it was to be shut in to one small circle of very small folks. She had felt the injurious line of separation between the shopkeepers and the rest of the world; at least she thought

she had felt it. As a matter of fact, I think it very doubtful whether Phœbe Tozer had felt anything of the kind; but she thought so now; and then it was a fact that she was born Phœbe Tozer, and was used to that life, whereas Phœbe Beecham had no such knowledge. She had never been aware of the limitations of a small Dissenting community in a small town, and though she knew how much the Crescent congregation thought of a stray millionaire like Mr. Copperhead (a thing which seemed too natural to Miss Beecham to leave any room for remark), her mother thought that it might have a bad effect upon Phœbe's principles in every way, should she find out the lowly place held by the connection in such an old-fashioned, self-conceited, Tory town as Carlingford. What would Phœbe think? how would she manage to associate with the Browns and the Pigeons? Fortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Tozer had retired from the shop; but the shop was still there, greasy and

buttery as ever, and Mrs. Beecham's own respected papa was still "the butterman." How would Phœbe bear it? This was the uppermost thought in her mind.

"You know, my darling," she said afterwards, when they had left the study, and were seated, talking it over, in the drawing-room, "there will be a great deal to put up with. I am silly; I don't like even to hear your papa say anything about dear old grandpapa. He is my own, and I ought to stand up for him; but even with grandpapa, you will have a great deal to put up with. They don't understand our ways. They are used to have things so different. They think differently, and they talk differently. Even with your sense, Phœbe, you will find it hard to get on."

"I am not at all afraid, I assure you, mamma."

"You are not afraid, because you don't know. I know, and I am afraid. You know, we are not great people, Phœbe. I

have always let you know that—and that it is far finer to elevate yourself than to be born to a good position. But when you see really the place which poor dear grandpapa and grandmamma think so much of, I am sure I don't know what you will say."

"I shall not say much. I shall not say anything, mamma. I am not prejudiced," said Phœbe. "So long as an occupation is honest and honourable, and you can do your duty in it, what does it matter? One kind of work is just as good as another. It is the spirit in which it is done."

"Oh, honest!" said Mrs. Beecham, half relieved, half affronted. "Of course, it was all that. Nothing else would have answered papa. Your uncle Tom has the —business now. You need not go there, my dear, unless you like. I am not fond of Mrs. Tom. We were always, so to speak, above our station; but she is not at all above it. She is just adapted for it;

and I don't think she would suit you in the least. So except just for a formal call, I don't think you need go there, and even that only if grandmamma can spare you. You must be civil to everybody, I suppose; but you need not go further; they are not society for you. You will hear people talk of me by my Christian name, as if we were most intimate; but don't believe it, Phœbe. I always felt aspirations towards a very different kind of life."

"Oh, don't be afraid, mamma," said Phœbe, calmly; "I shall be able to keep them at a distance. You need not fear."

"Yes, my dear," said the anxious mother; "but not too much at a distance either. That is just what is so difficult. If they can find an excuse for saying that my child is stuck up! Oh! nothing would please them more than to be able to find out something against my child. When you have apparently belonged to that low level, and then have risen," said Mrs.

Beecham, with a hot colour on her cheek, "there is nothing these kind of people will not say."

These conversations raised a great deal of thought in Phœbe's mind; but they did not change her resolution. If it was necessary that some one should go to look after her grandmamma, and keep all those vulgar people at bay, and show to the admiring world what a Dissenting minister's daughter could be, and what a dutiful daughter was, then who so fit as herself to be the example? This gave her even a certain tragical sense of heroism, which was exhilarating, though serious. She thought of what she should have "to put up with," as of something much more solemn than the reality; more solemn, but alas! not so troublesome. Phœbe felt herself something like a Joan of Arc as she packed her clothes and made her preparations. She was going among barbarians, a set of people who would not understand her, probably, and whom she

would have to "put up with." But what of that? Strong in a sense of duty, and superior to all lesser inducements, she felt herself able to triumph. Mrs. Beecham assisted with very divided feelings at the preparations. It was on her lips to say, "Never mind the evening dresses; you will not want them." But then the thought occurred to her that to let the Carlingford folks see what her daughter had been used to, even if she had no use for such things, would be sweet.

"No, Henery; she shall take them all," she said to her husband. "They shall see the kind of society my child is in; very different from their trumpery little teas! They shall see that you and I, we grudge nothing for Phœbe—and I dare be sworn there is not one of them like her, not even among the quality! I mean," said Mrs. Beecham, hastily, with a flush of distress at her own failure in gentility, "among those who think themselves better than we are. But Phœbe will let them see

what a pastor's family is out of their dirty little town. She will bring them to their senses. Though I hesitated at first when it was spoken of, I am very glad now."

"Yes; Phœbe is a girl to find her level anywhere," said the pastor, complacently. And they forgot what she would have to put up with in their satisfaction and admiration for herself.

CHAPTER VI.

A MORNING CALL.

SIR ROBERT DORSET and his daughter called, as in duty bound, upon their relation two days after her ball. "You had better come with us, Ursula," said Miss Dorset. "Sophy does not care about visits, and Mrs. Copperhead asked a great many questions about you. She is very tenderhearted to the —— young." Anne had almost said to the poor, for it is difficult to remember always that the qualifications by which we distinguish our friends when they are not present, are not always satisfactory to their own ears. "She was like you once, you know," she

added, half apologetically. Ursula, who was not in the least disposed to take offence, did not ask how, but assented, as she would have assented had cousin Anne told her to get ready to go to the moon. She went upstairs and put on her little felt hat, which had been made handsome by the long drooping feather bestowed upon her by Sophy, and the blue serge jacket which corresponded with her dress. She had not any great opinion of her own good looks, but she hoped that she was "lady-like," notwithstanding the simplicity of her costume. This was her only aspiration. In her heart she admired the tall straight angular kind of beauty possessed by her cousins, and did not think much of her own roundness and softness, which seemed to Ursula a very inferior "style;" but yet if she looked lady-like that was always something, and both Sir Robert and his daughter looked at her approvingly as she stood buttoning her gloves, waiting for them.

"If there are other city gentlemen there mind you make yourself very agreeable, Ursula," said cousin Sophy, which vexed the girl a little. Whether the people were city gentlemen or not, of course, she said to herself, she would try to be *nice*—was not that a girl's first duty? She tried for her part to be *nice* to everybody, to talk when she could, and receive the recompense of pleased looks. To walk with her friends up the long line of Regent Street, with many a sidelong glance into the shop-windows, was very pleasant to Ursula. Sometimes even Cousin Anne would be tempted to stop and look, and point things out to her father. Unfortunately, the things Miss Dorset remarked were chiefly handsome pieces of furniture, beautiful, carpets, and the like, which were totally out of Ursula's way.

"There is just the kind of carpet I want for the drawing-room," Anne said, looking at something so splendid that Ursula thought it was good enough for

the Queen. But Sir Robert shook his head.

"The drawing-room carpet will do very well," he said. "It will last out my day, and your brother will prefer to please himself."

This brought a little cloud upon Anne Dorset's placid face, for she too, like Mr. Beecham, had a brother whose wife it was not agreeable to think of as mistress in the old house. She went on quickly after that looking in at no more shops. Perhaps she who could buy everything she wanted (as Ursula thought) had on the whole more painful feelings in looking at them, than had the little girl beside her, whose whole thoughts were occupied by the question whether she would have enough money left to buy her sister Janey one of those new neckties, which were "the fashion." Janey did not often get anything that was the fashion. But at any rate Ursula made notes and laid up a great many things in her mind to

tell Janey of—which would be next best.

Mrs. Copperhead was seated in a corner of her vast drawing-room when her visitors arrived, and her pale little countenance brightened at sight of them. They were the nearest approach to "her own people" that the poor soul possessed. She received their compliments upon her ball with deprecating looks.

"I am sure you are very good—very good to say so. I am afraid it was not much amusement to you. They were not the kind of people—"

"I scarcely knew a soul," said Sir Robert, "it was a curious sensation. It does one good now and then to have a sensation like that. It shows you that after all you are not such a fine fellow as you thought yourself. Once before I experienced something of the same feeling. It was at a ball at the Tuileries—but even then, after a while, I found English people I knew, though I didn't know the French grandees; but Jove! except yourself and

Mr. Copperhead, Clara, I knew nobody here."

Mrs. Copperhead felt the implied censure more than she was intended to feel it.

"Mr. Copperhead does not care about cultivating fashionable people," she said, with a little spirit. "He prefers his old friends."

"That is very nice of him," cried Anne, "so much the kindest way. I liked it so much. At most balls we go to, people come and ask me to dance for duty, pretending not to see that my dancing days are over."

"She talks nonsense," said Robert. "Clara, I must trust to you to put this notion out of Anne's head. Why should her dancing days be over? I am not a Methuselah, I hope. She has no right to shelve herself so early, has she? I hope to see her make a good match before I die."

"So long as she is happy—" said Mrs. Copperhead, faltering. She was not any

advocate for good matches. "Oh, there is Mr. Copperhead!" she added, with a little start, as a resounding knock was heard. "He does not often come home so early; he will be very glad to see you, Sir Robert. Are you going to stay long in town, Miss May?"

"Not long, only till the children arrive," said Anne, looking compassionately at the rich man's nervous wife. She had been quiet enough, so long as she was alone. Now a little fever seemed to be awakened in her. She turned to Ursula and began to talk to her quickly—

"Do you like being in town? It is not a good time of the year. It is nicer in May, when everything looks cheerful; but I always live in London. You will come back for the season, I suppose?"

"Oh no," said Ursula. "I never was in London before. Cousin Anne brought me for a great pleasure. I have been twice to the theatre, and at the ball here."

"Oh yes, I forgot, you were at the

ball—and you danced, did you dance? I cannot remember. There were so many people. Oh yes, I recollect. I spoke to Clarence—"

"I danced three times," said Ursula. "I never was at a ball before. It was very nice. Mr. Copperhead was so kind—"

"What is that about Mr. Copperhead being kind? Was I kind? I am always kind—ask my wife, she will give me a good character," said the master of the house, coming up to them. "Ah, the Baronet! how do you do, Sir Robert. I don't often see you in my house."

"You saw us the other evening," said Sir Robert, courteously, "and we have just come, Anne and I, to let Clara know how much we enjoyed it. It was really splendid. I don't know when I have seen so much—um—luxury—so great a display of—of—beautiful things—and—and wealth."

"Glad to hear you were pleased," said Mr. Copperhead, "no expense was spared

at least. I don't often throw away my money in that way, but when I do I like things to be regardless of expense. That is our way in the city; other people have to make a deal of gentility go a long way, but with us, who don't stand on our gentility—"

"It is not much to stand upon, certainly, in the way of giving balls," said Sir Robert. "I quite agree with you that money should not be spared when a good effect is to be produced. Anne, my dear, if you have said all you have to say to Clara, you must recollect that we have a great deal to do—"

"You are not going the moment I come in," said Mr. Copperhead. "Come, we must have some tea or something. Not that I care very much for tea, but I suppose you'll be shocked if I offer you anything else in the afternoon. Haven't you ordered tea, Mrs. Copperhead? I can't teach my wife hospitality, Sir Robert—not as I understand it. She'd see you

come and go a dozen times, I'll be bound, without once thinking of offering anything. That ain't my way. Tea! and directly, do you hear."

"Yes," said Mrs. Copperhead, in a nervous tremor, "bring tea, Burton, please. It is rather early, but I do so hope you will stay." She gave Miss Dorset an appealing glance, and Anne was too kind to resist the appeal.

"To be sure they'll stay," said Mr. Copperhead. "Ladies never say no to a cup of tea, and ours ought to be good if there's any virtue in money. Come and look at my Turner, Sir Robert. I ain't a judge of art, but it cost a precious lot, if that is any test. They tell me it's one of the best specimens going. Come this way."

"You won't mind?" said poor Mrs. Copperhead. "He is very hospitable, he cannot bear that any one should go without taking something. It is old-fashioned, but then Mr. Copperhead—"

"It is a most kind fashion, I think," said Anne Dorset, who had a superstitious regard for other people's feelings, "and Mr. Copperhead is quite right, I never say no to a cup of tea."

Just then Clarence came in with his hands in his pockets, so curiously like his father in his large somewhat loose figure, as unlike him in aspect and expression, that even the gentle Anne could scarcely help smiling. When he had shaken hands with Miss Dorset he dropped naturally into a seat beside Ursula, who, dazzled by his position as son of the house, and flattered by what she called his "kindness," was as much pleased by this sign of preference as if Clarence Copperhead had been a hero.

"I hope you have recovered my father's ball," he said.

"Recovered! Mr. Copperhead."

"Yes, you think it uncivil; but I myself have scarcely recovered yet. The sort of people he chose to collect—people whom nobody knew."

"But Mr. Copperhead," said Ursula, "if it was his old friends, as your mother says, how much more noble of him than if they had been fine people he did not care for! As for me, I don't know any one anywhere. It was all the same to me."

"That was very lucky for you," said the young man. "My good cousins did not take it so easily. They are your cousins, too?"

"Oh yes—they are so good," cried Ursula, "Cousin Sophy laughs at me sometimes, but Cousin Anne is as kind as an angel. They have always been good to us all our lives."

"You live near them, perhaps? Sir Robert has been kind enough to ask me to the Hall."

"No, not near. We live at Carlingford. It is not a place like the Dorset's; it is a poor little town where papa is one of the clergymen. We are not county people like them," said Ursula, with

anxious honesty that he might not have a false idea of her pretensions. "I have never been anywhere all my life, and that is why they brought me here. It was by far the most beautiful party I ever saw," she added, with a little enthusiasm. "I never was at a real dance before."

"I am glad you thought it pretty," said Clarence. "I suppose it was pretty; when the rooms are nice," and he looked round the handsome room, not without a little complacency, "and when there is plenty of light and flowers, and well-dressed people, I suppose no dance can help being a pretty sight. That was about all. There was no one worth pointing out."

"Oh, there were some very pretty people," said Ursula; "there was a young lady in black. She was always dancing. I should have liked to know her. You danced with her a great many times, Mr. Copperhead."

"Ah!" said Clarence. He was not more foolish than his neighbours, but it

flattered him that his dancing with one person should have been noticed, especially by a pretty creature, who herself had attracted him and shared the privilege. "That was Miss Beecham. I did not dance with her above three or four times. Of course," he said, apologetically, "we are old friends."

Ursula did not know why he should apologize. She did not intend to flirt, not having any knowledge of that pastime as yet. She was quite simple in her mention of the other girl who had attracted her attention. Now having said all she could remember to say, she stopped talking, and her eyes turned to the elder Mr. Copperhead, who came back, followed by Sir Robert. There was a largeness about the rich man, which Ursula, not used to rich men, gazed at with surprise. He seemed to expand himself upon the air, and spread out his large person, as she had never known anyone else do. And Sir Robert, following him, looked so strangely diffe-

rent. He was very reluctant to be so led about, and, as it were, patronized by the master of the house, and his repugnance took a curious form. His nose was slightly drawn up, as if an odour of something disagreeable had reached him. Ursula, in her innocence, wondered what it was.

"Here's the Baronet, Clarence," said Mr. Copperhead, who was slightly flushed; "and he doubts the Turner being genuine. My Turner! Go off at once to those picture people, Christie, whatever you call them, and tell them I want proofs that it's genuine. I am not the sort of man, by George! to be cheated, and they ought to know that. They have had many a hundred pounds of my money, but they shall never have another penny if I don't get proofs. It ain't pleasant, I can tell you, to hear the Baronet, or anyone else for that matter, running down my pictures."

"I did not run it down," said Sir Robert, with another little curl of his nostrils. (What could there be in this

grand big house that could make a disagreeable smell?) "I only said that I had seen copies that were so wonderfully good that none but an expert could tell the difference; that was all. I don't say that yours is one of them."

"No; nor no one shall!" cried Mr. Copperhead. "We shall have the experts, as you call them, and settle it. By George! there shall be nothing uncertain in my house. You can tell the men it is Sir Robert Dorset who suggested it. There's nothing like a title (even when it isn't much of a title) to keep people up to their work. Not meaning any disrespect to Sir Robert, I could buy him and his up five times over. But I ain't Sir Robert, and never will be. Say Sir Robert, Clarence, my boy; that'll bear weight."

"It was an unfortunate observation on my part," said Sir Robert, stiffly. "I have a picture myself, which I bought for a Correggio, and which is a mere copy, I believe, though a very nice one. I hold

my tongue on the subject, and nobody is the wiser. Anne, my dear, I think we must go now."

"That would never suit me," said the rich man; "holding my tongue ain't my way, is it, Mrs. Copperhead? What! going, after all, without your tea? I am afraid, ma'am, the Baronet is touchy, and doesn't like what I said. But nobody minds me, I assure you. I say what I think, but I don't mean any harm."

"Oh, no," said Anne, drawing herself up, while her father took leave of poor little tremulous Mrs. Copperhead. "We really must go; we have stayed longer than we meant to stay. Ursula—"

"Your little companion?" said Mr. Copperhead. "Ah! you should take care, Miss Dorset, of these little persons. They stand in the way of the young ladies themselves often enough, I can tell you. And so can Mrs. Copperhead; she knows."

He laughed, and both Anne and Ursula

became aware that something offensive was meant; but what it was, neither of them could make out. Mrs. Copperhead, whose intelligence had been quickened on that point, perceived it, and trembled more and more.

"Good-bye, dear," she said to Ursula in an agony. "Though we are not cousins, we are connections, through your kind cousin Anne; for she lets me call her my cousin Anne too. Perhaps you will come and pay me a visit sometimes, if —if you can be spared."

"Oh, yes; I should be very glad," said Ursula, confused.

She did not understand why Sir Robert should be in such a hurry, when both young Mr. Copperhead and his mother were so kind. As for the other Mr. Copperhead, he did not interest Ursula. But he went down to the door with them in an excess of civility, offering Anne his arm, which she was obliged to take, much against her will; and even Ursula felt a

passing pang of humiliation when the footman threw open the great door before them, and no carriage was visible.

"Oh, you are walking!" said Mr. Copperhead, with one of his big laughs.

After all, a laugh could hurt nobody. Why was it that they all felt irritated and injured? Even Sir Robert grew scarlet, and when they were outside on the broad pavement, turned almost angrily upon his daughter.

"I tell you what, Anne," he said; "not if it was to save my life, shall I ever enter that brute's doors again."

"Oh, papa; poor Mrs. Copperhead!" cried kind Anne, with a wail in her voice. That was all the reply she made.

CHAPTER VII.

SHOPPING.

NEXT day a telegram came from Southampton, announcing the arrival of the little Dorsets, which Ursula rejoiced over with the rest, yet was dreadfully sorry for in her heart. "Now we shall be able to get home," the sisters said, and she did her best to smile; but to say that she was glad to leave London, with all its delights, the bright streets and the shop-windows, and the theatres, and the excitement of being "on a visit," would be a great deal more than the truth. She was glad, sympathetically, and to please the others; but for herself, her heart fell. It

was still winter, and winter is not lively in Carlingford; and there was a great deal to do at home, and many things "to put up with." To be sure, that was her duty, this was only her pleasure; but at twenty, pleasure is so much more pleasant than duty. Ursula did not at all rebel, nor did she make painful contrasts in her mind, as so many young people do; asking why are others so well off, and I so badly off? but her heart sank. All the mendings, all the keepings in order, the dinners to be invented with a due regard for the butcher's bill, the tradespeople to be kept in good humour, the servant to be managed, and papa, who was more difficult than the servant, and more troublesome than the children! If Ursula sighed over the prospect, I don't think the severest of recording angels would put a very bad mark against her. She had been free of all this for ten wonderful days. No torn frocks, no unpleasant baker, no hole in the carpet, no spoiled mutton-chops had disturbed her

repose. All these troubles, no doubt, were going on as usual at home, and Janey and the maid were struggling with them as best they could. Had Ursula been very high-minded and given up to her duty, no doubt she would have been too much moved by the thought of what her young sister might be enduring in her absence, to get the good of her holiday; but I fear this was not how she felt it. Janey, no doubt, would get through somehow; and it was very sweet to escape for ever so short a time, and have a real rest. Therefore, it must be allowed that, when Ursula went to her bedroom after this news arrived, she relieved herself by "a good cry." Two or three days longer, what difference could that have made to those children? But after her headache was relieved in this way, the cloud dispersed a little. The thought of all she had to tell Janey consoled her. She counted over the spare contents of her purse, and calculated that, after all, she would have enough to

buy the necktie; and she had all her presents to exhibit; the ball-dress, that unhoped-for acquisition; the Venetian beads; the bracelet, "Which is really good—*good* gold; fancy!" said Ursula to herself, weighing it in her hand. How Janey would be interested, how she would be dazzled! There was a great deal of consolation in this thought. In the afternoon her cousins took her out "shopping," an occupation which all young girls and women like. They bought a great many things "for the spring," and "for the children," while Ursula looked on with admiration. To be able to buy things three months in advance, three months before they could possibly be wanted, what luxury! and yet the Dorsets were not rich, or so, at least, people said.

"Now, Ursula," said Cousin Anne, "we have made all our purchases. Suppose you choose frocks for the children at home."

"Oh, me?" cried poor Ursula, forget-

ing grammar. She blushed very red, and looked, not without indignation, into Anne Dorset's mild eyes. "You know I have not any money; you know we can't afford it!" she cried, with starting tears.

"But I can," said Cousin Anne; "at least, I have some money just now. Money always goes, whether one buys things or not," she added, with a little sigh. "It runs through one's fingers. When one has something to show for it, that is always a satisfaction. Come, this would be pretty for little Amy; but it is you who must choose."

"But, Cousin Anne! Dresses! If it was a necktie or a ribbon; but frocks—"

"Frocks would be most useful, wouldn't they? One for Amy, and one for Janey. I suppose Robin does not wear frocks now?"

"He has been in knickerbockers these two years," said Ursula, half proud, half sorry; "and the worst of it is, they can't be made at home. Papa says, boys'

clothes made at home are always spoiled, and the tailor is so dear. Oh, Cousin Anne, are you really, really going to be so very, very good— !"

Mrs. Copperhead came into the shop while they were choosing. Poor little woman! she who trembled so in her own house, how everybody bowed down before her at Messrs. Margrove and Snelcher's! It was all she could do to extricate herself from a crowd of anxious officials, all eager to supply her with everything that heart could desire, when she saw the little party. She came up to them, almost running in her eagerness, her small pale face flushed, and leaned on Anne Dorset's chair and whispered to her.

"You will not be angry, dear kind Anne. You are always so good to everybody. Oh, forgive me! forgive me!"

Ursula could not help hearing what she said.

"There is nothing to forgive *you*, Mrs. Copperhead."

"Oh, dear Anne! But I am more than myself, you know! He does not mean it; he never was brought up to know better. He thinks that is how people behave—"

"Please don't say anything, dear Mrs. Copperhead."

"Not if you will forgive—not if you will promise to forgive. Poor Clarence is heart-broken!" cried the poor woman. "He is so frightened for what you must think."

"We don't think anything," said Sophy, breaking in; "it is one of our good qualities as a family that we never think. Come and help us; we are choosing frocks for Ursula's sisters. She has two. What are their ages, Ursula? You, who live in town, and know the fashions, come and help us to choose."

And how respectful all the shopmen grew when this nameless country party was joined by the great Mrs. Copperhead —or rather the great Mr. Copperhead's wife, at whose command was unlimited

credit, and all the contents of the shop if she chose. One hurried forward to give her a chair, and quite a grand personage, a "head man," came from another counter to take the charge of pleasing such a customer. Ursula could not but look upon the whole transaction with awe. Mrs. Copperhead was a very humble timid woman, and Mr. Copperhead was not *nice;* but it was something to command the reverence of all the people in such a grand shop—a shop which Ursula by herself would scarcely have ventured to enter, and in which she felt timid and overwhelmed, saying, "Sir" to the gentleman who was so good as to ask what she wanted. But here Mrs. Copperhead was not afraid. She gave herself up with her whole heart to the delightful perplexity of choice, and when that matter was settled, looked round with searching eyes."

"Don't they want something else?" she said, "it is so long since I have

bought any children's things. It reminds me of the days when Clarence was little, when I took such pride in his dress. Come with me into the cloak-room, my dear, I am sure they must want jackets or something."

Ursula resisted with pitiful looks at Cousin Anne, and Sophy whispered into Mrs. Copperhead's ear an explanation, which, instead of quenching her ardour, brought it up instantly to boiling point. Her pale little languid countenance glowed and shone. She took both Ursula's hands in hers, half smiling, half crying.

"Oh, my dear," she said, "you can give me such a pleasure, if you will! You know we are connections, almost relations. Let me send them something. Dear children, I wish I could see them. Come and look at the little jackets and mantles. I have often thought, if Providence had given me a little girl, what pleasure I should have had in dressing her. Hats too! I am sure they must want hats.

Come, my dear, come and look at them."
Ursula did not know what to do. A little pride and a great deal of shyness kept her back, but Mrs. Copperhead was too much in earnest to be crossed. She bought a couple of very smart little upper garments for Amy and Janey, and then, clandestinely taking no one into her confidence, for Ursula herself, and gave secret orders to have them all sent to the Dorsets' lodgings that night. She was quite transformed so long as this transaction lasted. Her languid countenance grew bright, her pale eyes lighted up.

"You have given me such a pleasure," she said, holding Ursula's hands, and standing up on tiptoe to kiss her. "I am so much obliged to you. I could almost think that Clarence was little again, or that he had got a little sister, which was always my heart's desire. Ah, well! often, often, it seems better for us not to have our heart's desire, my dear; at least I suppose that is how it must be."

"I do not know how to thank you," said Ursula, "you have been so kind—so very kind."

"I have been kind to myself," said Mrs. Copperhead, "I have so enjoyed it; and my dear," she added, with some solemnity, still holding Ursula by the hands, "promise you will do me one favour more. It will be such a favour. Whenever you want anything for yourself or your sister will you write to me? I am always in London except in autumn, and I should so like to do your commissions. People who live in London know how to get bargains, my dear. You must promise to let me do them for you. It will make me so happy. Promise!" cried the little woman, quite bright in her excitement. Ursula looked at the two others who were looking on, and did not know what to say.

"She thinks you are too expensive an agent for her," said Sophy Dorset, "and I think so too."

Mrs. Copperhead's face faded out of its pleasant glow.

"There are two things I have a great deal too much of," she said, "money and time. I am never so happy as when I am buying things for children, and I can see that she will trust me—won't you, my dear? Must we say goodbye now? Couldn't I take you anywhere? Look at that big carriage, all for me alone, a little light woman. Let me take you somewhere. No! Ah, Cousin Anne, you have not forgiven us for all you said."

"We have some other things to do," said Anne, drawing back. As for Ursula, she would not at all have objected to the splendour of the carriage. And her heart was melted by the lonely little woman's pathetic looks. But the other ladies stood out. They stood by while poor Mrs. Copperhead got into the carriage and drove off, her pale reproachful little face looking at them wistfully from the window. It was afternoon by this time, getting

dark, and it was a tolerably long walk along the lighted, crowded streets.

"Cousin Anne, I am afraid we have hurt her feelings," said Ursula, "why wouldn't you go?"

"Go!" cried mild Anne Dorset; "get into that man's carriage after yesterday? Not for the world! I can put up with a great deal, but I can't go so far as that."

"She never did any harm," said Sophy, "poor little soul! You see now, Ursula, don't you, how fine it is to marry a rich man, and have everything that your heart can desire?"

Ursula looked at her wondering. To tell the truth, Mrs. Copperhead's eagerness to buy everything she could think of for the unknown children at Carlingford, the manner with which she was regarded in the great shop, her lavish liberality, her beautiful carriage, and all the fine things about her, had brought Ursula to this very thought, that it was extremely fine to marry a rich man. Sophy's irony was

lost upon her simple-minded cousin, and so indeed was Mrs. Copperhead's pathos. That she was very kind, and that she was not very happy, were both apparent, but Ursula did not connect the unhappiness with the fact that she was a rich man's wife. Mr. Copperhead certainly was not very *nice;* but when people got so old as that, they never were very happy, Ursula thought, and what had the money to do with it? She looked confused and puzzled at Sophy, wondering what she meant. Yes, indeed, to marry a rich man, to be able to buy presents for everyone, to make the children at home perfectly happy without any trouble to one's self! Could any one doubt that it was very nice? Alas! Ursula did not think it at all likely that this would ever be in her power.

"Poor Mrs. Copperhead!" said Anne, as they made their way along the crowded street, where it was difficult for them to walk together, much less to maintain any conversation. And presently Ursula,

keeping as close as possible to her cousin's side, but compelled to make way continually for other passers-by, lost herself in a maze of fancies, to which the misty afternoon atmosphere, and the twinkling lights, and the quickly passing crowds lent a confused but not unpleasing background. She was glad that the noise made all talk impossible, and that she could dream on quietly as they glided and pressed their way through the current of people in Oxford Street and Regent Street, as undisturbed as if she had been shut up in her own room—nay more so—for the external sights and sounds which flitted vaguely by her, disguised those dreams even from herself. Mrs. Copperhead had once been poorer than she was, a poor little governess. What if somewhere about, in some beautiful house, with just such a carriage at the door, a beautiful young hero should be waiting who would give all those dazzling delights to Ursula? Then what frocks she would buy, what

toys, what ornaments! She would not stop at the girls, but drive to the best tailor's boldly, and bid him send down some one to take Johnnie's measure, and Robin's, and even Reginald's; and then she would go to the toyshop, and to the bookseller, and I can't tell where besides; and finally drive down in the fairy chariot laden with everything that was delightful, to the very door. She would not go in any vulgar railway. She would keep everything in her own possession, and give each present with her own hands—a crowning delight which was impossible to Mrs. Copperhead—and how clearly she seemed to see herself drawing up, with panting horses, high-stepping and splendid, to the dull door of the poor parsonage, where scarcely anything better than a pony-carriage ever came! How the children would rush to the window, and "even papa" out of his study; and what a commotion would run through Grange Lane, and even up into the High Street, where

the butcher and the baker would remember with a shiver how saucy they had sometimes been — when they saw what a great lady she was.

A dreamy smile hovered upon Ursula's face as she saw all the little scenes of this little drama, mixed up with gleams of the shop-windows, and noises of the streets, and great ghosts of passing omnibuses, and horses steaming in the frosty air. How many girls, like her, go dreaming about the prosaic streets? It was not, perhaps, a very elevated or heroic dream, but the visionary chariot full of fine things for the children, was better than Cinderella's pumpkin carriage, or many another chariot of romance. Her cousins, who were so much her elders, and who shuddered in their very souls at the thought of poor Mrs. Copperhead, and who were talking earnestly about the children they expected next morning, and what was to be done with them, had no clue to Ursula's thoughts. They did not think much of

them, one way or another, but took great care not to lose her from their side, and that she should not be frightened by the crowding, which, after all, was the great matter. And they were very glad to get back to the comparative quiet of Suffolk Street, and to take off their bonnets and take their cup of tea. But Ursula, for her part, was sorry when the walk was over. She had enjoyed it so much. It was half Regent Street and half Carlingford, with the pleasure of both mixed up together; and she was half little Ursula May with her head in the air, and half that very great lady in the dream-chariot, who had it in her power to make everybody so happy. Between poor Mrs. Copperhead, who was the most miserable, frightened little slave in the world, with nothing, as she said, but time and money, and Ursula without a penny, and who always had so much to do, what a gulf there was! a gulf, however, which fancy could bridge over so easily. But the

dream was broken when she got indoors; not even the quiet of her own little room could bring back in all their glory the disturbed images that had floated before her in the street.

This was Ursula's last day in town, and there can be no doubt that it was of a nature, without any aid from Sophy's suggestion, to put a great many ideas into her mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DORSETS.

NEXT day the little Dorsets came, an odd little pair of shivering babies, with a still more shivering Ayah. It was the failing health of the little exotic creatures, endangered by their English blood, though they had never seen England, and talked nothing but Hindostanee, which had brought them "home" at this inhospitable time of the year; and to get the rooms warm enough for them became the entire thought of the anxious aunts, who contemplated these wan babies with a curious mixture of emotions, anxious to be "very fond" of them, yet feeling diffi-

culties in the way. They were very white, as Indian children so often are, with big blue veins meandering over them, distinct as if traced with colour. They were frightened by all the novelty round them, and the strange faces, whose very anxiety increased their alarming aspect; they did not understand more than a few words of English, and shrank back in a little heap, leaning against their dark nurse, and clinging to her when their new relations made overtures of kindness. Children are less easily conciliated in real life than superficial observers suppose. The obstinate resistance they made to all Anne Dorset's attempts to win their confidence, was enough to have discouraged the most patient, and poor Anne cried over her failure when those atoms of humanity, so strangely individual and distinct in their utter weakness, helplessness, and dependence, were carried off to bed, gazing distrustfully at her still with big blue eyes; creatures whom any moderately strong

hand could have crushed like flies, but whose little minds not all the power on earth could command or move. Strange contrast! Anne cried when they were carried off to bed. Sir Robert had escaped from the hot room, which stifled him, long before; and Sophy, half angry in spite of herself, had made up her mind to "take no notice of the little wretches."

"Fancy!" she said; "shrinking at Anne—Anne, of all people in the world! There is not a little puppy or kitten but knows better. Little disagreeable things! Oh, love them! Why should I love them? They are John's children, I believe; but they are not a bit like him; they must be like their mother. I don't see, for my part, what there is in them to love."

"Oh, much, Sophy," said Anne, drying her eyes; "they are our own flesh and blood."

"I suppose so. They are certainly Mrs. John's flesh and blood; at least, they are not a bit like us, and I cannot love them

for being like her, can I?—whom I never saw?"

The illogicality of this curious argument did not strike Anne.

"I hope they will get to like us," she said. "Poor little darlings! everything strange about them, new faces and places. I don't wonder that they are frightened, and cry when anyone comes near them. We must trust to time. If they only knew how I want to love them, to pet them—"

"I am going to help little Ursula with her packing," said Sophy hastily; and she hurried to Ursula's room, where all was in disorder, and threw herself down in a chair by the fire. "Anne is too good to live," she cried. "She makes me angry with her goodness. Little whitefaced things like nobody I know of, certainly not like our family, shrinking away and and clinging to that black woman as if Anne was an ogre—*Anne!* why a little dog knows better—as I said before."

"I don't think they are very pretty children," said Ursula, not knowing how to reply.

"Why should we be supposed to be fond of them?" said Sophy, who was relieving her own mind, not expecting any help from Ursula. "The whole question of children is one that puzzles me; a little helpless wax image that does not know you, that can't respond to you, and won't perhaps when it can; that has nothing interesting in it, that is not amusing like a kitten, or even pretty. Well! let us suppose the people it belongs to like it by instinct—but the rest of the world—"

"Oh, Cousin Sophy!" cried Ursula, her eyes round with alarm and horror.

"You think I ought to be fond of them because they are my brother's children? We are not always very fond, even of our brothers, Ursula. Don't scream; at your age it is different; but when they marry and have separate interests—if these mites go on looking at me with

those big scared eyes as if they expected me to box their ears, I shall do it some day—I know I shall; instead of going on my knees to them, like Anne, to curry favour. If they had been like our family, why that would have been some attraction. Are you pleased to go home, or would you prefer to stay here?"

"In London?" said Ursula, with a long-drawn breath, her hands involuntarily clasping each other. "Oh! I hope you won't think me very silly, but I do like London. Yes, I am pleased—I have so many presents to take to them, thanks to you and to Cousin Anne, and Mrs. Copperhead. I am ashamed to be carrying away so much. But Carlingford is not like London," she added, with a sigh.

"No, it is a pretty soft friendly country place, not a great cold-hearted wilderness."

"Oh, Cousin Sophy!"

"My poor little innocent girl! Don't you think it is desolate and cold-hearted,

this great sea of people who none of them care one straw for you?"

"I have seen nothing but kindness," said Ursula, with a little heat of virtuous indignation, "there is you, and Mrs. Copperhead; and even the gentlemen were kind — or at least they meant to be kind."

"The gentlemen?" said Sophy, amused. "Do you mean the Copperheads? Clarence, perhaps? He is coming to Easton, Ursula. Shall I bring him into Carlingford to see you?"

"If you please, Cousin Sophy," said the girl, simply. She had not been thinking any thoughts of "the gentlemen," which could make her blush, but somehow her cousin's tone jarred upon her, and she turned round to her packing. The room was littered with the things which she was putting into her box, that box which had grown a great deal too small now, though it was quite roomy enough when Ursula left home.

"Ursula, I think you are a good little thing on the whole—"

"Oh, Cousin Sophy, forgive me! No, I am not good."

"Forgive you! for what? Yes, you are on the whole a good little thing; not a saint, like Anne; but then you have perhaps more to try your temper. We were always very obedient to her, though we worried her, and papa always believed in her with all his heart. Perhaps you have more to put up with. But, my dear, think of poor Mrs. Copperhead, for example—"

"Why do you always call her poor Mrs. Copperhead? she is very rich. She can make other people happy when she pleases. She has a beautiful house, and everything—"

"And a bear, a brute of a husband."

"Ah! Does she mind very much?" asked Ursula, with composure. This drawback seemed to her insignificant, in comparison with Mrs. Copperhead's greatness. It was only Sophy's laugh that

brought her to herself. She said with some haste, putting in her dresses, with her back turned. "I do not mean to say anything silly. When people are as old as she is, do they mind? It cannot matter so much what happens when you are old."

"Why? but never mind, the theory is as good as many others," said Sophy. "You would not mind then marrying a man like that, to have everything that your heart could desire?"

"Cousin Sophy, I am not going to—marry anyone," said Ursula, loftily, carrying her head erect. "I hope I am not like that, thinking of such things. I am very very sorry that you should have such an opinion of me, after living together ten days."

She turned away with all the forlorn pride of injury, and there were tears in her voice. Sophy, who dared not laugh in reply, to make the young heroine more angry, hastened to apologize.

"It was a silly question," she said.

"I have a very good opinion of you, Ursula. Ten days is a long time, and I know you as if we had been together all your life. I am sure you do not think anything a nice girl ought not to think; but I hope you will never be deceived and persuaded to marry anyone who is like Mr. Copperhead. I mean who is not nice and young, and good, like yourself."

"Oh, no!" cried the girl, with energy. "But most likely I shall not marry anyone," she added, with a half sigh, "Janey may, but the eldest has so much to do, and so much to think of. Cousin Anne has never married."

"Nor Cousin Sophy either," Sophy's laugh sounded hard to the girl. "Never mind, you will not be like us. You will marry, most likely, a clergyman, in a pretty parsonage in the country."

"I do not think I am very fond of clergymen," said Ursula, recovering her ease and composure. "They are always in and about, and everything has to be

kept so quiet when they are studying; and then the parish people are always coming tramping upstairs with their dirty feet. When you have only one servant it is very, very troublesome. Sir Robert never gives any trouble," she said, once more, with a soft little sigh.

"Papa?" said Sophy, somewhat surprised, "but you would not—" she was going to say, marry papa; but when she looked at Ursula's innocent gravity, her absolute unconsciousness of the meanings which her chance words might bear, she refrained. "I think I must send Seton to help you," she said, "you cannot get through all that packing by yourself."

"Oh yes, I am not tired. I have put in all my old things. The rest are your presents. Oh, Cousin Sophy!" said the girl, coming quickly to her and stealing two arms round her. "you have been so good to me! as if it was not enough to give me this holiday, the most delightful I ever had in my life—to send me home

loaded with all these beautiful things! I shall never forget it, never, never, if I were to live a hundred years!"

"My dear!" cried Sophy, startled by the sudden energy of this embrace. Sophy was not emotional, but her eyes moistened and her voice softened in spite of herself. "But you must let me send Seton to you," she said, hurrying away. She was excited by the day's events, and did not trust herself to make any further response; for if she "gave way" at all, who could tell how far the giving way might go? Her brother John had been married at the time when Sophy too ought to have been married, had all gone well—and, perhaps, some keen-piercing thought that she too might have had little children belonging to her, had given force and sharpness to her objections to the pale little distrustful Indian children who had shrunk from her overtures of affection. She went to her room and bathed her eyes, which were hot and painful, and then she

went back to Anne in the sitting-room, who had opened the window to reduce the temperature, and was resting in an easy-chair, and pondering what she could do to make the children love her, and to be a mother to them in the absence of Mrs. John.

"I have been talking to Ursula, who is always refreshing," said Sophy. "I wonder whom that child will marry. She gave me to understand, in her awkward, innocent way, that she preferred papa. A laugh does one good," Sophy added, slightly rubbing her eyes. Anne made no immediate answer. She scarcely heard indeed what her sister said.

"I think we shall get on after a while," she said, softly. "They said their prayers very prettily, poor darlings, and let me kiss them without crying. After a while we shall get on, I don't fear."

"Anne!" cried Sophy, "you are too much for mere human nature: you are too bad or too good for anything. I begin to

hate these little wretches when I hear you speak of them so."

"Hush!" said Anne, "I know you don't mean it. Easton will be very strange to them at first. I could not go to India for my part. A crust of bread at home would be better. Think of parting with your children just when they come to an age to understand?"

"John, I suppose, did not take children into consideration when he went away. You speak as if children were all one's life."

"A great part of it," said Anne, gently. "No, dear, I am not clever like you, and perhaps it is what you will call a low view; but after all it runs through everything. The flowers are used for the seed, and everything in the world is intended to keep the world going. Yes, even I, that is the good of me. I shall never be a mother, but what does that matter? There are so many children left on the world whom somebody must bring up."

"And who are brought to you when they need you, and taken from you when they need you no longer," said Sophy, indignantly, "you are left to bear the trouble—others have the recompense."

"It is so in this world, my dear, all the way down, from God himself. Always looking for reward is mean and mercenary. When we do nothing, when we are of no use, what a poor thing life is," said Anne, with a little colour rising in her cheeks, "not worth having. I think we have only a right to our existence when we are doing something. And I have my wages; I like to be of a little consequence," she said, laughing. "Nobody is of any consequence who does not do something."

"In that case, the ayah, the housemaid is of more consequence than you."

"So be it—I don't object," said Anne, "but I don't think so, for they have to be directed and guided. To be without a housemaid is dreadful. The moment you think of that, you see how important the

people who work are; everything comes to a standstill without Mary, whereas there are ladies whose absence would make no difference."

"I, for instance."

"You are very unkind to say so, Sophy; all the same if you were to do more, you would be happier, my dear."

"To do what? go on my knees to those wax dolls, and entreat them to let me pet them and make idols of them—as you will do?"

"Well, how are you getting on now?" said Sir Robert, coming in. "Ah! I see, you have the window open; but the room is still very warm. When they get to Easton they will have their own rooms of course. I don't want to reflect upon John, but it is rather a burden this he has saddled us with. Mrs. John's mother is living, isn't she? I think something might have been *said* at least, on her part, some offer to take her share."

Sophy gave her sister a malicious glance,

but promptly changed her tone, and took up her position in defence of the arrangement, with that ease which is natural in a family question.

"Of course" she said, "your grandchildren, Dorsets, and the heir, probably, as Robert has no boy, could go nowhere, papa, but to us. It may be a bore, but at least John showed so much sense; for nothing else could be——"

"John does not show very much sense in an ordinary way. What did he want with a wife and children at his age? The boy is five, isn't he? and the father only thirty—absurd! I did not marry till I was thirty, though I had succeeded before that time, and was the only son and the head of the family. John was always an ass," said Sir Robert with a crossness, which sprang chiefly from the fact that the temperature of the room was higher than usual, and the habits of his evening interfered with. He was capable of sacrificing something of much more importance to his

family, but scarcely of sacrificing his comfort, which is the last and most painful of efforts.

"That may be very true," said Sophy, "but all the same, it is only right that the children should be with us. Mrs. John's people are not well off. Her mother has a large family of her own. The little things would have been spoiled, or they would have been neglected; and after all, they are Dorsets, though they are not like John."

"Well, well, I suppose you are right" said Sir Robert, grumbling, "and, thank Heaven, to-morrow we shall be at home."

Anne had scarcely said a word, though it was she who was most deeply concerned about the children. She gave her sister a hug when Sir Robert relapsed into the evening paper, and then stole upstairs to look at the poor babies as they lay asleep. She was not a mother, and never would be. People, indeed, called her an old maid, and with reason enough, though

she was little over thirty; for had she been seventy, she could not have been more unlikely to marry. It was not her vocation. She had plenty to do in the world without that, and was satisfied with her life. The sad reflection that the children whom she tended were not her own, did not visit her mind, as, perhaps, it had visited Sophy's, making her angry through the very yearning of nature. Anne was of a different temperament, she said a little prayer softly in her heart for the children and for her sister as she stooped over the small beds. "God bless the children—and, oh, make my Sophy happy!" she said. She had never asked for nor thought of happiness to herself. It had come to her unconsciously, in her occupations, in her duties, as natural as the soft daylight, and as little sought after. But Sophy was different. Sophy wanted material for happiness—something to make her glad; she did not possess it, like her sister, in the quiet of her own heart. And from the

children's room Anne went to Ursula's, where the girl, tired with her packing, was brushing her pretty hair out before she went to bed. Everything was ready, the drawers all empty, the box full to overflowing, and supplemented by a large parcel in brown paper; and what with the fatigue and the tumult of feeling in her simple soul, Ursula was ready to cry when her cousin came in and sat down beside her.

"I have been so happy, Cousin Anne. You have been so good to me," she said.

"My dear, everybody will be good to you," said Miss Dorset, "so long as you trust everybody, Ursula. People are more good than bad. I hope when you come to Easton you will be still happier."

Ursula demurred a little to this, though she was too shy to say much. "Town is so cheerful," she said. It was not Sir Robert's way of looking at affairs.

"There is very little difference in places," said Anne, "when your heart is

light you are happy everywhere." Ursula felt that it was somewhat derogatory to her dignity to have her enjoyment set down to the score of a light heart. But against such an assertion what could she say?

CHAPTER IX.

COMING HOME.

THE party which set out from Suffolk Street next morning was a mighty one; there were the children, the ayah, the new nurse whom Anne had engaged in town, to take charge of her little nephews as soon as they got accustomed to their new life; and Seton, the ancient serving-woman, whom the sisters shared between them; and Sir Robert's man, not to speak of Sir Robert himself and the Miss Dorsets and Ursula. Easton was within a dozen miles of Carlingford, so that they all travelled together as far as that town. The Dorset party went farther on to the

next station, from which they had still six miles to travel by carriage. They set down Ursula on the platform with her box and her parcel, and took leave of her, and swept out of the station again, leaving her rather forlorn and solitary among the crowd. "Disgraceful of May not to send some one to meet the child. I suppose he knew she was coming," said Sir Robert. And Ursula had something of the same feeling, as she stood looking wistfully about her. But as soon as the train was gone, her name was called in a somewhat high-pitched voice, and turning round she found herself hugged by Janey, while Johnny, fresh from school, seized her bag out of her hand by way of showing his satisfaction.

"We didn't come up till we could make sure that the Dorsets were out of the way," said Janey, "and, oh, is it really you? I am so glad to get you home."

"Why didn't you want to see the Dorsets? They are the kindest friends we have in the world," said Ursula. "How

is papa? Is he in a good humour? And the rest? Why did not some more come to meet me? I made sure there would be four at least."

"Amy and Robin have gone out to tea —they didn't want to; but papa insisted. Oh, he is very well on the whole. And Reginald is at home, of course, but I thought you would like me best. Johnnie came to carry the bag," said Janey with a natural contempt for her younger brother. "What a big parcel! You must have been getting quantities of presents, or else you must have packed very badly, for I am sure there was lots of room in the trunk when you went away."

"Oh, Janey, if you only knew what I have got there!"

"What?" said Janey, with quiet but composed interest. It never occurred to her that she could have any individual concern in the contents of the parcels. She was a tall girl who had outgrown all her frocks, or rather did outgrow them

periodically, with dark elf locks about her shoulders, which would not curl or crêper or do anything that hair ought to do. She had her thoughts always in the clouds, forming all sorts of impossible plans, as was natural to her age, and was just the kind of angular, jerky school-girl very well intentioned, but very maladroit, who is a greater nuisance to herself and everybody else than even a school-boy, which is saying a good deal. Things broke in her hands as they never broke in anybody else's; stuffs tore, furniture fell to the ground as she passed by. Ursula carefully kept her off the parcel and gave it to Johnnie. One of the railway porters, when all the rest of the passengers were disposed of, condescended to carry her trunk, and thus they set out on their way home. The parsonage was close to St. Roque, at the other end of Grange Lane. They had to walk all the way down that genteel and quiet surburban road, by the garden walls over which, at this season,

no scent of flowers came, or blossomed branches hung forth. There were red holly-berries visible, and upon one mossy old tree a gray bunch of mistletoe could be seen on the other side of the street. But how quiet it was! They scarcely met a dozen people between the station and St. Roque.

"Oh, Janey, is everybody dead?" said Ursula. "How dull it is! You should see London——"

"Ursula," said Janey firmly, "once for all, I am not going to stand this London! A nasty, smoky, muddy place, no more like Carlingford than— I am like you. You forget I have been in London; you are not speaking to ignorant ears," said Janey, drawing herself up, "and your letters were quite bad enough. You are not going to talk of nothing but your disagreeable London here. Talk to people who have never seen it!" said the girl, elevating her shoulders with the contempt of knowledge.

"That time you were at the dentist's—" said Ursula, "and call that seeing London! Cousin Anne and Cousin Sophy took me everywhere. We went to drive in the Park. We went to the Museum and the National Gallery. And, oh! Janey, listen! we went to the theatre: think of that!"

"Well, I should like to go to the theatre," said Janey, with a sigh. "But you told me in your letter. That's what comes of being the eldest. Unless you get married, or something, nobody will ever think of taking *me*."

"You are five years younger than I am," said Ursula with dignity. "Naturally, people don't think of a girl at your age. You must wait till you are older, as I have had to do. Janey! guess what is in *that?*"

"Your new dress—your ball-dress. If it isn't crumpled, as you said, you can't have danced very much. I know my dress will be in tatters if I ever go to a ball."

"I danced as much as I wished. I did

not know many people," said Ursula, drawing herself up. "Of course, at this time of the year nobody is in town, and we hardly knew anyone—and of course—"

"Of course, you only knew the fashionable people who are out of town in winter," cried Janey, with a laugh which echoed along the street. Ursula had not come home from London to be laughed at by her younger sister, she who had been petted by the Dorsets, and whose opinion even Sir Robert had asked on various occasions. She felt this downfall all the more deeply that she had been looking forward to so many long talks with Janey, and expected to live all her brief ten days' holiday over again, and to instruct her young sister's mind by the many experiences acquired in that momentous time. Poor Ursula! ten days is quite long enough to form habits at her age, and she had been taken care of, as young ladies are taken care of in society; accompanied or attended wherever she went, and made

much of. To find herself thus left to arrive and get home as she pleased, with nobody but Janey to meet her, was a terrible falling-off; and to be laughed at by Janey was the last step of all. Tears filled her eyes, she turned her shoulder to her companion, averting her head; and this was all poor Ursula had to look to. The dreary Carlingford street, papa finding fault, everything going wrong, and Janey laughing at her! To be Cousin Anne's maid, or governess to the little Indian children, would be better than this. For five minutes more she walked on in offended silence, saying nothing, though Janey, like the school-girl she was, made frequent use of her elbow to move her sister.

"Ursula!" the girl said at last, with a more potent nudge, "what's the matter? won't you speak to me?" And Janey, who had her own disappointment too, and had expected to be received with enthusiasm, burst out crying, regardless of appearances, in the middle of the street.

"Janey, for heaven's sake—people will see you! I am sure it is I who should cry, not you," said Ursula, in sudden distress.

"I don't care who sees me," sobbed Janey. "You have been enjoying yourself while we have stayed at home, and instead of being pleased to come back, or glad to see us— Oh, how can you be so cold-hearted?" she said with a fresh burst of tears.

Here the other side of the question suddenly dawned upon Ursula. She had been enjoying herself while the others stayed at home. It was quite true. Instead of feeling the shock of difference she should have thought of those who had never been so lucky as she was, who had never seen anything out of Carlingford. "Don't be so foolish, Janey," she said, "I *am* glad; —and I have brought you such beautiful presents. But when you do nothing but laugh——"

"I am sure I didn't laugh to hurt. I

only laughed for fun!" cried Janey, drying her eyes not without a little indignation; and thus peace was made, for indeed one was dying to tell all that happened, and the other dying to hear. They walked the rest of the way with their heads very close together, so absorbed that the eldest brother, coming out of the gate as they approached, stood looking at them with a smile on his face for some time before they saw him. A slight young man, not very tall, with dark hair, like Ursula's, and a somewhat anxious expression, in correct English clerical dress.

"Has it all begun already?" he said, when they came close up to him, but without perceiving him, Ursula's face inspired with the pleasure of talking, as Janey's was with the eager delight of listening. The house was built in the ecclesiastical style, with gables and mullioned windows, which excluded the light, at least, whether or not they inspired passers-by with a sense of correct art, as they were

intended to do. It was next door to the church, and had a narrow strip of shrubbery in front, planted with somewhat gloomy evergreens. The gate and door stood always open, except when Mr. May himself, coming or going, closed them momentarily, and it cannot be denied that there were outward and visible signs of a large, somewhat unruly family inside.

"Oh, Reginald!" cried Ursula. "You have come home!"

"Yes—for good," he said with a half-laugh, half-sigh. "Or for bad—who can tell? At all events, here I am."

"Why should it be for bad?" cried Janey, whose voice was always audible half-way up the street. "Oh, Ursula, something very nice has happened. He is to be warden of the old college, fancy! That *is* being provided for, papa says; and a beautiful old house."

"Warden of the old college! I thought it was always some old person who was chosen."

"But papa says he can live at home and let the house," cried Janey. "There is no reason why it should be an old gentleman, papa thinks; it is nice, because there is no work—but look at Reginald, he does not like it a bit; he is never satisfied, I am sure, I wish it was me—"

"Come in," said Reginald hastily, "I don't want all my affairs, and my character besides, to be proclaimed from the house-tops." Janey stopped indignant, to make some reply, and Ursula, grasping her arm, as she feared, with an energetic pinch, went in quickly. Little Amy had been playing in the little square hall, which was strewed with doll's-clothes, and with two or three dolls in various stages of dilapidation. Some old, ragged school-books lay in a corner, the leaves out of one of which were blowing about in the wind. Even ten days of Anne Dorset's orderly reign had opened Ursula's eyes to these imperfections.

"Oh, what a muddle!". she cried, "I don't wonder that Reginald does not care for living at home."

"Oh, I wish papa heard you!" cried Janey loudly, as Ursula led the way into the drawing-room, which was not much tidier than the hall. There was a basket-full of stockings to be mended, standing on the old work-table. Ursula felt, with a sinking of the heart, that they were waiting for her arrival, and that Janey had done nothing to them More toys and more old school-books were tossed about upon the faded old carpet. The table-cover hung uneven, one end of it dragging upon the floor. The fire was burning very low, stifled in dust and white ashes. How dismal it looked! not like a place to come home to. "Oh, I don't wonder Reginald is vexed to be made to live at home," she said once again to herself, with tears in her eyes.

"I hope you have enjoyed yourself," her brother said, as she dropped wearily

into the old easy-chair. "We have missed you very much; but I don't suppose you missed us. London was very pleasant, I suppose, even at this time of the year?"

"Oh, pleasant!" said Ursula. "If you had been with me, how you would have liked it! Suffolk Street is only an inn, but it is a very nice inn, what they call a private hotel. Far better than the great big places on the American principle, Sir Robert says. But we dined at one of those big places one day, and it was very amusing. Scores of people, and great mirrors that made them look hundreds. And such quantities of lights and servants; but Sir Robert thought Suffolk Street was very much the best. And I went to two theatres and to a ball. They were so kind. Sophy Dorset laughs at me sometimes, but Anne is an angel," said Ursula fervently. "I never knew any one so good in my life."

"That is not saying much," said Janey, "for none of us are very good, and you

know nobody else. Anne Dorset is an old maid."

"Oh, Janey! how dare you?"

"And, for that matter, so is Sophy. Papa says so. He says she was jilted, and that she will never get a husband."

"Hold your tongue," said Reginald fiercely, "if we are to hear what my father says at second hand through an imp like you—"

"Oh, yes," said Janey, mocking, "that is because you are not friends with papa."

"Janey, come and help me to take off my things," said Ursula, seeing that Reginald would probably proceed to strong measures and box his sister's ears. "If you were older, you would not talk like that," she said, with dignity, as they went upstairs. "Oh, dear Janey, you can't think how different Cousin Anne and Sophy are, who are not girls, like us. They never talk unkindly of other people. You would get to think it childish, as I

do, if you had been living with Cousin Anne."

"Stuff!" said Janey. "Papa is not childish, I hope. And it was he who said all that. I don't care what your fine Cousin Anne does."

Notwithstanding, the reproof thus administered went to Janey's heart; for to a girl of fifteen, whose next sister is almost twenty, the reproach of being childish is worse than any other. She blushed fiery-red, and though she scoffed, was moved. Besides, though it suited her to quote him for the moment, she was very far from putting any unbounded faith in papa.

"Just wait a moment! See what Cousin Anne, whom you think so little of, has sent you," said Ursula, sitting down on the floor with the great parcel in her lap, carefully undoing the knots; for she had read Miss Edgeworth's stories in her youth, and would not have cut the strings for the world; and when the new dresses

in all their gloss and softness, were spread out upon the old carpet, which scarcely retained one trace of colour, Janey was struck dumb.

"Is that," she said faltering and conscious-stricken, "for *me?*"

"This is for you; though you think them old maids—and that they will never get husbands," said Ursula, indignantly. "What a thing for a girl to say! And, indeed, I don't think Cousin Anne will ever get a husband. There is not one in the world half good enough for her—not one! Yes, this is for you. They went themselves, and looked over half the things in the shop before they could get one to please them. They did not say 'Janey is an unkind little thing, that will repeat all she hears about us, and does not care for us a bit.' They said, 'Ursula, we must choose frocks for Janey and Amy. Come and help us to get what they will like best.'"

Janey's lips quivered, and two very big

tears came into her eyes. She was stricken with the deepest compunction, but her pride did not permit her to give in all at once.

"I daresay you told her how badly off we were," she said.

"I told her nothing about it, and she did not say a word—not a word, as if it were a charity—only to please you—to let you see that you were remembered; but I daresay it is quite true after all," said Ursula, with lofty irony, "that Cousin Anne will never get a husband, and that they are old maids."

"Oh, you know I didn't mean it!" said Janey, giving way to her tears.

Then Ursula got up and took off her hat and smoothed her hair, feeling satisfied with her success, and went downstairs again to Reginald, who was seated on the dingy sofa waiting for her, to answer her questions about the great event which had happened since she had been away. Ursula's mind was full of

the shock of the sharp impression made by her return, though the impression itself began to wear away.

"I can understand why you don't care about living at home," she said. "Oh, I wonder if I could do anything to mend it! I am so glad you have got something, Reginald. If you have a good servant, you might be quite comfortable by yourself, and we could come and see you. I should not feel it a bit—not a single bit; and it would be so much nicer for you."

"You are mistaken," said her brother. "It is not staying at home I object to. We are not very tidy or very comfortable, perhaps, but we all belong to each other, at least. It is not that, Ursula."

"What is it then? Janey says," said Ursula, drawing a long breath of awe and admiration, "that you are to have two hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"For doing nothing," he said.

"For doing nothing?" She looked up at him a little bewildered, for his tone

struck Ursula as not at all corresponding with the delightful character of the words he said. "But, Reginald, how nice, how very nice it sounds! How lucky you must have been! How could it happen that such a delightful thing should come to one of us? We are always so unlucky, papa says."

"If you think this luck—" said Reginald. "He does, and he is quite pleased; but how do you suppose I can be pleased? Thrust into a place where I am not wanted—where I can be of no use. A dummy, a practical falsehood. How can I accept it, Ursula? I tell you it is a sinecure!"

Ursula looked at him with eyes round with wonder. He seemed to be speaking in some different language of which she understood nothing. "What is a sinecure?" she said.

CHAPTER X.

PAPA.

"URSULA has come back!" cried the little ones, who had returned from their tea-party, running to meet their father at the door.

Mr. May was very good, except by moments, to his younger children. He was not, indeed, an unkind father to any of them; but he had never forgiven Providence for leaving him with his motherless family upon his hands, a man so utterly unfit for the task. Perhaps he did not put this exactly into words, but he felt it deeply, and had never got over it. There were so many things that he could

have done better, and there were so many people who could have done this better; and yet it was precisely to him, not a person adapted to the charge of children, that it had been given to do it! This seemed to argue a want of judgment in the regulation of mortal affairs which irritated him all the more because he was a clergyman, and had to persuade other people that everything that happened to them was for the best. He was a man of some culture, and literary power, and wrote very pleasant "thoughtful" papers for some of the Church magazines; but these compositions, though very easy to read, were only brought into the world by elaborate precautions on the part of the family, which scarcely dared to speak above its breath when papa was "writing;" for on such occasions he could be very savage, as the occasional offender knew. He was a man with an imposing person, good-looking, and of very bland and delightful manners, when he chose. But yet

he had never made friends, and was now at fifty-five the incumbent of St. Roque, with a small income and a humble position in the church hierarchy of Carlingford. He preached better than any other of the Carlingford clergymen, looked better, had more reputation out of the place; and was of sufficiently good family, and tolerably well connected. Yet he never got on, never made any real advance in life. Nobody could tell what was the cause of this, for his opinions were moderate and did not stand in his way—indeed within the limits of moderation he had been known to modify his principles, now inclining towards the high, then towards the low, according as circumstances required, though never going too far in either direction. Such a man ought to have been successful, according to all rules, but he was not. He was generally in debt and always needy. His eldest son, James, was in India, doing well, and had often sent a contribution towards

the comfort of the family, and especially to help Reginald at College. But James had married a year before, and accordingly was in a less favourable position for sending help. And indeed these windfalls had never produced much effect upon the family, who heard of James' gifts vaguely without profiting by them. All this *donna à penser* to the elder children. Having no softening medium of a mother's eyes to look at their father through, they were more bold in judging him than, perhaps, they ought to have been; and he did not take pains to fascinate his children, or throw the glamour of love into their eyes. He took it for granted, frankly and as a part of nature, that he himself was the first person to be considered in all matters. So he was, of course—so the father, the bread-winner, the head of the family ought to be; and when he has a wife to keep him upon that pedestal, and to secure that his worship shall be respected, it becomes natural, and the first

article of the family creed; but somehow when a man has to set forth and uphold this principle himself, it is less successful; and in Mr. May's case it was not successful at all. He was not severe or tyrannical, so that they might have rebelled. He only held the conviction quite honestly and ingeniously, that his affairs came first, and were always to be attended to. Nothing could be said against this principle—but it tells badly in the management of a family unless, indeed, as we have said, it is managed through the medium of the mother, who takes away all imputation of selfishness by throwing an awful importance and tender sanctity over all that happens to be desirable or necessary for "papa."

Mr. May had no wife to watch over the approaches of his study, and talk of him with reverential importance to her children. This was not his fault, but his misfortune. Bitterly had he mourned and resented the blow which took her from him, and deeply felt the loss she was to him—this

was how he spoke of it always, the loss to him; and probably poor Mrs. May who had adored and admired her husband to the last day of her life, would have been more satisfied with this way of mourning for her than any other; but naturally Ursula, who thought of the loss to herself and the other children, found fault with this limitation of the misfortune. A man who has thus to fight for himself does not appear in an amiable aspect to his family, to whom, as to all young creatures, it seemed natural that *they* should be the first objects; and as they were a great trouble and burden to him, perhaps the children did not always bear their most amiable aspect to their father. Both looked selfish to the other, and Mr. May, no doubt, could have made out quite as good a case as the children did. He thought all young people were selfish, taking everything they could, trying to extract even the impossible from the empty purse and strained patience of their

elders; and they thought that he was indifferent to them, thinking about himself as it is a capital sin in a parent to do; and both of them were right and both wrong, as indeed may be said in every case to which there are two sides.

"Ursula has come!" cried the two little ones. Amy and Robin could read their father's face better than they could read these instruments of torture called printed books, and they saw that he was in a good humour, and that they were safe to venture upon the playful liberty of seizing him, one by each hand, and dragging him in. He was a tall man, and the sight of him triumphantly dragged in by these imps, the youngest of whom was about up to his knees, was pretty, and would have gone to the heart of any spectator. He was not himself unconscious of this, and when he was in a good humour, and the children were neat and tolerably dressed he did not object to being seen by the passers-by dragged

up his own steps by those two little ones. The only passers-by, however, on this occasion were a retired shopkeeper and his wife, who had lately bought one of the oldest houses in Grange Lane, and who had come out for a walk as the day was fine. "Mark my words, Tozer," the lady was saying, "that's a good man though he's a church parson. Them as children hangs on to like that, ain't got no harm in them."

"He's a rum un, he is," said Mr. Tozer in reply. It was a pity that the pretty spectacle of the clergyman with his little boy and girl should have been thus thrown away upon a couple of Dissenters, yet it was not without its effect. Amy pulled one arm and Robin pulled the other. They were dark haired children like all the Mays, and as this peculiarity is rare among children, it gave these two a certain piquancy.

"Well, well," he said, "take me to Ursula," and after he had kissed his newly arrived daughter, he sat down in the faded

drawing-room with much geniality, and took one child on each knee.

"I hope you have enjoyed yourself, Ursula," he said, "of course, we have missed you. Janey has done her best, but she is not very clever at housekeeping, nor does she understand many things that people require as you have learned to do."

"Oh, I am so glad you have missed me!" said Ursula, "I mean sorry; I have enjoyed myself very very much. The Dorsets were so kind, kinder than anybody ever was before."

"And, papa, they have sent me a new dress."

"And me too, papa," chirruped little Amy on his knee.

"You too, Mouse! it was very kind of them; and you went to the Tower and did all the lions, Ursula? that is the lot of country cousins, and the Dorsets would spare you nothing, I suppose."

"We went to much better things," said Ursula, producing her theatres and her

ball as she had done before. "And, oh, papa, I like them so much. I wish we lived a little nearer. Those poor little Indian children, I fear they will be too much for cousin Anne; they looked so pale and so peevish, not like our children here."

"Well, they are not pale at all events," said Mr. May, putting them down, "run and play like good children. You will have heard that we have had something happening to us, even in this quiet place while you were away."

"Oh, I was so astonished," said Ursula, "but Reginald doesn't seem to like it. That is so odd; I should have thought he would have been overjoyed to get something. He used to talk so about having no interest."

"Reginald is like a great many other people. He does not know his own mind," said Mr. May, his countenance overcasting. Ursula knew that sign of coming storms well enough, but she was too much interested to forbear.

"What is a sinecure, papa?" she asked, her brother's last word still dwelling in her mind.

"A piece of outrageous folly," he cried, getting up and striding about the room, "all springing from the foolish books boys read nowadays, and the nonsense that is put into their minds. Mean! it means that your brother is an ass, that is what it means. After all the money that has been spent upon him—"

"But, papa, we have not spent much, have we? I thought it was his scholarship?" said Ursula with injudicious honesty. Her father turned upon her indignantly.

"I am not aware that I said we. *We* have nothing to spend upon anyone, so far as I know. I said I—the only person in the house who earns any money or is likely to do so, if Reginald goes on in this idiotical way."

Ursula grew red. She was Mr. May's own daughter, and had a temper too. "If I could earn anv money I am sure I

would," she cried, "and only too glad. I am sure it is wanted badly enough. But how is a girl to earn any money? I wish I knew how."

"You little fool, no one was thinking of you. Do a little more in the house, and nobody will ask you to earn money. Yes, this is the shape things are taking nowadays," said Mr. May, "the girls are mad to earn anyhow, and the boys, forsooth, have a hundred scruples. If women would hold their tongues and attend to their own business, I have no doubt we should have less of the other nonsense. The fact is everything is getting into an unnatural state. But if Reginald thinks I am going to maintain him in idleness at his age—"

"Papa, for heaven's sake don't speak so loud, he will hear you!" said Ursula, letting her fears of a domestic disturbance overweigh her prudence.

"He will hear me? I wish him to hear me," said Mr. May, raising his voice.

"Am I to be kept from saying what I like, how I like, in my own house, for fear that Reginald should hear me, forsooth! Ursula, I am glad to have you at home; but if you take Reginald's part in his folly, and set yourself against the head of the family, you had better go back again and at once. *He* may defy me, but I shall not be contradicted by a chit of a girl, I give you my word for that."

Ursula was silent; she grew pale now after her redness of hasty and unconsidered self-defence. Oh, for Cousin Anne to shield and calm her; what a difference it made to plunge back again thus into trouble and strife.

"He thinks it better to be idle at his father's expense than to do a little work for a handsome salary," said Mr. May, "everything is right that is extracted from his father's pocket, though it is contrary to a high code of honour to accept a sinecure. Fine reasoning that, is it not? The one wrongs nobody, while the

other wrongs you and me and all the children, who want every penny I have to spend; but Reginald is much too fine to think of that. He thinks it quite natural that I should go on toiling and stinting myself."

"Papa, it may be very wrong what he is doing; but if you think he wants to take anything from you—"

"Hold your tongue," said her father, "I believe in deeds, not in words. He has it in his power to help me, and he chooses instead, for a miserable fantastic notion of his own, to balk all my care for him. Of course the hospital was offered to him out of respect for me. No one cares for *him*. He is about as much known in Carlingford as—little Amy is. Of course it is to show their respect to me. And here he comes with his fantastic nonsense about a sinecure! Who is he that he should make such a fuss? Better men than he is have held them, and will to the end of

the chapter. A sinecure! what does he call a sinecure?"

"That is just what I want to know," said Ursula under her breath, but her father did not, fortunately, hear this ejaculation. Reginald had gone out, and happily was not within hearing, and Mr. May calmed down by degrees, and told Ursula various circumstances about the parish and the people which brought him down out of his anger and comforted her after that passage of arms. But the commotion left him in an excitable state, a state in which he was very apt to say things which were disagreeable, and to provoke his children to wrath in a way which Ursula thought was very much against the scriptural rule.

"Things in the parish are going on much as usual," he said, "Mrs. Sam Hurst is as kind as ever."

"Indeed!" said Ursula with a suppressed snort of anger. Mr. May gave the kind of offensive laugh, doubly offensive to every woman, which men give when

their vanity is excited and when there is, according to the common expression, a lady in the case.

"Yes, she is very kind," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "She has had the children to tea a great many times since you have been away. To show my sense of her kindness, you must ask her one of these days. A woman who understands children is always a valuable friend for a man in my position—and also, Ursula, for a girl in yours."

"She may understand children, but they are not fond of her," said Ursula, with a gleam of malice which restored her father to good humour. He had no more idea of marrying a second time than of flying. He was tenderly attached in his way to his wife's memory, and quite sufficiently troubled by the number of dwellers in his house already; but he rather liked as a good looking man in his wane generally does, to think that he could marry if he pleased, and to hold the possibility

over the heads of his household, as a chastisement of all their sins against him which he could use at any time. All the Mays grew hot and angry at the name of Mrs. Sam Hurst, and their fear and anger delighted their father. He liked to speak of her to provoke them, and partly for that, partly for other reasons of his own, kept up a decorous semi-flirtation with his neighbour who lived next door, and thus excited the apprehensions and resentment of the girls every day of their lives. When Ursula thought of Mrs. Sam Hurst she wished for the Dorsets no more. It was above all things, she felt, her duty to be here on the spot to defend the family from that woman's machinations. The idea put energy into her. She ceased to be tired, ceased to feel herself "after her journey," capable of nothing but sitting still and hearing of all that had been done since she went away.

In the course of the evening, however, Ursula took advantage of a quiet moment

to look up the dictionary and make herself quite safe about the meaning of the word sinecure. It was not the first time she had heard it, as may be supposed. She had heard of lucky people who held sinecures, and she had heard them denounced as evil things, but without entering closely into the meaning. Now she had a more direct interest in it, and it must be confessed that she was not at all frightened by the idea, or disposed to reject it as Reginald did. Ursula had not learnt much about public virtue, and to get a good income for doing nothing, or next to nothing, seemed to her an ideal sort of way of getting one's livelihood. She wished with a sigh that there were sinecures which could be held by girls. But no, in that as in other things "gentlemen" kept all that was good to themselves; and Ursula was disposed to treat Reginald's scruples with a very high hand. But she did not choose that her father should attack him with all these disagreeable

speeches about maintaining him in idleness, aud taunts about the money that had been spent on his education. That was not the way to manage him the girl felt; but Ursula resolved to take her brother in hand herself, to argue with him how foolish it was, to point out to him that if he did not take it some one else would, and that the country would not gain anything while he would lose, to laugh at his over delicacy, to show him how delightful it would be if he was independent, and what a help to all his brothers and sisters. In short it seemed quite simple to Ursula, and she felt her path mapped out before her, and triumphed in every stage of her argument, inventing the very weakest replies for Reginald to make. Full of the inspiration of this purpose she felt that it was in every way well that she had come home. With Reginald settled close by, going away no longer, standing by her in her difficulties, and even perhaps, who could tell? taking her to parties, and

affording her the means now and then of asking two or three people to tea, the whole horizon of her life brightened for Ursula. She became reconciled to Carlingford. All that had to be done was to show Reginald what his duty was, and how foolish he was to hesitate, and she could not allow herself to suppose that *when it was put before him properly* there could long remain much difficulty upon that score.

CHAPTER XI.

PHŒBE'S PREPARATIONS.

A FEW days after Ursula's return home, another arrival took place in Carlingford. Phœbe Beecham, after considering the case fully, and listening with keen interest to all the indications she could pick up as to the peculiarities of her grandfather's house, and the many things in life at Carlingford which were "unlike what she had been used to," had fully made up her mind to dare the difficulties of that unknown existence, and to devote herself in her mother's place to the care of her grandmother and the confusion of Mrs. Tom. This was partly undertaken out of

a sense of duty, partly out of that desire for change and the unknown, which has to content itself in many cases with the very mildest provision, and partly because Phœbe's good sense perceived the necessity of the matter. She was by no means sure what were the special circumstances that made "Mrs. Tom" disagreeable to her mother, but she was deeply sensible of the importance of preventing Mrs. Tom from securing to herself and her family all that Mr. and Mrs. Tozer had to leave. Phœbe was not mercenary in her own person, but she had no idea of giving up any "rights," and she felt it of the utmost importance that her brother, who was unfortunately by no means so clever as herself, should be fully provided against all the contingencies of life. She was not concerned about herself in that particular. Phœbe felt it a matter of course that she should marry and marry well. Self-confidence of this assured and tranquil sort serves a great many excellent

purposes—it made her even generous in her way. She believed in her star, in her own certain good-fortune, in herself; and therefore her mind was free to think and to work for other people. She knew very well by all her mother said, and by all the hesitations of both her parents, that she would have many disagreeable things to encounter in Carlingford, but she felt so sure that nothing could really humiliate *her*, or pull her down from her real eminence, that the knowledge conveyed no fears to her mind. When this confidence in her own superiority to all debasing influences is held by the spotless princess in the poem it is the most beautiful of human sentiments, and why it should not be equally elevated when entertained by a pink and plump modern young woman, well up in all nineteenth century refinements, and the daughter of the minister of the Crescent Chapel, it would be hard to say. Phœbe held it with the strongest faith.

"Their ways of thinking perhaps, and their ways of living, are not those which I have been used to," she said; "but how does that affect me? I am myself whatever happens; even if poor dear grandmamma's habits are not refined, which I suppose is what you mean, mamma, that does not make me unrefined. A lady must always be a lady wherever she is—Una," she continued, using strangely enough the same argument which has occurred to her historian, "is not less a princess when she is living among the satyrs. Of course, I am not like Una—and neither are they like the wild people in the wood."

Mrs. Beecham did not know much about Una, except that she was somebody in a book; but she kissed her daughter, and assured her that she was "a real comfort," and devoted herself to her comfort for the few days that remained, doing everything that it was possible to do to show her

love, and, so to speak gratitude to the good child who was thus throwing herself into the breach. The Beechams were in no want of money to buy what pleased them, and the mother made many additions to Phœbe's wardrobe, which that young lady herself thought quite unnecessary, not reflecting that other sentiments besides that of simple love for herself were involved.

"They shall see that my daughter is not just like one of their common-looking girls," Mrs Beecham said to her husband; and he shared the feeling, though he could not but think within himself that her aspect was of very much more importance than the appearance of Phœbe Tozer's child could possibly be as *his* daughter.

"You are quite right, my dear," he replied, "those sort of vulgar people are but too ready to look down upon a pastor's family. They ought to be made to see the difference."

The consequence of this was that Phœbe was fitted out like a young princess

going on her travels. Ursula May would have been out of her wits with delight, had half these fine things come her way; but Phœbe took them very calmly.

"I have never undervalued dress," she said, "as some girls do; I think it is a very important social influence. And even without that, mamma, so long as it pleases you—" So with this mixture of philosophy and affection all went well.

"We must call on Mrs. Copperhead before you go; they would think it strange, after all the interest they have shown in us."

"Have they shown an interest in us?" said Phœbe. "Of course we must call—and Mrs. Copperhead is a lady, but as for Mr. Copperhead, mamma—"

"Hush! he is the leading member, and very influential in the connection. A pastor's family must not be touchy, Phœbe. We must put up with a great many things. There ought to be peace among brethren,

you know, and harmony is the first thing that is essential in a church—"

"I wonder if harmony would be as essential, supposing Mr. Copperhead to come to grief, mamma."

"Phœbe! slang from you—who have always set your face against it."

"What can one talk but slang when one thinks of such a person?" said Phœbe gravely; and thus saying she opened the door for her mother, and they went out in their best gowns to pay their visit. Mrs. Copperhead was very civil to the pastor's family. It was not in her to be uncivil to anyone; but in her soft heart she despised them a little, and comported herself to them with that special good behaviour, and dignified restraint, which the best natured people reserve for their inferiors. For though she went to chapel, taken there by Mr. Copperhead, she was "church" at heart. The interest which Mrs. Beecham took in everything, and the praises she bestowed on the ball, did not relax her cold-

ness. They were too well off, too warm and silken to call forth her sympathies, and there was little in common between them to afford any ground for meeting.

Yes, Mr. Copperhead was quite well—she was quite well—her son was quite well. She hoped Mr. Beecham was well. She had heard that most people were pleased with the ball, thank you. Oh, Miss Beecham was going away—indeed! She hoped the weather would be good; and then Mrs. Copperhead sat erect upon her sofa, and did not try to say any more. Though she had not the heart of a mouse, she too could play the great lady when occasion served. Clarence, however, was much more hospitable than his mother, He liked Phœbe, who could talk almost as if she was in society, as girls talk in novels. He knew, of course, that she was not in society, but she was a girl whom a fellow could get on with, who had plenty to say for herself, who was not a lay figure like many young ladies; and then she was

pretty, pink, and golden, "a piece of colour" which was attractive to the eye. He soon found out where she was going, and let her know that he himself intended a visit to the neighbourhood.

"The Dorsets live near," he said. "Relations of my mother's. You saw them at the ball. I daresay you will meet them somewhere about." This, it is to be feared, Clarence said in something of his mother's spirit, with a warm sense of superiority, for he knew that the pastor's daughter was very unlikely to meet the Dorsets. Phœbe, however, was equal to the occasion.

"I am not at all likely to meet them," she said with a gracious smile. "For one thing, I am not going to enjoy myself, but to nurse a sick person. And sick people don't go to parties. Besides, you know the foolish prejudices of society, properly so called. I think them foolish because they affect me," said Phœbe, with engaging frankness. "If they did not affect me,

probably I should think them all right."

"What foolish prejudices?" said Clarence, thinking she was about to say something about her inferior position, and already feeling flattered before she spoke.

"About Dissenters, you know," she said, "of course, you must be aware that we are looked down upon in society. It does not matter, for when people have any sense, as soon as they know us they do us justice; but of course you must be aware that the prejudice exists."

Clarence did know, and with some bitterness; for Mr. Copperhead, though he did not care much, perhaps, about religion, cared for his chapel and stood by it with unswerving strictness. His son, who was an Oxford man, and respectful of all the prejudices of society, did not like this. But what could he do against the obstinate dissentership of his father. This, as much as anything else, had acted upon the crowd the night of the ball, and made them all nobodies. He hesitated to make

any reply, and his face flushed with shame and displeasure. Phœbe felt that she had avenged upon Clarence his mother's haughty politeness. She had brought home to him a sense of the social inferiority which was common to them both. Having done this, she was satisfied, and proceeded to soften the blow.

"It cannot fall upon you, who are in so much better a position, as it does upon us," said Phœbe. "We are the very head and front of the offending, a Dissenting minister's family!—Society and its charms are not for us. And I hope we know our place," she said with mock humility, "when people have any sense and come to know us it is different; and for the foolish ones I don't care. But you see from that, I am not likely to meet your cousins, am I?" she added with a laugh.

"If you mean that they are among the foolish ones——"

"Oh, no; I don't. But you can't suppose they will take the trouble to find *me*

out. Why should they? People entirely out of my range, and that have nothing to do with me. So you may be quite sure I am right when I say we shan't meet."

"Well," said Clarence, piqued, "I am going to Easton, and I shall see you, if Mrs. Beecham will give me permission to call."

"She will give you the address along with that; but till then, good-bye," said Phœbe. To tell the truth, she had no desire to see Clarence Copperhead in Carlingford. Perhaps, he meant something, perhaps he did not—at this stage of the proceedings it was a matter of indifference to Phœbe, who certainly had not allowed "her affections" to become engaged. If he did mean anything, was it likely that he could support unmoved the grandfather and grandmother who were, or had been "in trade?" On the other hand, was it not better that he should know the worst? Phœbe was no husband-hunter. She con-

templated the issue with calm and composure, however it might turn out.

"He asked me if he might call," said Mrs. Beecham, in some excitement. "I don't care much to have you seen, my darling, out of your own father's house."

"Just as you please, mamma—just as it suits best," said Phœbe, dismissing the subject. She was not anxious. A good deal depended on whether he meant anything or nothing, but even that did not conclude the subject, for she had not made up her own mind.

"Why didn't you tell them about the Mays?" said Clarence, as the two ladies went out. "They live in Carlingford, and I should think it would be pleasant on both sides."

"My dear boy, you forget the difference of position," said Mrs. Copperhead. "They are Dissenters."

"Oh, I like that," cried Clarence, half angry, as himself sharing the disadvantages of the connection. "A needy beggar

like May has a great deal to stand upon. I like that."

"But it is true all the same," said Mrs. Copperhead, shaking her head. "And you can see the difference at once. I daresay Miss Beecham is a very clever young woman, but between her and Miss May what a difference there is! Anyone can see it—"

"I am afraid then I am stupid, for I can't see it, mother. They are both pretty girls, but for amusing you and that sort of thing give me Phœbe. She is worth twenty of the other. As sharp as a needle, and plenty to say for herself. That is the kind of girl I like."

"I am very sorry for it. I hope that is not the kind of wife you will like," said Mrs. Copperhead, with a sigh.

"Oh, wife! they haven't a penny, either the one or the other," said Clarence, with delightful openness, "and we may be sure that would not suit the governor even if it suited me."

In the meantime Mrs. Beecham and Phœbe were walking up the broad pavement of Portland Place towards their home.

"It is pleasant to see the mother and the son together," said Mrs. Beecham, who was determined to see everything in the best light that concerned the Copperheads. "They are so devoted to each other, and Phœbe, dear—I don't like to talk in this way to a sensible girl like you, but you must see it with your own eyes. You have certainly made a great impression upon Clarence Copperhead. When he said he hoped to see you in Carlingford, and asked, might he call? it was exactly like asking my permission to pay you his addresses; it is very flattering, but it is embarrassing as well."

"I do not feel particularly flattered, mamma; and I think if I were you I would not give him the address."

Mrs. Beecham looked anxiously in her daughter's face.

"Is it from prudence, Phœbe, or is it that you don't like him, that you wouldn't have him if he asked you?"

"We must wait till he does ask me," said Phœbe, decisively. "Till then I can't possibly tell. But I don't want him at Carlingford. I know that grandpapa and grandmamma are—in trade."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Beecham, in a subdued voice.

"Dissenters, and in trade; and he is going to stay with the Dorsets, fine county people. Don't give him the address; if we meet by chance, there is no harm done. I am not ashamed of anyone belonging to me. But you can say that you don't think his father would like him to be visiting me at Carlingford—which I am sure would be quite true."

"Indeed he might go much farther without finding anyone so well worth visiting," said the mother, indignant, to which Phœbe nodded her head in tranquil assent.

"That is neither here nor there," she said, "you can always tell him so, and that will please Mr. Copperhead, if ever be comes to hear of it. He thought at one time that I was too entertaining. One knows what that means. I should like him to see how little I cared."

"But, my dear, Clarence Copperhead would be worth—a little attention. He could give a girl—a very nice position," Mrs. Beecham faltered, looking at her daughter between every word.

"I am not saying anything against Clarence Copperhead," said Phœbe, with composure, "but I should like his dear papa to know how little I care, and that you have refused him my address."

This was all she said on the subject. Phœbe was quite ready to allow that Clarence was everything that her mother had said, and she had fully worked out her own theory on marriage, which will probably be hereafter expounded in these pages, so that she was not at all shocked

by having his advantages thus pointed out to her. But there was no hurry, she said to herself. If it was not Clarence Copperhead, it would be some one else, and why should she, at this early stage of her career, attempt to precipitate the designs of Providence? She had plenty of time before her, and was in no hurry for any change; and a genuine touch of nature in her heart made her anxious for an opportunity of showing her independence to that arrogant and offensive "leading member," who made the life of the office-bearers in the Crescent a burden to them. If she could only so drive him into a corner, that he should be obliged to come to her in his despair, and beg her to accept his son's hand to save him from going off in a galloping consumption, that would have been a triumph after Phœbe's heart. To be sure this was a perfectly vain and wildly romantic hope—it was the only bit of wild and girlish romance in the bosom of a very well-educated, well-intentioned

and sensible young woman. She had seen her parents put up with the arrogance of the millionaire for a long time without rebelling any more than they did; but Mr. Copperhead had gone further than Phœbe could bear; and thoroughly as she understood her own position, and all its interests, this one vain fancy had found a footing in her mind. If she could but humble him and make him sue to her. It was not likely, but for such a triumph the sensible Phœbe would have done much. It was the one point on which she was silly, but on that she was as silly as any cynic could desire.

And thus with a huge trunk full of charming dresses, a dressing-case fit for any bride, the prettiest travelling costume imaginable, and everything about her fit, Mrs. Beecham fondly thought, for a duke's daughter, Phœbe junior took her departure, to be the comfort of her grandmamma, and to dazzle Carlingford. Her fond parents accompanied her to the

station and placed her in a carriage, and feed a guard heavily to take care of and watch over her. "Not but that Phœbe might be safely trusted to take care of herself anywhere," they said. In which expression of their pride in their daughter, the observant reader may see a proof of their own origin from the humbler classes. They would probably have prided themselves on her timidity and helplessness had they been a little better born.

CHAPTER XII.

GRANGE LANE.

MR. and Mrs. Tozer had retired from business several years before. They had given up the shop with its long established connection, and all its advantages, to Tom, their son, finding themselves to have enough to live upon in ease, and indeed luxury; and though Mrs. Tozer found the house in Grange Lane shut in by the garden walls to be much duller than her rooms over the shop in High Street, where she saw everything that was going on, yet the increase in gentility was unquestionable. The house which they were fortunate enough to secure in this

desirable locality, had been once in the occupation of Lady Weston, and there was accordingly an aroma of high life about it, although somebody less important had lived in it in the meantime, and it had fallen into a state of considerable dilapidation, which naturally made it cheaper. Mr. Tozer had solidly repaired all that was necessary for comfort, but he had not done anything in those external points of paint and decoration, which tell so much in the aspect of a house. Lady Weston's taste had been florid, and the walls continued as she had left them, painted and papered with faded wreaths which were apt to look dissipated, as they ought to have been refreshed and renewed years before. But outside, where the wreaths do not fade, there was a delightful garden charmingly laid out, in which Lady Weston had once held her garden parties, and where the crocuses and other spring bulbs, which had been put in with a lavish hand, during Lady Weston's extravagant reign,

had already begun to blow. The violets were peeping out from among their leaves on a sheltered bank, and Christmas roses, overblown, making a great show with their great white stars, in a corner. Tozer himself soon took a great interest in this little domain out of doors, and was for ever pottering about the flowers, obeying, with the servility of ignorance, the gardener's injunctions. Mrs. Tozer, however, who was in weak health, and consequently permitted to be somewhat cross and contradictory, regretted the High Street.

"Talk of a garden," she said, "a thing as never changes except according to the seasons! Up in the town there was never a day the same, something always happening—Soldiers marching through, or Punch and Judy, or a row at the least. It is the cheerfullest place in the whole world, I do believe; shut up here may do for the gentry, but I likes the streets and what's going on. You may call me vulgar if you please, but so I do."

Tozer prudently said nothing to such outbursts except a soothing exhortation to wait till summer, when she would find the benefit of the fresh air, not to speak of the early vegetables; and he himself found the garden an unspeakable resource. At first, indeed, he would stroll up to the shop of a morning, especially if any new consignment of first rate York hams, or cheese, was coming in, which he loved to turn over and test by smell and touch; but by and by the ancient butterman made a discovery, such as we are all apt to make when we get old and step out of the high road of life. He found out that his son did not appreciate his advice, and that Mrs. Tom cared still less for his frequent appearances. Indeed, he himself once saw her bounce out of the shop as he entered, exclaiming audibly, "Here's that fussy old man again." Tozer was an old man it is true, but nobody (under eighty) cares to have the epithet flung in his teeth; and to be in the way is always unpleasant. He had

self-command enough to say nothing about it, except in a very modified shape to his wife, who was ready enough to believe anything unpleasant about Mrs. Tom; but he took to gardening with ardour from that day; and learned all about the succession of the flowers, and how long one set lasted, and which kind should be put into the ground next. He would even take off his coat and do a tolerable day's work under the gardener's direction, to the great advantage of his health and temper, while Mrs. Tozer grumbled upstairs. She was getting more and more helpless about the house, unable to see after the stout maid-of-all-work, who in her turn grumbled much at the large house, for which one maid was not enough. Many altercations took place in consequence between the mistress and servant.

"The ungrateful hussy hasn't even as many rooms to do as she had in the High Street, when there was the 'prentices' beds to make," Mrs. Tozer said indig-

nantly to her husband; but Jane on her side pointed to the length of passage, the stairs, the dining and drawing-rooms, where there had once only been a parlour.

"Cook and 'ousemaid's little enough," said Jane; "there did ought to be a man in this kind of 'ouse; but as there's only two in family, I shouldn't say nothing if I had a girl under me."

Things were gravitating towards this girl at the time of Phœbe's arrival; but nothing had as yet been finally decided upon. Jane, however, had bestirred herself to get the young lady's room ready with something like alacrity. A young person coming to the house promised a little movement and change, which was always something, and Jane had no doubt that Phœbe would be on her side in respect to the "girl." "She'll want waiting upon, and there'll always be sending of errands," Jane said to herself. She knew by experience "what young 'uns is in a house."

There was something, perhaps, in all

the preparations for her departure which had thrown dust in Phœbe Beecham's eyes. She had been too sharp-sighted not to see into her mother's qualms and hesitations about her visit to Carlingford, and the repeated warnings of both parents as to the "difference from what she had been accustomed to;" aud she thought she had fully prepared herself for what she was to encounter. But probably the elaborate outfit provided by her mother, and the importance attached to her journey had to some degree obliterated this impression, for it is certain that when Phœbe saw an old man in a shabby coat, with a wisp of a large white neckcloth round his throat, watching anxiously for the arrival of the train as it came up, she sustained a shock which she had not anticipated. It was about five years since she had seen her grandfather, an interval due to hazard rather than purpose, though, on the whole, the elder Beechams had not been sorry to keep their parents and their children apart.

Phœbe, however, knew her grandfather perfectly well as soon as she saw him, though he had not perceived her, and was wandering anxiously up and down in search of her. She held back in her corner for the moment, to overcome the shock. Yes, there could be no doubt about it; there he was, he whom she was going to visit, under whose auspices she was about to appear in Carlingford. He was not even like an old Dissenting minister, which had been her childish notion of him. He looked neither more nor less than what he was, an old shopkeeper, very decent and respectable, but a little shabby and greasy, like the men whose weekly bills she had been accustomed to pay for her mother. She felt an instant conviction that he would call her "Ma'am," if she went up to him, and think her one of the quality. Poor Phœbe! she sat back in her corner and gave a gasp of horror and dismay, but, having done this, she was herself again. She gave her head a shake, like

one who is about to take a plunge, rose lightly to her feet, took up her bag, and stepped out of the carriage, just as Mr. Tozer strolled anxiously past for the third time.

"Grandpapa!" she cried with a smile. Mr. Tozer was almost as much taken aback by this apparition as Phœbe herself had been. He knew that his daughter had made great strides in social elevation, and that her children, when he had seen them last, had been quite like "gentlefolks' children;" but to see this young princess step forth graciously out of a first-class carriage, and address him as "Grandpapa," took away his breath.

"Why—why—why, Miss! you ain't little Phœbe?" he cried, scared out of his seven senses, as he afterwards said.

"Yes, indeed, I am little Phœbe," she said, coming up and kissing him dutifully. She was half-disgusted, he half-frightened; but yet it was right, and Phœbe did it. "I have only two boxes and a bag," she

said, "besides my dressing-case. If you will get a cab, grandpapa, I will go and see after the luggage."

Old Tozer thought he could have carried the bag himself, and left the boxes to follow; but he succumbed humbly and obeyed.

"She don't seem a bit proud," he said to himself; "but, good Lord, what'll she ever say to my old woman?"

He saw the contrast very clearly between his wife and this splendid grandchild. It did not strike him so much in his own case.

"How is grandmamma?" said Phœbe, blandly; "better, I hope? Mamma was so sorry not to come herself; but you know, of course, she has a great many things to do. People in town are obliged to keep up certain appearances. You are a great deal better off in the country, grandpapa."

"Lord bless you, my dear, do you call Carlingford the country?" said Mr. Tozer. "That is all you know about it. Your

granny and I are humble folks, but the new minister at Salem is one as keeps up appearances with the best. Your mother was always inclined for that. I hope she has not brought you up too fine for the likes of us."

"I hope not, indeed," said Phœbe. "No fear of my being too fine for my duty, grandpapa. Do you live down this nice road? How pretty it is! how delightful these gardens must be in summer. I beg your pardon for calling it the country. It is so quiet and so nice, it seems the country to me."

"Ah, to be sure; brought up in the London smoke," said Mr. Tozer. "I don't suppose, now, you see a bit of green from year's end to year's end? Very bad for the 'ealth, that is; but I can't say you look poorly on it. Your colour's fresh, so was your mother's before you. To be sure, she wasn't cooped up like you,"

"Oh, we do get a little fresh air sometimes—in the parks, for instance," said

Phœbe. She was somewhat piqued by the idea that she was supposed to live in London smoke.

"Ah, the parks are always something; but I suppose it takes you a day's journey to get at them," said Mr. Tozer, shaking his head. "You mustn't mind your grandmother's temper just at first, my dear. She's old, poor soul, and she ain't well, and she's sometimes cross above a bit. But she'll be that proud of you, she won't know if she's on her 'eels or 'er 'ead; and as for a cross word now and again, I hope as you won't mind—"

"I shan't mind anything, grandpapa," said Phœbe, sweetly, "so long as I can be of use."

And these were, indeed, the dutiful sentiments with which she made her entry upon this passage in her life, not minding anything but to be of use. The first glimpse of old Tozer, indeed, made it quite evident to Phœbe that nothing but duty could be within her reach. Pleasure,

friends, society, the thought of all such delights must be abandoned. And as for Clarence Copperhead and the Miss Dorsets, the notion of meeting or receiving them was too absurd. But Duty remained, and Phœbe felt herself capable of the sacrifice demanded from her. That confidence in herself which we have already indicated as a marked feature in her character, gave her the consoling certainty that she could not suffer from association with her humble relations. Whosoever saw her must do her justice, and that serene conviction preserved her from all the throes of uneasy pride which afflict inferior minds in similar circumstances. She had no wish to exhibit her grandfather and grandmother in their lowliness, nor to be ostentatious of her homely origin, as some people are in the very soreness of wounded pride; but if hazard produced the butterman in the midst of the finest of her acquaintances, Phœbe would still have been perfectly at her ease.

She would be herself, whatever happened.

In the meantime, however, it was apparent that Duty was what she had to look to; Dûty, and that alone. She had come here, not to amuse herself, not to please herself, but to do her duty; and having thus concluded upon her object, she felt comparatively happy, and at her ease.

Mrs. Tozer had put on her best cap, which was a very gorgeous creation. She had dressed herself as if for a party, with a large brooch, enclosing a curl of various coloured hair cut from the heads of her children in early life, which fastened a large worked collar over a dress of copper-coloured silk, and she rustled and shook a good deal as she came downstairs into the garden to meet her grandchild, with some excitement and sense of the "difference" which could not but be felt on one side as well as on the other. She, too, was somewhat frightened by the appearance of the young lady, who was her Phœbe's child, yet was so unlike any other scion of the

Tozer race; and felt greatly disposed to curtsey and say "Ma'am" to her.

"You've grown a deal and changed a deal since I saw you last," she said, restraining this impression, and receiving Phœbe's kiss with gratified, yet awe-struck feeling; and then her respectful alarm getting too much for her, she added, faltering, "You'll find us but humble folks; perhaps not altogether what you've been used to—"

Phœbe did not think it expedient to make any reply to this outburst of humility.

"Grandmamma, I am afraid you have over-exerted yourself, coming downstairs to meet me," she said, taking the old lady's hand, and drawing it within her arm. "Yes, I have grown; I am tall enough to be of some use; but you must not treat me as if I were a stranger. No, no; never mind my room. I am not tired; the journey is nothing. Let me take you back to your chair and make you comfort-

able. I feel myself quite at home already. The only odd thing is that I have never been here before."

"Ah, my dear, your mother thought too much of you to send you to the likes of us; that's the secret of it. She was always fond of fine folks, was my Phœbe; and I don't blame her, bringing you up quite the lady, like she's done."

"You must not find fault with mamma," said Phœbe, smiling. "What a nice cozy room! This is the dining-room, I suppose; and here is your cushion, and your footstool at this nice window. How pleasant it is, with the crocuses in all the borders already! I am not at all tired; but I am sure it must be tea-time, and I should so like a cup of tea."

"We thought," said Mrs. Tozer, "as perhaps you mightn't be used to tea at this time of day."

"Oh, it is the right time; it is the fashionable hour," said Phœbe; "everybody has tea at five. I will run upstairs

first, and take off my hat, and make myself tidy. Jane—is that her name?—don't trouble, grandmamma; Jane will show me the way."

"Well?" said Mr. Tozer to Mrs. Tozer, as Phœbe disappeared. The two old people looked at each other with a little awe; but she, as was her nature, took the most depressing view. She shook her head.

"She's a deal too fine for us, Tozer," she said. "She'll never make herself 'appy in our quiet way. Phœbe's been and brought her up quite the lady. It ain't as her dress is much matter. I'd have given her a silk myself, and never thought of it twice; and something lively like for a young person, 'stead of that grey stuff, as her mother might wear. But all the same, she ain't one of our sort. She'll never make herself 'appy with you and me."

"Well," said Tozer, who was more cheerful, "she ain't proud, not a bit; and as for manners, you don't pay no more for manners. She came up and give

me a kiss in the station, as affectionate as possible. All I can say for her is as she ain't proud."

Mrs. Tozer shook her head; but even while she did so, pleasanter dreams stole into her soul.

"I hope I'll be well enough to get to chapel on Sunday," she said, "just to see the folks' looks. The minister needn't expect much attention to his sermon. 'There's Phœbe Tozer's daughter!' they'll all be saying, and a-staring, and a-whispering. It ain't often as anything like her is seen in chapel, that's a fact," said the old lady, warming into the exultation of natural pride.

Phœbe, it must be allowed, had a good cry when she got within the shelter of her own room, which had been very carefully prepared for her, with everything that was necessary for comfort, according to her grandmother's standard; but where the "tent" bed hung with old-fashioned red and brown chintz, and the moreen curtains

drooping over the window, and the gigantic flowers on the carpet, made Phœbe's soul sick within her. Notwithstanding all her courage, her heart sank. She had expected "a difference," but she had not looked for her grandfather's greasy coat and wisp of neckcloth, or her grandmother's amazing cap, or the grammatical peculiarities in which both indulged. She had a good hot fit of crying, and for the moment felt so discouraged and depressed, that the only impulse in her mind was to run away. But her temperament did not favour panics, and giving in was not in her. If somebody must do it, why should not she do it? she said to herself. How many times had she heard in sermons and otherwise that no one ought to look for the sweet without the bitter, and that duty should never be avoided or refused because it is unpleasant? Now was the time to put her principles to the test; and the tears relieved her, and gave her something of the feeling of a martyr, which

is always consolatory and sweet; so she dried her eyes, and bathed her face, and went downstairs cheerful and smiling, resolved that, at all costs, her duty should be done, however disagreeable it might be. What a good thing the new fashion of five o'clock tea is for people who have connections in an inferior path of life who make tea a meal, and don't dine, or dine in the middle of the day! This was the thought that passed through Phœbe's mind as she went into the dining-room, and found the table covered, not to say groaning under good things. She took her place at it, and poured out tea for the old people, and cut bread-and-butter with the most gracious philosophy. Duchesses did the same every day; the treatable had renewed its ancient sway, even in fashionable life. It cannot be told what a help and refreshment this thought was to Phœbe's courageous heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TOZER FAMILY.

WHEN Phœbe woke next morning, under the huge flowers of the old-fashioned cotton drapery of her "tent" bed, to see the faint daylight struggle in through the heavy curtains which would not draw back from the window, the discouragement of her first arrival for a moment overpowered her again—and with even more reason—for she had more fully ascertained the resources of the place in which she found herself. There were no books, except some old volumns of sermons and a few back numbers of the Congregational

Magazine, no visitors, so far as she could make out, no newspaper but the Carlingford Weekly Gazette, nothing but her grandmother's gossip about the chapel and Mrs. Tom to pass the weary hours away. Even last night Mrs. Tozer had asked her whether she had not any work to beguile the long evening, which Phœbe occupied much more virtuously, from her own point of view, in endeavouring to amuse the old people by talking to them. Though it was morning, and she ought to have been refreshed and encouraged by the repose of the night, it was again with a few hot tears that Phœbe contemplated her prospects. But this was only a passing weakness. When she went down to breakfast, she was again cheerful as the crocuses that raised their heads along the borders with the promise of summer in them. The sun was shining, the sky was frosty, but blue. After all her present sufferings could not endure for ever. Phœbe hurried to get dressed, to get her

blue fingers warmed by the dining-room fire. It is needless to say that there was no fire, or thought of a fire in the chilly room with its red and brown hangings in which Mrs. Tozer last night had hoped she would be happy. "No fear of that, grandmamma," she had answered cheerfully. This was as much a lie, she felt, as if it had been said with the wickedest intentions—was it as wrong? How cold it was, and yet how stifling! She could scarcely fasten the ribbon at her neck, her fingers were so cold.

"Yes, grandpapa, it is brighter than in London. We don't live in the city, you know. We live in rather a pretty neighbourhood looking out on Regent's Park, but it is seldom so bright as the country. Sometimes the fog blows up our way, when the wind is in the east; but it is warmer I think," said Phœbe, with a little shiver, stooping over the dining-room fire.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Tozer, shaking her head, "it's your mother as has spoilt you, I don't make no doubt, with fires and things. That takes the hardiness out of young folks. A little bit of cold is whole-some, it stirs up the blood. Them as is used to fires is always taking cold. One good fire in the sitting-room, that's always been my principle, and them as is cold if they can't warm theirselves with movin' about, which is far the best, let them come and warm their fingers when they pleases—as you may be doing now."

"Perhaps it is a very good principle, grandmamma," said Phœbe, "when one is used to it; but the country is colder than town. Where there are fires on every side you must have more warmth than in a detached house like this. But it is only my hands after all. Shall I make the tea?"

"You should wear mittens like me—I always did in the High Street, especial when I was going and coming to the shop,

helping serve, when the children were young and I had the time for it. Ah! we've done with all that now. We're more at our ease, but I can't say as we're much happier. A shop is a cheerful sort of thing. I daresay your mother has told you—"

"No," said Phœbe, under her breath; but the reply was not noticed. She nearly dropped the teapot out of her hand when she heard the word—Shop! Yes to be sure, that was what being "in trade" meant, but she had never quite realized it till now. Phœbe was going through a tremendous piece of mental discipline in these first days. She writhed secretly, and moaned to herself—why did not mamma tell me? but she sat quite still outside, and smiled as if it was all quite ordinary and natural, and she had heard about the shop all her life. It seemed cruel and unkind to have sent her here without distinct warning of what she was going to meet. But Phœbe was a

good girl, and would not blame her father and mother. No doubt they meant it "for the best."

"Is uncle Tom," she said, faltering somewhat, "in the—shop now?"

"If I'm able," said Mrs. Tozer, "I'll walk that far with you this morning—or Tozer, I mean your grandfather, will go. It's a tidy house o' business, though I say it as shouldn't, seeing it was him and me as made it all; though I don't hold with Mrs. Tom's nonsense about the new windows. Your uncle Tom is as innocent as innocent, but as for her, she ain't no favourite of mine, and I makes no bones about saying so, I don't mind who hears."

"She ain't so bad as you make her out," said Tozer. "She's kind enough in her way. Your grandmother is a-going to show you off—that's it, my dear. She can't abide Tom's wife, and she wants to show her as you're far finer than her girls. I don't say no. It's nat'ral, and I'm not one as stands against nature; but don't

you be prejudiced by my old woman there. She *is* a prejudiced one. Nothing in the world will make her give up a notion when she's took it into her head."

"No, nothing; and ain't I always right in the end? I should think you've proved that times enough," said the old woman. "Yes, I'll take a little, my dear, since you press me so pretty. Folks take many a thing when they're pressed as they wouldn't touch if there was no one to say, take a bit. Tozer he never thinks of that; he's always had the best o' appetites; but as for me, if I gets a cup o' tea that's all as I cares for. You'll see as she'll take my view, when she's once been to the High Street. She's her mother's daughter, and Phœbe can't abide that woman, no more than me."

"Have they got many children?" said Phœbe. "I know there are two girls, but as I have never seen them—Are they as old as I am?" she asked, with a tremulous feeling at her heart. If there were

girls in the shop in the High Street, with whom she would have to be on familiar terms, as her cousins and equals, Phœbe did not feel that she could put up with that.

"The eldest, Polly, is only twelve," said Tozer, "but never you mind, my dear, for you shan't be without company. There's a deal of families with daughters like yourself. Your grandmother won't say nothing against it; and as for me, I think there's nought so cheery as young folks. You shall have a fire in the drawing-room, and as many tea-parties as you like. For the young men, I can't say as there's many, but girls is plenty, and as long as you're content with that—"

Mrs. Tozer regarded him with withering contempt across the table.

"You're clever ones, you men," she said. "Families with daughters! Do you think the Greens and the Robbins is company for *her?* I daresay as you've heard your mother speak of Maria Pigeon, my

dear? She married John Green the grocer, and very well to do and respectable they may be, but nobody but the likes of your grandfather would think of you and them making friends."

"Indeed I don't care for making friends," said Phœbe, "you must remember that I came not for society, but to wait upon you, dear grandmamma. I don't want young friends. At home I always go out with my mother; let me take walks with you, when you are able. I am glad Uncle Tom's children are little. I don't want company. My work—and the garden—and to sit with grandmamma, that is all I care for. I shall be as happy as the day is long," said this martyr, smiling benignly over the aches in her heart.

Her grandparents looked at her with ever-growing pride. Was not this the ideal young woman, the girl of the story-books, who cared about nothing but her duty?

"That's very nice of you, my dear;

but you ain't going to hide yourself up in a corner," said Tozer. And, "Never fear I'll take her wherever it's fit for her to go to," his wife added, looking at her with pride. Phœbe felt, in addition to all the rest, that she was to be made a show of to all the connection, as a specimen of what the Tozer blood could come to, and she did not even feel sure that something of the same feeling had not been in her mother's bosom when she fitted her out so perfectly. Phœbe Tozer had left contemporaries and rivals in Carlingford, and the thought of dazzling and surpassing them in her offspring as in her good fortune had still some sweetness for her mind. "Mamma meant it too!" Phœbe junior said to herself with a sigh. Unfortunately for her, she did everybody credit who belonged to her, and she must resign herself to pay the penalty. Perhaps there was some compensation in that thought.

And indeed Phœbe did not wonder at her grandmother's pride when she walked

up with her to High Street, supporting her on her arm. She recognised frankly that there were not many people like herself about, few who had so much the air of good society, and not one who was so well dressed. There were excuses to be made then for the anxiety of the old people to produce her in the little world which was everything to them, and with her usual candour and good sense she acknowledged this, though she winced a little when an occasional acquaintance drifted across Mrs. Tozer's path, and was introduced with pride to "my granddaughter," and thrust forth an ungloved hand, with an exclamation of, "Lord bless us, Phœbe's eldest! I hope I see you well, Miss." Phœbe continued urbane, though it cost her many a pang. She had to keep on a perpetual argument with herself as she went along slowly, holding up her poor grandmother's tottering steps. "If this is what we have really sprung from, this is my own class, and I ought to like it; if I don't like it, it must be

my fault. I have no right to feel myself better than they are. It is not position that makes any difference, but individual character," Phœbe said to herself. She got as much consolation out of this as is to be extracted from such rueful arguments in general; but it was after all indifferent comfort, and had not her temperament given her a strong hold of herself, and power of subduing her impulses, it is much to be feared that Phœbe would have dropped her grandmother's arm as they approached the station, and run away. She did waver for a moment as she came in sight of it. On that side lay freedom, comfort, the life she had been used to, which was not very elevated indeed, but felt like high rank in comparison with this. And she knew her parents would forgive her and defend her if she went back to them unable to support the martyrdom which she had rashly taken upon herself. But then how weak that would be, Phœbe thought to herself,

drawing Mrs. Tozer's arm more tightly within her own—how small! how it would hurt the feelings of the old people, how it would vex and embarrass her father and mother! lastly, it might peril her brother's interests and her own, which to do her justice was the last thing she thought of, and yet was not undeserving of notice in its way.

"Lean on me more heavily, grandmamma," she said at last finally concluding and throwing off this self-discussion. She could not prolong it further. It was unworthy of her. Henceforward she had made up her mind to set her face like a flint, and no longer leave the question of her persistence in her domestic mission an open question. Whatever she might have "to put up with," it was now decided once for all.

"Bless us all, if this ain't grandmamma," said Mrs. Tom. It was not often, as she herself said with pride, that she required to be in the shop, which was very much

improved now from its old aspect. Ill luck, however, brought her here to-day. She stood at the door which led from the shop to the house, dividing the counter, talking to a lady who was making a complaint upon the quality of cheese or butter. Mrs. Tozer had led Phœbe that way in order to point out to her the plate-glass windows and marble slabs for the cheese, of which, though they were one of her grievances against Mrs. Tom, she was secretly proud.

"I don't deny but what they've done a deal," said the old woman, "show and vanity as I call it. I wish they may do as well for themselves with all their plate-glass as me and Tozer did without it; but it ain't often as you'll see a handsomer shop," she added contemplating fondly the scene of her early labours. If a squire looks fondly at his land, and a sailor at his ship (when ships were worth looking at), why should not a shopkeeper regard his shop with the same affectionate feelings?

Mrs. Tom Tozer had just taken leave of her remonstrant customer with a curtsey, and an assurance that the faults complained of should be remedied when she caught sight of the infirm old woman leaning on Phœbe's arm, and made the exclamation already quoted.

"Lord bless us all! if it ain't grandmamma, and Phœbe's daughter along o' her, I'll lay you sixpence," said Mrs. Tom in the extremity of her surprise, and at the highest pitch of her voice. The lady customer was still in the shop, and when she heard this she turned round and gave the newcomers a stare. (It was not very wonderful, Phœbe allowed to herself with secret anguish.) She gave old Mrs. Tozer a familiar nod. "This is quite a long walk for you nowadays," she said gazing at Phœbe though she addressed the old woman.

"Thank ye, ma'am, I am a deal better," said Mrs. Tozer, "especially as I've got my grand-daughter to take care of me."

"Oh! is this young — person your

grand-daughter," said the customer with another stare, and then she nodded again and went away wondering. "Well," Phœbe said to herself, "one little sting more or less what did it matter?" and she went on through the shop supporting her grandmother, keenly sensible of the looks that encountered her on every side. Mrs. Tom stood leaning against the counter waiting for them without making any advance. She was smart and good-looking, with a malicious gleam in a pair of bright black beady eyes.

"How are you, granny?" she said, "I declare you're looking quite young again, and as spry as twenty. Come in and rest; and this young lady as is with you, I don't think as I need ask her name, the likeness speaks for itself. It's Phœbe Beecham, ain't it? Bless us all! I'd have known her anywhere, I would; the very moral of her mother, and of you too, granny. As you stand there now, you're as like as two peas."

Unconsciously Phœbe cast a look upon her grandmother. She did not think she was vain. To be unconscious that she had some personal advantages would, of course, be impossible; but a thrill crept through her when she looked at the old woman by her side, wrinkled and red, in her copper-coloured gown. As like as two peas! was that possible? Phœbe's heart sank for the moment to her shoes, and a pitiful look of restrained pain came to her face. This was assailing her in her tenderest point.

"Am I so like you, grandmamma?" she said, faltering; but added quickly, "then I cannot be like mamma. How do you do? My mother wished me to come at once, to bring her kind regards. Is my uncle at home?"

"No, Miss, your uncle ain't at home," said Mrs. Tom, "but you might be civil, all the same, and put a name to me, more nor if I was a dog. I'm your aunt,

I am—and I likes all my titles, I do—and proper respect."

"Surely," said Phœbe, with a bow and a gracious smile—but she did not add that name. She was pleased to think that "Tom's wife," was her mother's favourite aversion, and that a dignified resistance to her claims was, so to speak, her duty. It even amused her to think of the ingenuity required throughout a long conversation for the clever and polite eluding of this claim.

"I hope as you mean to let us in, Amelia," said Mrs. Tozer, "for it ain't often as I takes so long a walk. I would never have thought of it but for Phœbe—Phœbe junior, as Tozer calls her. She's been used to things very different, but I'm thankful to say, she ain't a bit proud. She couldn't be more attentive to me if I was the Queen, and talks of your children as pretty as possible, without no nonsense. It ain't often as you see that in a girl brought up like she's been."

"I don't pretend to know nothing of how she's been brought up," said Mrs. Tom, "and I don't think as there's no occasion for pride here. We're all well-to-do, and getting on in the world—thanks to Him as gives the increase. I don't see no opening for pride here. Me and your mother were never very good friends, Phœbe, since that's your name; but if there's anything I can do for you, or my family, you won't ask twice. Grandmother's ain't a very lively house, not like mine, as is full of children. Come in, Granny. I'm always speaking of making the stairs wider, and a big window on the landing; but folks can't do everything at once, and we'll have to do with it a bit longer. We've done a deal already to the old place."

"More than was wanted, or was thought upon in my time," said the old lady, to whom this was as the trumpet of battle. "The stairs did well enough for me, and I can't think what Tom can want chang-

ing things as he's been used to all his life."

"Oh, it ain't Tom," said his wife, her face lighting up with satisfaction. "Tom wouldn't mind if the place was to come to bits about our ears. He's like you, granny, he's one of the stand-still ones. It ain't Tom, it's me."

This little passage of arms took place as they were going upstairs, which cost poor Mrs. Tozer many pantings and groanings, and placed Phœbe for once, on Mrs. Tom's side, for a window on the landing would have been a wonderful improvement, there was no denying. When, at last, they had toiled to the top, fighting their way, not only through the obscurity, but through an atmosphere of ham and cheese which almost choked Phœbe, the old lady was speechless with the exertion, though the air was to her as the air of Paradise. Phœbe placed her on a chair and undid her bonnet-strings, and for a minute was really alarmed. Mrs. Tom, however, took it with perfect equanimity.

"She's blown a bit; she ain't as young as she was, nor even as she thinks for," said that sympathetic person. "Come, Granny, cheer up. Them stairs ain't strange to you. What's the good of making a fuss? Sit down and get your breath," she went on, pulling forward a chair; then turning to Phœbe, she shrugged her shoulders and raised her eyebrows. "She's breaking fast, that's what it is," said Mrs. Tom under her breath with a nod of her head.

"This is the room as your mother spent most of her life in, when she was like you," said Mrs. Tozer, when she regained her breath. "It was here as she met your father first. The first time I set eyes on him, 'That's the man for my Phœbe,' I said to myself; and sure enough, so it turned out"

"You didn't miss no way of helping it on, neither, granny, if folks do you justice," said Mrs. Tom. "Mothers can do a deal when they exerts themselves; and now Phœbe has a daughter of her own,

I dare be sworn she's just as clever. throwing the nice ones and the well-off ones in her way. It's a wonder to me as she hasn't gone off yet, with all her opportunities—two or three and twenty, ain't you, Miss Phœbe? I should have thought you'd have married long afore now."

"I shall be twenty my next birth-day," said Phœbe. "My cousins are a great deal younger, I hear; are they at school? I hope I shall see them before I go."

"Oh, you'll see 'em fast enough," said their mother, "they're 'aving their music lesson. I don't hold with sending girls to school. I likes to keep them under my own eye. I suppose I needn't ask you now if you play?"

"A very little," said Phœbe, who rather piqued herself upon her music, and who was learned in Bach and Beethoven, and had an opinion of her own about Wagner. Mrs. Tom brightened visibly, for her girls played not a little, but a great deal.

"And draw?—but I needn't ask, for

living in London, you've got masters at your very door."

"Not at all, I am sorry to say," said Phœbe, with a pathethic tone of regret in her voice.

"Lord bless us! Now who'd have thought it? I think nothing a sacrifice to give mine the best of education," said Mrs. Tom.

CHAPTER XIV.

STRANGERS.

"WELL, Ursula, how do you do?" said Mrs. Sam Hurst, meeting her young neighbour with outstretched hands. She was a portly good-looking woman with an active mind, and nothing, or next to nothing to do, and instead of being affronted as some persons might have been, she was amused, and indeed flattered by the suspicion and alarm with which all the young Mays regarded her. Whether she had the least intention of ever giving any justification to their alarms it would be impossible to say, for indeed to a sensible woman of forty-five, well

to do and comfortable, a husband with "a temper of his own," and a large poor unruly family was, perhaps, not so tempting as he appeared to be to his jealous children. Anyhow she was not at all angry with them for being jealous and afraid of her. She was cordial in her manner to the Mays as to everybody she knew. She asked how Ursula had enjoyed herself, where sho had been, what she had seen, and a hundred questions more.

"It is quite delightful to see somebody who has something to tell," she said, when the interrogation was over. "I ask everybody what news, and no one has any news, which is dreadful for me."

"How can you care for news?" said Ursula, "news! what interest can there be in mere news that doesn't concern us?'

"You are very foolish, my dear," said Mrs. Hurst, "what's to become of you when you're old, if you don't like to hear what's going on? I'm thankful to say I

take a great deal of interest in my fellow-creatures for my part. Now listen, I'll tell you a piece of news in return for all your information about London. When I was in Tozer's shop to-day—I always go there, though they are Dissenters; after all, you know, most tradespeople are Dissenters; some are sorry for it, some think it quite natural that gentle-people and tradespeople should think differently in religious matters; however, what I say is, you can't tell the difference in butter and bacon between church and dissent, can you now? and Tozer's is the best shop in the town, certainly the best shop. So as I was in Tozer's as I tell you, who should come in but old Mrs. Tozer, who once kept it herself—and by her side, figure my astonishment, a young lady! yes, my dear, actually a young lady, in appearance, of course—I mean in appearance—for as you shall hear, it could be no more than that. So nicely dressed, nothing vulgar or showy, a gown that Elise

might have made, and everything to correspond, in perfect taste. Fancy! and you may imagine how I stared. I could not take my eyes off her. I was so astonished, that I rubbed up my old acquaintance with the old woman, and asked how her rheumatism was. I *hope* it is rheumatism. At all events I called it so, and then she told me as proud as a peacock that it was her granddaughter; fancy, her granddaughter! did you ever hear of such a thing? The other woman in the shop, the present Tozer, called out to her by name. Phœbe they called her. Poor girl I was so sorry for her. A lady in appearance, and to have to submit to that!"

"Oughtn't ladies to be called Phœbe?" asked Janey, "Why not? It's rather a pretty name."

"That is so like Janey," said Mrs. Hurst, "I know she is the clever one; but she never can see what one means. It is not being called Phœbe, it is because

of her relations that I am sorry for her. Poor girl! educating people out of their sphere does far more harm than good, I always maintain. To see that nice-looking-well-dressed girl in Tozer's shop, with all the butter boys calling her Phœbe—"

"The butter boys are as good as any one else," cried Janey, whose tendencies were democratic, "I daresay she likes her relations as well as we like ours, and better, though they do keep a shop."

"Oh, Janey!" cried Ursula, whose feelings were touched; then she remembered that her sympathies ought not to flow in the same channel with those of Mrs. Sam Hurst, and continued coldly, "If she had not liked them she need not have come to see them."

"That is all you know, you girls. You don't know the plague of relations, and how people have got to humble themselves to keep money in the family, or keep up appearances, especially people that have risen in the world. I declare I think

they pay dear for rising in the world, or their poor children pay dear—"

"You seem to take a great deal of interest in the Tozers," said Ursula, glad to administer a little correction, "even if they came to St. Roque's I could understand it—but Dissenters!" This arrow struck home.

"Well," said Mrs. Hurst, colouring, "of all people to take an interest in Dissenters I am the last; but I was struck, I must admit, to see that old Mrs. Tozer, looking like an old washerwoman, with a girl in a twenty-guinea dress, you may take my word for it, though as plain as that little brown frock of yours, Ursula. That was a sight to wake anyone up."

Ursula looked down at the little brown frock thus contemptuously referred to, with mingled offence and consciousness of inferiority. It had not cost as many shillings, and had been made up at home, and was not a shining example of the dress-

maker's art. "If you value people according to what their dress costs—"

"I can't know much about her moral qualities, can I?" said Mrs. Hurst, "and I don't suppose she has any position, being old Tozer's grandchild. But she wasn't amiss in her looks, and I declare I should have taken her for a lady if I had met her in the street. It shows how one may be taken in. And this is a lesson for you, young girls; you should never trust to appearances. I confess I'd like to find out some more about her. Going in, Ursula? Well, my dear, perhaps I'll step in for a talk in the evening. You must be dull after your gaiety. Tell your dear papa," said Mrs. Hurst with a laugh, "that I am coming to sit with you after tea. Now mind you give him my message. He does not like to miss me when I come to the Parsonage, does he now? Good-bye for the present. Till eight o'clock."

"Oh, how I hate her," cried Janey, "except sometimes when she makes me

laugh and I feel tempted to like her; but I always resist it. Do you think really, Ursula, that papa could be—such a—stupid—"

"Oh, please don't ask me," cried Ursula. "How can I tell? I don't know what he may do; but if he does—and if she does—oh, then, Janey—"

"Yes, indeed, then!" said Janey, breathing hard. This mysterious threat seemed very horrible to both of them, though what they meant by it, it would have been very hard for either of them to tell. They waited within the little shrubbery, whispering to each other till they heard Mrs. Hurst close her own door, for they did not want any more of her society, though they had no intention of going in. When she was safe out of the way, they stole out and continued their walk in the opposite direction.

"I wanted to have gone into the town," said Ursula. "It *is* hard to have that woman next door; one can't go anywhere

or do anything! I wanted some braid for your new frock, Janey, and twist to make the button-holes; but if we had said we were going up into Carlingford, she would have come too. Never mind; a walk is better than nothing. Walk fast, and let us try how far we can go before tea."

Upon this idea, the two girls set out walking as if for a race, which did them all the good in the world, quickening the blood in their veins, sending the colour to their cheeks, and dispersing all the cobwebs from their minds, since they soon got into the spirit of the race, and pursued it with eagerness, with little outbursts of laughter, and breathless adjurations to each other to keep within the proper pace, and not to run. It was not a very inviting road along which they took their walk. Beyond St. Roque the land was divided into allotments for the working people, not very tidily kept, and rough with cut cabbages, plants, and dug up potatoas. Beyond this lay a great turnip-field, somewhat rank

in smell, and the east wind swept chill along the open road, which was not sheltered by a single tree, so that the attractions of the way soon palled upon pedestrians. Looking back to Grange Lane, the snug and sheltered look of that genteel adjunct to the town was comforting to behold. Even Grange Lane was not gay; a line of garden walls however they may shelter and comfort the gardens within are not lovely without; but yet the trees, though leafless, waved over the red lines of brick, and the big laurels hung out bushes of dark verdure and long floating sprays of ivy.

"Let's turn back; perhaps she may not be at the window," cried Ursula. "It is so dull here."

Janey stopped short in the heat of the walk, objecting for the moment.

"I wish you had not gone to London. You never used to care for the streets and the shops; now a regular good walk is too much for you," cried Janey.

"With a turnip-field on one side and a potatoe-field on the other!" said Ursula, in high disdain.

"I'll tell you what!" cried Janey. "I don't think I like you since you came back. The Dorsets are fine people, and we are not fine. There are no grand parties, nor theatres, nor balls at Carlingford. When we go out here, we go to walk, not to see things, as you have been used to doing. I don't know what you mean by it; nineteen years with us, and one fortnight with them! and the fortnight counts for more than all the years!"

Janey was not in the habit of restraining her voice any more than anything else about her, and she spoke this out with loud school-girl tones, reckless who might hear her. In most cases she might have done this with the utmost impunity, and how was she to know, as she said to her sister afterwards, in self-defence, that anyone, especially any gentleman, could be lurking about, spying upon people, among

those nasty allotments? There was some one there, however, who came down the muddy path, all cut up by the wheelbarrows, with a smile upon his face. A gentleman? Janey called him so without a doubt on the subject; but Ursula, more enlightened and slightly irritated, had her doubts. He was dressed, not with any care of morning costume, but wore a black frock-coat of the most formal description, with a white cravat carelessly tied, semi-clerical, and yet not clerical. He had a smile on his face, which, on the whole, was rather a handsome face, and looked at them, showing evident signs of having heard what Janey said. To be sure, he did not say anything, but Ursula felt that his look was just the same as if he had spoken, and coloured high, resenting the intrusion. By this stranger's side was one of the men who had been working at the allotments, whose hands were not clean, and whose boots were heavy with the clinging, clayey soil. When they had

nearly reached the road, the gentleman turned round and shook hands with his companion, and then walked on towards Carlingford, throwing another look towards the girls as he passed. It would be hard to say whether curiosity or anger was strongest in Ursula. In Janey, the former sentiment carried everything before it.

"Oh, I wonder who he is?" she cried, low, but eager, in her sister's ear. "Who can he be, Ursula, who can he be? We know all the men about here, everyone, as well as we know Reginald. Oh, Ursula, who do you think he can be?"

"He is very impertinent," cried Ursula, with an angry blush. "How should I know? And oh! how very very silly of you, Janey, to talk so loud, and make impudent men stare at us so."

"Impudent!" cried Janey. "I didn't talk loud. He looked rather nice, on the contrary. Why, he laughed! Do you call that impudent? It can't be anybody from the town, because we know every-

body; and did you see him shaking hands with that man? How very funny? Let us run in and tell Mrs. Sam Hurst, and ask her who she thinks he is. She is sure to know."

"Janey," said Ursula, severely, "if you live very long, you will be as great a gossip and as fond of news as Mrs. Sam Hurst herself."

"I don't care," cried Janey; "you're just as fond of news as I am, only you won't confess it. I am dying to know who he is. He is quite nice-looking, and tall and grand. A new gentleman! Come, quick, Ursula; let us get back and see where he goes."

"Janey!" cried the elder sister. She was half curious herself, but Ursula was old enough to know better, and to be ashamed of the other's naïve and undisguised curiosity. "Oh, what would Cousin Anne say! A girl running after a gentleman (even if he is a gentleman), to see where he goes!"

"Well!" cried Janey, "if she wants to know, what else is she to do? Who cares for Cousin Anne? She is an old maid. Why, if it had been a lady, I shouldn't have minded. There are so many ladies; but a new gentleman! If you won't come on, I will run by myself. How pleased Mrs. Sam Hurst will be!"

"I thought you hated Mrs. Sam Hurst?"

"So I do when I think of papa; but when there's anything going on, or anything to find out, I like her dearly. She's such fun! She never shilly-shallies, like you. She's not an old maid like your Cousin Anne that you are always talking of. Come along! if anybody else finds out who he is before we do," cried Jenny, with almost despairing energy, "I shall break my heart!"

Ursula stoically resisted the tug upon her, but she went back to Grange Lane, to which, indeed, she had turned her face before they met the stranger, and she could not help seeing the tall black figure

in front of her which Janey watched so eagerly. Ursula was not eager, but she could not help seeing him. He walked up the street quickly, not as if he thought himself of interest to anyone, but when he had got half way up Grange Lane, crossed to speak to somebody. This filled Janey with consternation.

"He is not such a stranger after all," she cried. "He knows some one. He will not be quite a discovery. Who is it he is talking to, I wonder? He is standing at one of the doors, but it is not Miss Humphrey, nor Miss Griffiths, nor any of the Charters. Perhaps she is a stranger too. If he is married he won't be half so interesting, for there are always plenty of ladies. Perhaps he has just come by the railway to spend the day—but then, there is nothing to see in Carlingford, and how did he know that man at the lots? Oh, Ursula, why don't you answer me, why don't you say something? have you no feeling? I am sure it don't matter a

bit to me, for I am not out, I am never asked to parties—but I take an interest for you other girls' sake."

Before this time, however, Ursula had found a new object of interest. She had not been quite so unmoved as Janey supposed. A new gentleman was a thing to awaken anybody who knew Carlingford, for, indeed, gentlemen were scarce in the society of the little town, and even at the most mild of tea-parties it is ludicrous to see one man (and that most likely a curate) among a dozen ladies—so that even when she appeared to Janey to wonder, she felt that her sister's curiosity was not unjustifiable. But while thus engaged in the enterprise of discovering "a new gentleman" for the good of society, Ursula's eyes and her attention were caught by another interest. The stranger had crossed the street to talk to a lady, who had been walking down the Lane, and whom Ursula felt she had seen somewhere. Who was it? Certainly not

Miss Humphreys nor Miss Griffiths, nor any other of the well-known young ladies of Grange Lane. The setting sun, which had come out suddenly after a dull day, threw a slanting, long-drawn ray up the street, which fell upon the strangers, as they stood talking. This ray caught the young lady's hair, and flashed back a reflection out of the shining coils which looked to Ursula (being dark herself, she admired golden hair more than anything) as bright as the sunshine And in the light she caught the outline of a pretty head, and of a nose slightly "tip-tilted," according to the model which the Laureate has brought into fashion. Where had she seen her before? She remembered all at once with a rush of bewildered pleasure

"Janey! Oh, Janey!" she cried, "Listen! This is too extraordinary. There is the young lady in black!"

Janey, as may be supposed, had heard every detail of Mrs. Copperhead's

ball, and knew what Ursula meant as well as Ursula herself did. She grew pale with excitement and curiosity. "No!" she said, "you can't mean it. Are you sure, are you quite sure? Two new people in one day! Why, everybody must be coming to Carlingford. It makes me feel quite strange!" said this susceptible young woman; "the young lady in black!"

"Oh, yes, there can't be any mistake," said Ursula, hurrying on in her excitement, "I looked at her so much. I couldn't mistake her. Oh, I wonder if she will know me, I wonder if she will speak to me! or if she is going to see the Dorsets, or what has brought her to Carlingford. Only fancy, Janey, the young lady in black whom I have talked so much of; oh, I wonder, I do wonder what has brought her here."

They were on the opposite side of the lane, so that their hurried approach did not startle the strangers; but Phœbe, looking up at the sound of the footsteps,

saw a face she knew looking wistfully, eagerly at her, with evident recognition. Phœbe had a faculty quite royal of remembering faces, and it took but a moment to recall Ursula's to her. Another moment was spent in a rapid discussion with herself, as to whether she should give or withhold the salutation which the girl evidently sought. But what harm could it do? and it would be pleasant to know some one; and if on finding out who she was, Miss Dorset's little relation shrank from her acquaintance, why then Phœbe said to herself "I shall be no worse than before." So she sent a smile and a bow across the road and said "How do you do?" in a pause of her conversation. Ursula was too shy to feel on equal terms with the young lady in black who was so much more self-possessed than she was. She blushed and smiled, answered "Quite well, thank you," across the lane like a child, and notwithstanding a great many pokes from

Janey's energetic elbow, went on without further response.

"Oh, why can't you run across and speak to her?" cried Janey, "oh, how funny you are and how disagreeable! would *I* pass anyone I knew, like that!"

"You don't understand, you are only a child," said Ursula, frightened and agitated, yet full of dignity, "we have only met—in society. When you are introduced to anyone in society it does not count. Perhaps they might not want to know you; perhaps—but anyhow you can't rush up to them like two girls at school. You have to wait and see what they will do."

"Well, I declare!" cried Janey, "then what is the good of society? You know them, and yet you mustn't know them. I would never be such a fool as that. Fancy looking at her across the lane and saying 'quite well, thank you,' after she had begun to speak. I suppose that's Cousin Anne's way? I should have rushed across

and asked where she was staying, and when she would come to see us. Ursula, oh!" cried Janey, suddenly changing her tone, and looking at her sister with eyes which had widened to twice their natural size with the grandeur of the idea, "you will have to ask her to tea!"

"Oh, you silly girl, do you think she wonld come? you should have seen her at the ball. She knew everybody, and had such quantities of partners. Mr. Clarence Copperhead was always dancing with her. Fancy her coming to tea with us." But Ursula herself was somewhat breathless with the suggestion. When a thing has been once said, there is always a chance that it may be done, and the two girls walked up very quickly into the High Street after this, silent, with a certain awe of themselves and their possibilities. It might be done, now that it had been said.

CHAPTER XV.

A DOMESTIC CRISIS.

THE interest shown by the two girls in the stranger whom they had noted with so much attention was not destined to meet with any immediate reward. Neither he, nor "the young lady in black," whom he hurried across the street to meet, could be heard of, or was seen for full two days afterwards, to the great disappointment of the young Mays. Ursula, especially, who had been entertaining vague but dazzling thoughts of a companionship more interesting than Janey's, more novel and at the same time more equal than that which was extended to her by the Miss Griffiths

in Grange Lane, who were so much better off and had so much less to do than she. Ursula did not recollect the name of the fortunate girl who was so much in the ascendant at Mr. Copperhead's ball, though Phœbe had been introduced to her; but she did recollect her popularity and general friendliness, and the number of partners she had, and all those delightful signs of greatness which impress a poor little stranger to whom her first dance is not unmingled pleasure. She whispered to Janey about her even in the drawing-room when all the family were assembled.

"Do you think she will call?" said Ursula, asking counsel even of Janey's inexperience, of which she was so contemptuous on other occasions.

"Call! how can she, if she is a stranger?" said Janey.

"As if you knew anything about it!" Ursula retorted with great injustice.

"If I don't know then why do you ask me?" complained Janey with reason.

The room looked more cheerful since Ursula had come home. The fire, no longer choked with cinders, burned clear and red. The lamp, though it was a cheap one, and burned paraffin oil, did not smell. The old curtains were nicely drawn, and the old covers smoothed over the chairs. All this did not make them look less old; but it made their antiquity natural and becoming. Johnny, the schoolboy, was learning his lessons on the rug before the fire. Reginald sat writing, with a candle all to himself, at a writing table in a corner. Ursula and Janey were working at the centre table by the light of the lamp. They had no time, you may imagine, for fancy work. Janey with many contortions of her person, especially of her mouth, with which she seemed to follow the movements of her needle, was stitching up a sleeve of her new frock which Miss Dorset had sent her, and which a poor dressmaker, who "went out," was at this moment making up in the

schoolroom; while Ursula was still busy with the basket of stockings which she had found awaiting her on their return. What Reginald was doing at the writing table was probably a great deal less useful, but the girls respected his occupation as no one ever thought of respecting theirs, and carried on their conversation under their breath, not to interrupt him. The little children had gone to bed, tea was over, and several hours of the long winter evening still before them. Janey had given over lessons, partly because there was no one to insist upon her doing them. Once in a week or so her father gave her a lecture for her ignorance, and ordered her into his study to do a long sum in arithmetic out of the first old "Colenso" that could be picked up; and about once a week too, awakening suddenly to a sense of her own deficiencies, she would "practise" energetically on the old piano. This was all that was being done for Janey in the way of education. She was fifteen, and as

Johnny, and Amy, and Robin were at an age when school is a necessity, the only retrenchment possible was to keep Janey at home. Ursula had got what education she possessed in the same irregular way. It was not much. Besides reading and writing she had pretty manners, which came by nature like those other gifts. A girl is not so badly off who can read and write and has pretty manners. Janey possessed the two first faculties, but neither had nor apparently could acquire the third. The two dark brown heads were close together as they worked. Ursula's shining and neat, and carefully arranged, Janey's rough with elf-locks; but they were more interesting than Reginald, though he was so much better informed. As for Johnny he lay extended on the rug, his head slightly raised on his two hands, his book on a level with the rest of his person, saying over his lesson to himself with moving lips. And now and then when the girls' whispered chatter

was silent, the sound of Reginald's pen scratching across the paper would fill up the interval; it was a sound which filled them all with respect.

This peaceful domestic scene was broken in upon by the entry of Mr. May. From the moment that he closed the hall-door behind him, coming in, a little thrill ran through the family party. The girls looked at each other when they heard that sound, and Johnny, without stopping his inward repetition, shifted himself and his book adroitly with the cleverness of practice, to the side instead of the front of the fire. Reginald's pen stopped its scratching, and he wheeled round on his chair to give an appealing glance at his sisters.

"What is it now?" he said hurriedly. Everyone knew that when the door was closed like that it meant something like a declaration of war. But they had not much time to wait and wonder. Mr. May came in pushing the door wide open before him, and admitting in a gust the chill

air of the January night. He looked at the peaceable domestic scene with a "humph" of dissatisfaction, because there was nothing to find fault with, which is as great a grievance as another when one is in the mood for grievances. He had come in cross and out of sorts with a private cause for his ill-temper, which he did not choose to reveal, and it would have been a relief to him had he found them all chattering or wasting their time, instead of being occupied in this perfectly dutiful way—even Johnny at his lessons repeating them over under his breath. What was the world coming to? Mr. May was disappointed. Instead of leading up to it gradually by a general *battue* of his children all round, he had to open upon his chief subject at once which was not nearly so agreeable a way.

"What are you doing, Reginald?" he asked, roughly, pulling his chair to the other side of the fire, opposite the corner to which Johnny had scuffled out

of the way. "I have come in especially to speak to you. It is time this shilly-shallying was done with. Do you mean to accept the College chaplaincy or not? an answer must be given, and that at once. Are you so busy that you can't attend to what I say?"

"I am not busy at all, sir," said Reginald, in a subdued voice, while his sisters cast sympathetic looks at him. Both the girls, it is true, thought him extremely foolish, but what of that? necessarily they were on his side against papa.

"I thought as much; indeed it would be hard to say what you could find to be busy at. But look here, this must come to an end one way or another. You know my opinion on the subject."

"And you know mine, sir," said Reginald, rising and coming forward to the fire. "I don't say anything against the old College. For an old man it might be quite a justifiable arrangement—one who had already spent his strength in work—

but for me—of course there is nothing in the world to do."

"And two hundred and fifty a year for the doing of it—not to speak of the house which you could let for fifty more."

"Father! don't you see that is just the very thing that I object to, so much for nothing."

"You prefer nothing for nothing," said Mr. May, with a smile, "well, I suppose that is more fair, perhaps—to the public; —but how about me? A son of three-and-twenty depending upon me for everything, useless, and bringing in nothing, does not suit me. You are all the same," he said, "all taking from me, with a thousand wants, education, clothes, amusements—"

"I am sure," said the irrepressible Janey, "it is not much clothes we get, and as for amusements—and education!"

"Hold your tongue," cried her father. "Here are six of you, one more helpless than another, and the eldest the most helpless of all. I did not force you into

the Church. You might have gone out to James if you had liked—but you chose an academical career, and then there was nothing else for it. I gave you a title to orders. You are my curate just now—so called; but you know I can't pay a curate, and you know I can't afford to keep you. Providence—" said Mr. May, sitting up in his chair, with a certain solemnity, "Providence itself has stepped in to make your path clear. Here is better than a living, a provision, for you. I don't bid you take it for life, take it for a year or two till you can hear of something better. Now what on earth is your objection to this?"

The girls had both turned their faces towards their brother. Janey, always the first in action, repeated almost unconsciously,

"Yes, what on earth, Reginald, can be your objection to this?"

Reginald stood in the middle of the room and looked helplessly at them. Against his father alone he might have

made a stand—but when the united family thus gazed at him with inquiring and reproachful looks, what was he to say?

"Objection!" he faltered, "you know very well what my objection is. It is not honest work—it is no work. It is a waste of money that might be better employed; it is a sinecure."

"And what do you call your nominal curateship," said his father, "is not that a sinecure, too?"

"If it is," said Reginald, growing red, but feeling bolder, for here the family veered round, and placed itself on his side, "it is of a contrary kind. It is *sine* pay. My work may be bad, though I hope not, but my pay is nothing. I don't see any resemblance between the two."

"Your pay nothing!" cried the father, enraged, "what do you call your living, your food that you are so fastidious about, your floods of beer and all the rest of it—not to speak of tailors' bills much heavier than mine?"

"Which are never paid."

"Whose fault is it that they are never paid? yours and the others who weigh me down to the ground, and never try to help or do anything for themselves. Never paid! how should I have gone on to this period and secured universal respect if they had never been paid. I have had to pay for all of you," said Mr. May, bitterly, "and all your vagaries; education, till I have been nearly ruined, dresses and ribbons, and a hundred fooleries for these girls, who are of no use, who will never give me back a farthing."

"Papa!" cried Ursula and Janey in one breath.

"Hold your tongues! useless impedimenta, not able even to scrub the floors, and make the beds, which is all you could ever be good for—and you must have a servant forsooth to do even that. But why should I speak of the girls?" he added, with a sarcastic smile, "they can do nothing better, poor creatures; but

you! who call yourself a man—a University man, save the mark—a fine fellow with the Oxford stamp upon you, twenty-three your next birthday. It is a fine thing that I should still have to support you."

Reginald began to walk up and down the room, stung beyond bearing—not that he had not heard it all before, but to get accustomed to such taunts is difficult, and it is still more difficult for a young and susceptible mind to contradict all that is seemly and becoming in nature, and to put forth its own statement in return. Reginald knew that his education had in reality cost his father very little, and that his father knew this. He was aware too, much more distinctly than Mr. May knew, of James' remittances on his account; but what could he say? It was his father who insulted him, and the young man's lips were closed; but the effort was a hard one. He could not stand still there and face the man who had so little consideration for his feelings. All he could do was to keep his

agitation and irritation down by that hurried promenade about the room, listening as little as he could, and answering not at all.

"Oh, papa! how can you?" cried Janey, seizing the first pause. Janey was not old enough to understand the delicacy that closed Reginald's lips, and the impulse of self-defence was stirring in her; "how dare you talk to Ursula so? I mayn't be much use, but Ursula! nice and comfortable you were when she was away! as if you didn't say so ten times in a morning; to be sure that was to make me feel uncomfortable. Scrub floors!" cried Janey, in the violence of her resentment. "I'll go out and be a maid-of-all-work whenever you please. I am sure it would be much happier than here."

"Hold your tongue," said Mr. May, "you scolding and Ursula crying; that's the beauty of the feminine element in a house. I ought to be very thankful, oughtn't I, that I have girls to furnish this

agreeable variety? But as for you, Reginald," his father added, "mark my words, if you determine to reject this windfall that Providence has blown into your hands, it must be done at once. No further play of I would and I would not, if you please, here; and if it does not suit you, you will please to understand that I have no further need for a curate that suits me still less. I want your room. If nothing else can be done, I must try to take a pupil to add a little to the income which has so many claims upon it; and I don't mean to go on keeping you—this is plain enough, I hope."

"Very plain, Sir," said Reginald, who had grown as pale as he was red before.

"I am glad to hear it; you will write to the Corporation at once, accepting or rejecting at your pleasure; but this must be done to-night. I insist on its being done to-night; and if you find yourself sufficiently bold to reject an income," said Mr. May with emphasis, "and go off into

the world without a penny in your pocket, I wash my hands of it; it is nothing to me."

Then there was a pause. The father of the family sat down in his chair, and looked round him with the happy consciousness that he had made everybody miserable. The girls were both crying, Reginald pale and desperate, coming and going through the room. No one had escaped but Johnny, who, happy in insignificance, lay all his length on the other side of the fire, and lifted his face from his book to watch the discomfiture of the others. Johnny had no terrors on his own account. He had done nothing to call forth the paternal wrath. Mr. May could not resist this temptation.

"Is that a way to learn lessons as they ought to be learnt?" he cried suddenly, throwing one of his darts at the unthinking boy. "Get up this moment, and sit down to a table somewhere. Your own room, where there is nobody to disturb

you, is better than amid the chit-chat here; do you hear me? get up, Sir, and go."

Johnny stumbled to his feet appalled; he was too much startled to say anything. He took his books across the room to the writing table which Reginald had abandoned in a similar way. But by the time he reached that haven, he came to himself, and recovering his courage muttered something about the hardship to which he was thus exposed, as boys have a way of doing; upon which Mr. May got suddenly up, seized him by the shoulders and turned him out of the drawing-room. "I said your own room, Sir," cried this impartial father, distributing to all alike an equal share of his urbanities. When he had accomplished this, he stood for a moment and looked at the rest of his confused and uncomfortable family. "There is not much cheerful society to be had here this evening, I perceive," he said. "It is pleasant to come in from one's

cares and find a reception like this, don't you think? Let some one bring me some coffee to my study. I am going to write."

"Whose fault is it that he gets such a reception?" burst forth Janey, the moment her father had closed the door. "Who does it all, I wonder? Who treats us like a set of wretches without any feeling? I can't hush, I won't hush! Oh, shouldn't I be glad to go out for a housemaid, to do anything!"

"Oh, Janey, hush! we can't help ourselves, we are obliged to put up with it," said Ursula, "but Reginald, he is not obliged, he can save himself when he likes. Oh, I know, I know papa is unreasonable; but, Reginald, aren't you a little bit unreasonable too?"

"Don't you begin to reproach me," cried the young man, "I have had enough for one day. Have I been such a charge upon him, Ursula? What has he spent upon me? Next to nothing. That tailor's

bill he spoke of, he knew as well as I do that I paid it by the tutorship I had in the vacation. It is his bill that is not paid, not mine. And then James's money—"

"Oh, never mind that, never mind the past," cried Ursula, "think of the present, that's what you ought to do. Oh, Reginald think; if *I* had the chance of two hundred and fifty pounds a year! there is nothing I would not do for it. I would scrub floors as he said, I would do anything, the dirtiest work. You will be independent, able to do what you please, and never to ask papa for anything. Reginald, think! Oh, dear, dear, I wish I knew how to talk to you. To be independent, able to please yourself!"

"I shall be independent anyhow after to-night," he said. "Ursula, you will help me to pack my things, won't you? It is leaving you here, you girls, with nobody to stand up for you; it is that I feel most."

"Oh, Reginald, don't go and leave us," cried Janey, leaning on the back of his chair, "what can we do without you? When he comes in in a rage like to-night, as long as you are here one can bear it. Oh, Reginald, can't you, can't you take the chaplaincy? Think what it would be for us."

"Yes, I will pack your things," said Ursula, "I will help you to get out of it, though we must stay and put up with it all, and never, never escape. But where will you go? You have no money, not enough scarcely to pay your railway fare. You would have to take to teaching; and where are you to go?"

"I have some friends left," cried Reginald, his lips quivering, "some people care for me still and would hold out a hand. I am—not—quite so badly off as he thinks; I could go to town, or to Oxford—or—"

"You don't know where; and here is a nice old-fashioned house all ready for you to step into, and an income," cried Ursula,

her tone deepening to mark the capital letter; "an Income, quite sure and ready—without any difficulty, without any trouble, all if you say yes. Oh, only think what a comfort for us all to be able to rush to you when we are in trouble! Think of Johnny and Robin; and that delightful wainscoted room for your study, with the bookcases all ready—and plenty of money to buy books." This being the highest point to which Ursula could reach, she dropped down after it into an insinuating half whisper, "And plenty of work to do, dear Reginald, plenty of work in the parish, you may be sure, if you will only help the Rector; or here where you are working already, and where you may be sure nobody will think of paying you. Oh, Reginald, there is plenty, plenty of work."

The young man was already beginning to melt. "Do you think so?" he said.

"Think!" cried Janey, "I am sure you may do all papa's work for him and wel-

come, if that is all. For my part I think you are very silly, both Ursula and you. Work! Pay is far better if you weren't such a pair of simpletons. After all, he has a little reason to be angry. Good gracious! why shouldn't you take it? Some one else will, if you won't. I would in a minute, and so would Ursula if we could. And why should you be so much grander than anybody else? I think it is quite childish for my part."

"Reginald, never mind her, she is only a child and doesn't understand ("Child yourself," cried Janey). I don't understand very well, but still I can see what you want. Oh, you might find such quantities of work, things nobody is ever found to do. What do the fellows do at Oxford that they get that money for? I have heard you say you would be very glad to get a fellowship—"

"That is different, that is a reward of scholarship."

"Well, and so is this too," said Ursula,

"It is (I am sure) because the old men knew you were one that would be kind. You were always kind, Reginald, that is what it is for."

"The old men have nothing to do with it," he said shaking his head, "it is the Corporation, and they are—"

"Very rich men, Reginald dear, a great many of them, very sensible; what does it matter about their education? And then you would be a really educated man, always ready to do anything that was wanted in Carlingford Don't you see that was their meaning? They pay you for that which is not work, but they will find you plenty of work they don't pay for. That is what they mean; and oh, Reginald, to run over to you there in that pretty wainscoted room, and to have you coming in to us every day, and to know that you were there to stand by us!"

Here once more Ursula began to cry. As for Janey, she made a dash at the writing table and brought him paper and

pens and ink, "Say yes, say yes," she cried, "Oh, Reginald, if it was only to spite papa!"

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