



"Good words are worth much and cost little."—Herbert.

GOOD WORDS

FOR 1879

EDITED BY

DONALD MACLEOD, D.D.,

ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS FOR SCOTLAND

And illustrated by

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A PARTY OF TRAVELLERS.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

PART I.

THERE are few things more amusing than to watch the exodus which takes place from all our English coasts in the beginning of August or thereabouts. That we English, who are supposed to be the most home-loving of all nations, should be at the same time the people most ready to leave home, is a fact too well known to require any repetition, and the universal flight which takes place when Parliament rises, when schools break up, when the law-courts are closed, and when the departure of customers sets even the shopkeepers free, may well furnish the humorist with a thousand incidents, and the observer with much quiet fun and some grave interest. Every steamboat that leaves every pier has a hundred little domestic stories in it, the most of them quite happy chapters of life, without any bitterness to speak of, except the *mauvais quart d'heure* which comes afterwards—the paying of the bills. I have not space, however, to enter here even into the little sketch, which I had intended, of our set of passengers by the *Calais-Douvres*, the new boat, which is so much more pleasant than the old ones; but will introduce you at once, without more ado, to the little party with which I made acquaintance in the beginning of September last year, when all the English world was setting out upon its holiday travels. This was a party of three people; two old, or let us say middle-aged, and one girl. The elder two were lively and *éveillés*; the young one seated herself on one of the benches, drew her shawl around her, and did not move, so far as I could see, till we reached the other shore. The head of the party was a little man, trim and alert, yet with a certain gravity in all his movements, as of one who felt himself a person of some importance. His clothes were of the universal grey, but dark and respectable. He was not ashamed to wear an opera-glass suspended over his shoulder, nor was he ashamed to show an interest in everything, pointing out the coast of France with a little excitement when it first came in sight, and taking out his glass to examine the ships in the Channel as the steamer passed them; but all this was done with perfect calm of manner and sobriety of tone. The novelty was pleasant to him, but it was not a novelty unexampled in his life. He took the lady, who was not his wife, but his sister,

to the bow, though at the risk of a sudden drenching from the spray, to explain to her the construction of the vessel. She was not ill—oh, not at all ill! but she was happier when she was allowed to sit quietly on her seat, looking furtively at her watch from time to time to see how the minutes were passing. These minutes go so slowly, with such tedious and culpable regularity, when one is crossing the Channel! When there is just a little wind, nothing but what you may call a freshness of sea air, an exhilarating breath—when the big undulations of the water are beautiful to behold in the sunshine, with the vessel cutting into them, scattering them into playful showers, turning up their lovely transparent greenness and blueness into lucid furrows as by a plough, a well-conditioned person with a good heart and a regard for his or her neighbours cannot be ill; but many prefer to be left quiet to enjoy the sea in their own fashion, perhaps to close their eyes, and so get rid of the sight of it altogether. This was the case with the lady, whom I afterwards knew as Miss Kendal, sister to the trim little gentleman. Who can limit the heroism of such domestic martyrs? She got up with a pale smile on her face and went to the bow, and looked at the two sharp prows tossing upward with the roll of the water, and listened to a little lecture upon this novel piece of naval architecture, getting greener and greener, paler and paler as she did so. When the playful spray dashed in her face the shock restored her. “Oh, thank you, it does not matter,” she said feebly when some one commiserated the sudden drenching. She tottered back to her seat, still smiling faintly, with her head going round and round, while her brother continued his discourse to the first listener that came handy. “I have found in the course of my life that to interest yourself in the things about you is indispensable to healthy existence,” he told me when we became well enough acquainted to discuss general subjects. And he was anxious to hear all about a novelty in the rig of a schooner yacht which some of the men on the deck were discussing, and hurried towards his sister to make her acquainted with that too. I was almost glad for her sake to see that the poor lady was past moving by that time. She smiled upon him, but shook her head; and that peculiarity in the jib-boom escaped Miss Kendal for ever.

All this time, while the old gentleman remarked and took an interest in everything, and spent a most busy and well-occupied hour (nay, two hours—what a pity that the big steamboat, with its wide airy cabins and liberal deck, should be slow!), the young lady who had come with him never moved nor looked at any one. She was a pretty young creature, slim and straight, with pretty hair, which the wind ruffled into a certain liveliness, bringing out secret little curls in it, and gleams of red in the brown. The only movement she made was to tuck a cheerful little lock under her hat, angry, it would seem, that anything about her should look happy. Hers was not the enforced quiet of the good lady by her side, who made such heroic efforts to respond to all the claims upon her. The young woman had a cloud on her brow of grievance direful and unpardonable. I divined, looking at them, that she had wished to go somewhere else, and had been outvoted—that she had hoped for other society and had been disappointed. It was impossible that any girl could have suffered so deeply at the hands of her friends as this girl bore the aspect of having suffered. She folded herself in her injury, whatever it was, as in a cloak. Speculating upon the trio, as one naturally speculates on the relations existing between any group that interests one, I concluded, as a matter of course, that she was the daughter of one or the other, and that they were making this journey on her account, though not by her will. I was mistaken in the first supposition, but not in the other, as will be seen.

When we got to Calais Miss Kendal was unfeignedly glad, as many a heroic but suffering passenger has been before her. "Thank heaven, that is over!" she said with a pleasant smile of thanks, as, taking advantage of the brief acquaintanceship of the passage, I helped her up the slippery steps of the pier. "But don't you know," I said, "that no one is ever ill in the *Calais-Douvres*?" She shook her head. She was pale, though gradually coming to life again. "I do not think I could have stood it a quarter of an hour longer," she said.

There I lingered, watching the crowd stream to the station to the overtaxed restaurant, which is too wildly busy in that moment of Gothic invasion to tempt any leisurely person, however hungry. I had plenty of time to spare. When the hordes of barbarians had swept on upon their way, and calm was re-established, the buffet at Calais, I knew, could furnish refreshments not unworthy that

first meal in France, to which every enlightened traveller looks forward with pleasure. I wandered along the stony streets into the little town, which, though it has no beauty, has perfect identity as French, and is as unlike anything English as if we had travelled a thousand miles to get to it. After a few digressions, I found myself in the *Place*, the great square in which everything centres. The sun was shining broadly, with an honest fulness, over the warm white stones, irregular and somewhat grass-grown, and in the centre were a few booths, the remains of the Saturday's market. After a while I perceived a group in the sunshine which gave me a pleasant surprise—three figures, each with a little round of shadow behind it, two in advance, one a little way behind. My fellow-travellers were at leisure, like myself; and in pursuance of his favourite theory, the head of the party was, as usual, interesting himself in what he found on his way. The merchandise in these booths was of a homely kind. Pots and pans, shoes and *sabots*, caps for the women, and a quantity of checked cotton, the staple of all. My friend had got a piece of this checked cotton in his hand, and was fingering it like a connoisseur. "Look, what good solid stuff it is," he was saying; "none of your flimsy prints." "It is very ugly," said his sister. And then the brisk little Frenchwoman who was the owner of the booth came forward with her smiling "Bon jour," and began to recommend her wares. She pulled it and pinched it to show how strong it was, and the colour so good—it would wash itself like a pocket-handkerchief. She produced a child in the twinkling of an eye from the lower regions of the booth, to show how well it looked. "Mais, madame, mais, je, vous, assure—" the little Englishman said; but his voice was drowned in her eloquence. Miss Kendal all this time stood by somewhat maliciously, and gave her brother no aid. "You know I am not very strong in my French," she said, with a touch of secret satisfaction; and there she stood with demure gravity, but laughter in her eyes (she was better of her voyage, quite recovered, she said), while the good man very ruefully accepted the necessity of purchase, and watched the measuring and cutting of half-a-dozen yards of the fabric he admired. When he turned away discomfited, with his parcel under his arm, she made me a little sign of warning, shaking her head to stop the laugh which the discomfited looks of the good little Englishman, thus victimised, called forth in spite of me. "What am I to do with it?"

he said in dismay. It was so warm in the sunshine that even the exertion of carrying six yards of cotton, done up in thick brown paper, made a difference. The good man had grown red to the brim of his hat. "Shall I give it to one of these children?—but that would hurt the poor woman's feelings!" It was then that Miss Kendal shook her head at me in warning. "Never mind," she said, "Reine will dispose of it for you. Come back, and I will give it to Mademoiselle Reine."

"Then you know Mademoiselle Reine!" said I, delighted.

She recovered her French when this little experience was over. We went back to the buffet together, and found an admirable *déjeuner*, such as our hurried compatriots rushing on to Paris knew nothing of; and then it appeared that we were all going the same way, not to Paris, but to the old town among the sand hills, prosaic, yet not without its memories, the little Flemish stronghold and seaport of St.-Eloi-sur-les-Dunes.

I found out who they were as we rolled slowly along on the leisurely railroad that runs a straight course through the flat marshy fields at a respectful distance from the coast. Nothing to be seen from thence but the level lines of a monotonous landscape, the canals, the poplars, the cottages cheerfully arrayed in whitewash, with roofs of red tiles and green painted shutters, a style of colouring, broad perhaps, and which fastidious people may consider wanting in refinement, but very useful in Flanders. Before we had got to St. Eloi I had found out a good deal about my travelling-companions. He was Mr. William Kendal, of the firm of Coniston and Kendal, long-established and most respectable solicitors. They lived in the respectable neighbourhood of Regent's Park, in Park Square, where the houses are excellent, if not perhaps much in the way of fashion. Miss Kendal lived with her brother, and was his housekeeper. She was one of those quiet women who, without any unkindness in them, nay, with the most devoted and true affection, yet cannot help seeing the foibles of their belongings, and get a gentle fun out of them in spite of themselves. Some, on the other hand, are irritated by every imperfection, and cannot bear those who have the honour of belonging to them to call forth a smile on any face. But Miss Kendal was of the former class. She liked her brother all the better for his peculiarities, and yielded to them with heroic self-denial—but quietly laughed at him all the same. She could not

help "seeing the fun" in every ludicrous combination of circumstances. With the tears in her eyes, the laugh would get into them too, a safeguard in many a trouble. The young lady was Helen Patmore, not the daughter of either—for they were a couple of old maidens and had never wed, neither the brother nor the sister—but their niece and adopted child. I did not know the story of her gloom till afterwards, and perhaps I may tell it you on another occasion; but it was not so interesting to me as the old brother and sister. A pretty girl, young and beloved and cared for, who has made up her mind that she is the most deeply injured of human creatures, and that nothing shall induce her to smile again, is in that condition of mind more laughable than pitiful, and poor Helen's determined effort to keep on the same level of sulky isolation was tragi-comical and inspired no serious feeling at all, except that of anger, in the impartial spectator. St. Eloi is not gay, but every little amusement that was to be had these good people frequented anxiously, for Helen's sake. I saw them at the Casino, at the little theatre, in all the promenades, at the shows and processions, religious and otherwise, which enliven life in a French town. The amusements of the Casino were strange to English customs. Night after night, all the sea-bathing people and a number of townsfolk assembled religiously in the pretty rooms, sometimes to hear music, sometimes to dance, to which latter amusement an excellent floor and good music much contributed. On the concert nights the music was in a large covered balcony opening towards the sea, where an excellent band played for two or three hours several times in the week, the *abonnés* sitting round, the ladies with their tapestry-work, the men with their cigars, with mild refreshments in the shape of coffee, *sirap*, and on fête days ices. The dark sea, lost in the blackness of the night, yet sounding out of that mystery and gloom in invisible boomings and rustlings, flashing in long wide ripples over the unseen sands, or breaking with sharp reports upon the pier, lay just below this open gallery all shining with lights; and the old French gavottes and minuets, the delicate fantastic rhythms and delightful bits of melody that danced and sung at once, must have sounded out to the passing ships with wistful suggestions, many a dark evening. When there was a moon, and from the open balcony you could look out on a soft dimness of sea and sky and sand, all falling into each other, with one silver touch on the water,

and all the upper air glowing with magical light, the scene was as fair as if it had been a great deal fairer, if the reader will pardon such a confusion of speech; for though there was really no feature of natural beauty in it, those three elements when they touch each other—the earth in that broad belt of sand, in soft shades of grey, faint touches of yellow; the sea with a half-perceptible heave and swell in the dark, and here and there an indistinct edge of white, where a little wave tumbles against some sandy mound or half-buried boulder; and the sky all alight with the last reflections of the day, or in the hazy whiteness of the moon, distinct above, falling away in long lines of indistinguishable mingling below, have a wonderful effect upon the imagination. My recollections of such scenes, which are always attractive to me, give me a kindness for Mr. Whistler's *Nocturnes*, whether they may be called pictures or not. They are suggestions; they turn the spectator himself into a painter, and complete their own vagueness out of his soul—when he happens to have one. The great mistake, I think, in theology as well as in other matters, is to take it for granted that we all have souls—a matter very open to doubt.

These good people took their charge to all the concerts, where we sat together and listened and grew very intimate. Miss Kendal and I used to nod at each other, keeping time to the old *bourrées* and corantos, which always formed part of the programme; and it was often a dreadful business for Helen to keep up her indifference. She might have written a philosophical essay, not to say a novel, with half the mental strain it cost her to make herself look as if she did not hear. But she succeeded. It is a pity that the success was so little worth the exertion. In the meantime I have been forgetting Mr. Kendal, who is, in reality, my first object. He did not neglect anything in the place. For the first few days he went about, not only with a Murray under his arm, but with one of the Guides—Joanne, the Murray of France. Murray tells very little, I am sorry to say, about St. Eloi, and even in the Guide—Joanne there is not so much as could be desired. The date of the foundation of the cathedral, and of the fine tower in which is the carillon, ringing its chimes at all the quarters—these he ascertained all about; and the curiosities in the museum, which were of the ordinary character of country-town museums. But it cost him a great deal of trouble to know more. Wherever one went, one was pretty sure to hear

his slow, cautious French, very English in tone, but much more correct than ordinary English—French, asking questions about everything. He had learned the language, if you like, according to the rules of Stratford-atte-Bowe, but he had learned it conscientiously, as he did everything. When he made a mistake in a gender he saw it, and went carefully over that sentence again and put it right. Frenchmen like to see a man taking pains to speak correctly the most elegant language in the world. We are very apt to say in our simplicity that our mistakes in French are never laughed at, as mistakes in English are laughed at among ourselves. But let not any one deceive himself. An Englishman may laugh, but he takes a foreigner's mistakes in very good part, often finding the broken English pretty, as you will read in many books. But don't suppose a Frenchman does this. A wrong gender or that universal incapacity to master accents which belongs to our innocent insularity is an offence to him; therefore Mr. Kendal's cautious repetitions were deeply approved by most people. He asked about all the churches, and about the canals, and enjoyed hearing how much was the fall at each lock. He made little expeditions to the towns near. I wish I had room to tell you about them, those wonders of little Flemish towns, all dead-alive yet all surviving, with perfect walls and citadels, and the power in their hands to open the sluices like the Dutch, and turn the whole wealthy country into a moat of defence, should peril come that way. The Prussians never got so far, or we might have seen it done. There they stand, dotted about the low, rich, level country, standing out from the flat, amid moats that are full of water-lilies, walls of Vauban's planning, cathedrals made by the old masters of the art, spacious splendid old houses with gabled fronts and many windows, looking across each silent *Place* to each fine, florid, solid belfry, listening century after century while the chimes tell out four quarters to each hour; with pictures even in their little museums—sketches by Rubens, here and there a battered bit of a jovial Dutch master, or a tranquil wreck of a Hobbema—though all the while they are of no more importance than so many villages. You could not drive along the clattering stony highway to one of those little towns without hearing Mr. Kendal's fine French, and seeing his trim little figure, always so trim and neat, with a red Murray peeping from his pocket and a Guide—Joanne in his hand. He found out

all about them, the dates, the statistics, the tiny little local industries, the amount of market-dues which the peasants paid when they came in with their baskets, their eggs and poultry, and vegetables, and big bouquets of flowers. He did not, however, I believe, ever inspect again the excellent quality of the striped cottons after that experience at Calais. But when all these interests were exhausted, Providence had provided for this excellent man another interest for his holidays, one which was always, unfortunately for itself, beneath our eyes.

The sands of St. Eloi are vast and level, without rocks or perils of any kind, and form at high tide an immense plain of shallow water, across which you have to wade your way for what appears a great distance before you can get water enough to swim in. Upon these sands, some time before our arrival, an unfortunate ship, failing to strike the harbour mouth, had run ashore. It was a Dutch vessel, somewhat heavy in the keel and cumbersome about the bows. "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good." The winds that blew the *Goote Vrouw* ashore was lucky for us, though unlucky for them. The stranded ship was the liveliest point of interest for all the idlers about. It gave a certain picturesque suggestion of misfortune not beyond friendly help, and of the dangers that lay hidden in the sea at its brightest, even when it lay shining before us in all the blaze of the summer morning, speckled along its whole margin with cheerful groups of bathers. Mr. Kendal instantly fixed his attention upon this ship. He told us all about it the second morning—its tonnage, its cargo, where it was bound to, the number of the seamen on board. When we listened to the concert and nodded at each other, keeping time to the gay yet stately movement of a gavotte, he with a telescope studied the ship. "I think she has shifted a little more to the west," he would say suddenly, in a pause of the music. "To the west!" said Miss Kendal, with an alarmed glance at him. "I think so! Decidedly she is settling down by the head," he replied, with the gravest concern on his countenance. Then the gleam of fun I have already noticed came into his sister's eyes. "I thought you were speaking of Helen," she said. "Helen!" Mr. Kendal uttered an impatient "Humph! decidedly she is settling down by the head." But in the morning he had taken a more cheerful view. They permitted me to breakfast with them in a corner of the great *salle*, at a round table placed in a window over-

looking the sands and sea, the bathing-machines and the big ship, which, when the tide was in, looked like a willing and graceful visitor, but, when it was out, showed herself for what she was, a crippled rover, a prisoner held ignominiously by the heel. Mr. Kendal walked to the window as soon as he came down-stairs. "I have been watching her all the morning," he said. "She is not so low as I thought." This time I too was deceived. I withdrew a few steps, thinking his sister and he might have something private to say about the girl who occupied, it was evident, the chief part of Miss Kendal's thoughts.

"Do you think so?" she cried eagerly. "Poor child! she is very silly, but——"

"Child!" he cried, and then there was the usual gleam on Miss Kendal's face, but this time mingled with annoyance and disappointment. "It is very strange," he said with a superior air, walking to the window—"very strange, a wonder to me, how you women can live in sight of a most interesting object, under your very noses, and never seem to see it! I tell you she has not settled down half so much as I thought. There is a high tide to-morrow, and if the wind changes, as there seems every reason to expect it will, why, please God, we'll have her off; but, as I say, you women never see a thing, though it is under your eyes!"

She gave a little laugh as she poured out the coffee. I suspect she was much inclined to make use of the same words.

When the high tide came, however, it did not accomplish what Mr. Kendal hoped. Before that there had been a great deal of work on board of the *Goote Vrouw*. The cargo had been taken out of her, and every unnecessary spar cut away; and to watch the heavy old coble, full of workmen in blouses, towed out of the harbour every morning by a brisk, impatient little steam-tug, and punctually called for in the evening, and dragged back again by the same little fuming and fretting emissary, pleased us all in our seaside idleness. When we went out for our morning bathe, we swam out to the ship and round about her weather-beaten sides. Unfortunately Mr. Kendal spoke no Dutch, so his questions in his slow and cautious French, to the dumpy sailor looking over the bulwarks, never met with any response, except that after many visits the man began to nod and grin at us, appreciating our friendly interest; and Mr. Kendal's respectable English countenance—surmounting shoulders clad in a red and black striped costume, according to the fashion of the

place, which gave a certain harlequin air to a face from which nothing could take its exemplary character or withdraw the air of prudence and gravity which it possessed—bobbing up and down with the waves as he surveyed the ship with anxious serenity, was somewhat comical. But when that famous storm got up, which suddenly made an end of the fine weather, his excitement was great. It was a terrible night; the wind, raging from the north-east, dashing the great waves over the level sands with a rush like that of an army charging, and flinging the raging water against the pier as if it had taken up some shrieking, struggling living creature, and hurled it upon the one obstacle standing out against its might. Mr. Kendal came into my room pale with anxiety, before I was dressed. "I thought you'd like to know," he said. "I stepped down to see if anything had happened. Of course the gale has driven her deeper into the sand, but she has not gone to pieces, as I feared. No chance now with the spring-tide," he added with emotion. All next day he was out of heart, coming in at intervals to tell us that the man on the pier, and the wonderful old salts who were always seated on the beach outside the harbour-master's office, old pilots, with whom he had many laborious consultations, had very little hopes of her. "She will have to be broken up," he said.

After all this you may suppose what a disappointment it was, what an illustration of the vanity of human expectations, that when at last the *Goote Vrouw* was triumphantly got off and towed into harbour, Mr. Kendal was not there to see! He had gone into the town to do business, to draw money by the aid of the kind and courteous gentleman who holds the troublesome post of consul at St. Eloi, when this climax arrived. For my own part, when I suddenly discovered that the stranded vessel had moved from her accustomed place, my first idea was to rub my eyes and ask myself if I was dreaming; my next to pick up my hat and rush out with surprise, not unmingled with alarm. Was it possible? One could scarcely believe there was no magic in it, except that same little black demon of a steam-tug. The three bare poles of masts, helplessly appealing to heaven, the battered hull we had swum round so often, moved along half reluctantly like a sick man dragged almost against his will from the verge of the grave, while the little *remorqueur*, pouring forth

floods of blackest smoke, in a kind of demoniacal triumph, with a throb of its fierce little engines that could be heard over all the sands in the stillness of the morning, panted and struggled along with its huge burden. The ship looked not like a thing redeemed from destruction, but like a victim pounced upon and carried off to some sea-ogres' den by that little myrmidon. I went out, as I have said, in great excitement, and followed along the sands and by the lower line of the fortifications that trace all the margin of the sea. Half-way to the town I saw my friend coming along, trim as usual, yet suffering a little from the heat, and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, unconscious of all that was happening. He looked as if he thought me mad, when I pointed wildly to the sea. "The *Goote Vrouw!*" I shouted out. Poor Mr. Kendal! and he had not been on the spot! I draw a veil over the disappointment of that moment. He was an Englishman, and acted as became his country. He betrayed no unseemly emotion, but put the amount of the cheque I had given him to cash into my hand, and, turning his back on me without a word, strode off in the direction of the pier. I felt the eloquence of his silence, and that there are moments of feeling with which a stranger has no right to interfere. Besides, I think that my real motive in coming out had been a certain desire to vindicate his interests, a sense that somebody representing him ought to "assist," as the French say, on such an important occasion. I felt now that in true friendship it was my duty to go home and leave him, who had the best right to that gratification, to see the *Goote Vrouw* safely established in the dock, which he had feared she was never to enter more.

But Mr. Kendal, I think, never quite forgave his fate which had withdrawn him from the scene of action at that critical moment. He was almost rude, as rude as a man so kind and sensible could be, to our admirable consul at the Casino, that evening; as if it could possibly be the fault of Her Britannic Majesty's representative at St. Eloi! And very soon after he went away.

Need I say that he is to be found every morning while the courts are sitting, trim, and fresh, and respectable, as cautious in his advice as he was in his French, carefully considering every opinion he gives, and taking the most anxious care of his clients' interests, in Bedford Row!

A PARTY OF TRAVELLERS.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

PART II.

OLD maids are often very interesting people. I think the only specimens of this class which I thoroughly dislike are those of the male species which one encounters now and then—a something different from the old bachelor, who is so often a genial personage. The unmarried person generally, when he or she gets old, is, however, in most cases very individual, more distinctly definable and “like himself,” according to the quaint formula which distinguishes an out-of-the-way character, than the broader being developed by marriage. The lady whom I am going to describe to you was very distinctively an old maid. She was very neat, very orderly about all her belongings, vexed and disturbed by untidiness in a way which seldom happens to a woman who has entered the second chapter of life. But then Miss Kendal had many features in her character which prevented it from being narrow. She sympathized with everybody, and she saw the fun in most things that came in her way. To say that she had a very quick perception of the ludicrous would be to put this tendency perhaps into words a little too strong, though perfectly just. It suits the finer shade of her delicate perceptions to say that she saw the fun that lies latent in most human situations. She was less indignant, perhaps, with some things that were wrong, less contemptuous of the silly, and, on the other hand, less impressed by the sublime, in consequence. The smile that stole into her eyes and crept to the corners of her mouth, disarmed her when she had human weakness of the ordinary kind to deal with, and equipped her in armour of proof against sentimental or other pretences. Even when, sometimes, she was taken in, her soft heart proving too many for her clear-sightedness, by any specious show of feeling, the lingering of that smile showed how she saw instinctively through the fictitious veil even when it blinded her. This threw gleams of laughter all over the world and brightened the face of nature to her; but yet I can well imagine that on various occasions in life she must have found this power of perception much in her way.

The reader will readily believe that such a woman must have somehow required a special thorn in the flesh; and she had it in one of those mingled relationships of

pain and delight, of impotence and authority, which are our chiefest tortures and pleasures. This sober pair of brother and sister were by nature as likely to be happy as any couple on earth. They had relinquished, indeed, the warmer joys of married life; but they had kept that companionship of man and woman which, after all, is the greatest and most lasting happiness of marriage—better, more delicate, complete, and sufficing, than any tie between man and man, or woman and woman. Whatsoever dreams might have crossed their firmament had faded away, and left them unseparated, always each other's first friends, without any divided interests or jar of alienation. I think there is no more delightful tie in the world. The old brother and sister have less of the selfishness *à deux*, which is one of the commonest forms of egotism, than a married pair, and they are not so straitly bound within their own immediate circle as are people with children, whose devotion to their family is their chief virtue, though it may get to be a social sin. To see them together was a very pleasant sight. She had the most perfect respect and love for him, yet laughed at him softly, with an amusement which was always tender; while he entertained a kind of contempt for her and her opinions, though he trusted her implicitly in all practical matters. Miss Kendal for her part knew a great deal less, but had read a great deal more, than her brother. She was fond of books in which there was no information. She did not care about the date at which a church was founded, nor was she very warmly interested in historical events. At St. Eloi she never looked at Murray, and never went near the Museum, but walked about upon the broad sands or wandered among the dunes; and when she was in the town strolled through the market, delighted with all the old women and the young ones, but quite unconcerned about the manufactures or produce of the country. While he put questions she looked round her, not caring to hear anything explained, and listened to the carillon while he was making a note of the exact date at which the belfry was founded. She was a very English figure in the Flemish town, though she was not an *Anglaise pour rire*. There were none of those conflicting colours

about her which our neighbours across the Channel expect to see as distinguishing the female Briton; but she wore a large hat—a very rare covering with a middle-aged Frenchwoman—and a good, rich, perfectly unsuitable silk gown wherever she went. In the hot summer weather these thick, lustrous, brown and black silks were, it could not be denied, entirely out of place; but they were a necessary part of Miss Kendal. She had no costumes that were fit for the Bains de Mer. She picked up her silken skirts, indeed, and carried them very tidily, seldom getting a stain; but for my part I should have thought this troublesome; and I think she would have laughed had she seen any other tidy little lady walking along the sands with her arms full of billows of brown silk. But even Miss Kendal, with all her sense of humour, could not see herself; which is a good thing—for what would become of all our little individualities, our angles, the rough places which distinguish us one from another, if we could see how droll we appear—just as droll, or more so, than the other people are?

“How friendly this looks,” she said to me when we met in the gallery of the Casino, where party after party were arriving: the father and mother, and a child or two, followed by the *bonne* in her pretty white cap, who formed one of the party, and took her chair, like the rest, to listen to the music. These good people all knew each other, and met with many a friendly greeting. It was Sunday, and they had all come out, entire families together, after having piously performed their religious duties in the morning, to spend the rest of the day by the sea. The programme of this after part of the day was not pious, but it was innocent enough. In the afternoon came the music, and very pretty music it was, though without that distinction between the sacred and secular which pleases us at home. The little programmes that were handed about had something printed, we noticed, on the back, which all our friends were studying. This was the *menu* for the table d’hôte at which most of them afterwards dined, babies and *bonnes* and all; and after dinner the pretty Casino rooms were lighted up, and there was a ball; and at eleven o’clock there came a sound of many omnibuses to convey all the family parties away to bed. I confess that we sat and looked on with a good deal of amusement, though it was Sunday, and though the dancing goes much against insular notions. Nothing

could be more virtuous and domestic than this tranquil pleasure-making. The people all belonged to St. Eloi, and had known each other from their cradles; or they were visitors in large parties of friends and allies, all intimate and familiar with each other. The ladies danced in their pretty summer morning dresses, which they had worn all day, with bonnets on, and often little veils half over their faces, the most curious fashion: brothers and sisters and cousins, neighbours and friends—very quietly and gracefully, not flying wildly about the room, as so many English dancers do, and with a marked liking for figure-dances—the Lancers, or even the old-fashioned quadrilles, which our young people dislike so much: and at eleven o’clock went home to bed, with the pleasant consciousness of a well-spent day. We got a great deal of amusement out of these good people, who on their side no doubt found *les Anglais* more amusing still; but after a time it palled upon us. “It looks very pretty,” Miss Kendal said, “the first day; but now they look rather like the figures on a barrel-organ. We have only been here a fortnight, but I can’t bear it any longer. I know how the men make their bows, and almost what that little man with the red hair is saying. And they will do it all over again to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow. Evening church, with a sermon an hour long, would be more amusing, after all!”

“Pleasure-making is the most monotonous of all occupations,” said I; but I was stopped in my commonplace little speech by the smile which trembled upon the lips of Helen, Miss Kendal’s pretty niece, who, as I have said, was sulky, poor child!—sulky as never young woman was before. She sat by us wherever we went, wrapped up, as it were, in a thunder-cloud; and this smile was no melting, but only an expression of infinite contempt for my opinion. Helen was Miss Kendal’s charge, her child, the thing she loved best in the world; and, in consequence, naturally her chief trouble, the one thing in her lot which brought down this tranquil woman to an equality with the rest of us. She could not laugh where Helen was concerned. She divined every scornful look on her pretty, gloomy countenance, and instinct taught her why I had stopped short, and showed her, though she could not have seen it, Helen’s smile.

“Do you notice that change in the music?” she said hastily. “Why, in the name of all that is fantastic, should they bring in three

or four bars of 'Auld Lang Syne' into the middle of the Lancers? I wonder if they mean it, those fiddlers."

"My dear," said Mr. Kendal, who had brought his newspaper to the edge of the dancing, and was reading his *Galignani* with half a glance at the lights and the moving figures, "what could they mean by it? You don't suppose the fiddlers understand Scotch!"

She looked at me with the usual little smile in her eyes. "Do you think they understand Scotch?" she said: then sat and beat time with the look of one who understood something, whether it was Scotch or not. In the very middle of one of the figures in the dance, in the heart of the gayest rhythm of the music, why did that scrap of the old tune break in? I could not explain it any more than she; but it sent her back in a moment over twenty or thirty years, to the time of some "auld acquaintance," one could see. Meanwhile Mr. Kendal read his *Galignani*, and young Helen sat looking straight before her, taking notice of nothing, except now and then to signalise some remark she thought dull, by a faint suggestion of supercilious scorn.

It was Helen's impenetrable look that made them leave St. Eloi. There was not enough to amuse her, Miss Kendal thought; and I went with them, having nothing better to do, to some of the old Belgian towns, which the young lady beheld with the same gloominess, and without unbending in the least. Mr. Kendal was pleased with the move, for he had exhausted all the attractions of St. Eloi, and had got the measurements of the fortifications, and all the dates, and knew everything: and the *Goote Vrouw* was safe in harbour, so that there was no longer the same pleasure in anticipating the high tides. All the great Belgian towns are so near each other that you get from one to another very rapidly, and we made a pleasant sober little expedition together. My friends had been there before years ago, and remembered all the high gabled houses and the windmills standing up against the sky. Mr. Kendal had got the history of the Netherlands besides his two guide books, and pointed out everything to us. I never knew half so much about Philip van Artevelde before, though I have read the poem. As for Miss Kendal, she was very indifferent to that great personage. "To think this carillon has been chiming all the quarters since we were here before," she said, "since we were twenty, William!" "And for centuries before that,

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my dear," said William complaisantly; "the bells were consecrated in——" Miss Kendal only laughed and led me aside to those little glimpses of the canals which are so picturesque in Bruges. She knew them all by heart. "I have no turn for history," she said. "I don't know why I like this; it is not even beautiful, like Venice. I used to come and stand on the bridge and look along the water-line, and count all the gables and the little old gardens and note the redness of the bricks. There is no sense in the pleasure it gives me. I dare say they are dreadfully damp and unhealthy, the walls like sponges and the gardens mouldy; I would not live there for the world. And the chimes transport me altogether. I don't know if I am an old woman or a girl: they make the girl and the old woman one. Though you don't care much about them now, yet when you are as old as I am, Helen, when you come back again——"

"I do not think, Aunt Mary, that I shall ever want to come back again, should I live to be as old as Methuselah," said Helen. Miss Kendal's countenance changed a little, a cloud passed over it; and then she looked at that superb young person, so superior to time, to novelty, to change, and to reason, and a gleam of indulgent humour came over her face. She could scarcely bear to laugh at Helen, yet the force of Helen's impertinence and youthful sublimity moved her in spite of herself. She could have cried next moment; but in the meantime it was more than nature could do to keep that consciousness of all that was absurd in this tragi-comedy, out of her eyes. We walked back, a long round, and stopped at every new opening of the still canals and broken lines of houses—Helen walking by our side with a queenly toleration and superiority to our childish pleasure—and came once more into the great square opposite the belfry, where Miss Kendal lingered with that strange fascination for the chimes which seemed to possess her. I felt it get hold of me, too. They appeared to pursue each other, these quarters, hurrying on each other's heels, exultingly threatening mankind with the end of the hours that ran so fast. "It is nothing to them, up there, how fast they go! And after all, we don't take much more notice, do we?" she said, looking at the people moving about in the big area of the square, paying no sort of attention to the bells. A thing that is always clanging in your ears, how soon you come not to mind! Underneath the great tower, the mortals paid no attention, while

the immortals, the unliving, the undying, sounded out the measure of that time which never pauses. Miss Kendal herself, having just remarked upon this fact, turned deliberately round to the shop windows, which were full of the peculiar jewellery of the Low Countries—the peasant ornaments of Flanders, ornaments curiously wrought in inter-lacements of gold and silver, with sparks of little crystals or diamonds. "Come in and look at them," she said. There were whole cases of them, quaint and elaborate and simple in their old immemorial patterns, the same which have been used for centuries. With that servile desire to please which we show to our sulky children, Miss Kendal bought one of them, a pendant for Helen's pretty neck; and though the girl wanted to be disagreeable, yet a mingling of vanity and gratitude—reluctant gratitude—made her wear it when we got back to the hotel, upon the velvet which encircled that pretty throat—and there it attracted Mr. Kendal's eye. He thought it very pretty.

"Can't we get her some more of those things?" he said; for, to tell the truth, they both spoiled the girl. Upon which Miss Kendal flashed up in a little outbreak, as foolish as any of them.

"Thank heaven!" she said, "there are no holes in my child's ears to hang ear-rings in—"

Her brother looked at her reprovingly. "You mean, thank your own superior taste and judgment, Mary," he said.

And then Miss Kendal proved her real superiority. She saw the little bit of humbug of which she had been guilty, and a gleam of laughter came to her eyes, along with a fitting colour. She could laugh at herself, too. Then Helen put in her word.

"I am very sorry not to have my ears pierced," she said; "all the other girls have—and mamma thinks it ought to have been done years ago."

This startled them both a little. Helen's mother, as I learned later, was the chief disturbing influence of their easy life. They were quite inclined to think that the troublesomeness of their darling was her fault, and came from her inspiration. They gave each other a look and an almost imperceptible nod, as if assuring each other of a fact they had suspected.

"Come out with me to-morrow after breakfast," said Mr. Kendal, "and you shall have the ear-rings if you like them."

He was still more servile than his sister; and the pleasure of these two excellent people

in finding anything that was likely to mollify their little tyrant was pathetic. As for Miss Kendal, I think she was a little disturbed by this offer. It had been *her* idea. She gave him a look of comical reproach—and yet, though she was quite conscious that it was comical, she was vexed all the same.

"Men never stand by you," she said to me after, "they go over to the enemy on the first temptation." And then once more she laughed at herself. She was not at all more philosophical or less liable to err because she saw so distinctly how foolish it was, and even how laughable, which is an argument still more telling. She and I walked on next day to the hospital of St. Jean, where the famous pictures of Hans Memling have lived for a century or two, while Mr. Kendal and his niece stopped at the jeweller's. Perhaps it was this that made my friend cross. "They are wonderful pictures," she said, "but St. Ursula is ugly. Come into the chapel and wait for them." It was afternoon, and the "Salut" was just about to begin. A fat old Augustinian (I think) nun, in a voluminous white woollen gown, took her hands out of the big sleeves in which they were folded, and gave us chairs; and there we knelt while the music played in a little gallery above, and the priest at the altar went through a great many ceremonies very unintelligible to me. To come out of the fresh air and from all the novelties of a foreign place, in the very midst of the mingled amusement and fatigue of sight-seeing, into an unfrequented chapel, where a few poor people are saying their prayers monotonously in the middle of their monotonous life, as they do every day, gives one a curious sensation; to us it is so strange, to them so common. There were about a dozen people in the chapel, chiefly women, in their comfortable, ungraceful Flemish cloaks, covering them from shoulder to ankle, with white caps at the top, and heel-less, sturdy shoes below; well-clad, vigorous, comfortable, but not lovely figures. Is it an advantage, I wonder, of the Catholic ritual, that you are not absolutely bound to it, not called upon to follow every step, but may say your own prayers, and lay out your own troubles before the altar, while the priest there is doing all that is right and necessary for you? It is not according to our notions, yet sometimes, now and then, I think it is an advantage. For my part, I did not understand the service, and could not follow what was supposed to be going on officially; but it was not difficult to follow what was going on in the faces of the people about, all inde-

pendent of the pretty chanting of the choristers in the gallery, and the movements of the priest. It was like coming into a friendly house, where all the familiar affairs of life were going on, comprehensible and sympathetic, but in a different language. Just as the service concluded, Mr. Kendal came in, guide-book in hand. He had examined all the pictures in their proper order. It did not occur to him to form any opinion of St. Ursula, or to exercise his judgment on the matter. "Do you mean to leave the place without seeing the Memlings?" he said; "why, it is what one comes here for." He said just the same, excellent man, about the diamond-cutting in Amsterdam. He was a man who did his duty without any question with himself whether he liked it or not.

And, for my part, I confess I was sorry not to see the Memlings, and give my opinion about the St. Ursula; but I stood by my companion. On the other hand, she kept me sitting for a full hour before the Van Eyck in the cathedral, the "Adoration of the Lamb," to the great contempt of her brother, who allotted ten minutes to it, made out every part, and went off to all the other chapels, leaving not one dark area of canvas unvisited. The cicerone was angry too, and scolded us. "You will make all the gentlemen late, and you will not see half vot is to be seen," he informed us. This is what it is to have to do with a person who has fancies of her own. "And the others are just as well worth seeing," Mr. Kendal said.

This was, however, I think the only time that Miss Kendal asserted herself. She was sorry next morning, and made her peace with many expressions of contrition. "We have a temper in our family," she said. "Sometimes we get very cross when we are contradicted, and revenge ourselves upon ourselves, which is always a mistake."

"Does any one ever contradict *you*, Aunt Mary?" said Helen, roused by this speech, with that curl of the lip which very young persons in rebellion always think so imposing. The number of lips, quite uncurved by nature, which I have seen attempt this grimace! Helen had a pretty mouth, and succeeded rather well; and nothing could exceed the innocent insolence of her tone. Miss Kendal changed colour a little, but then smiled as usual.

"Oh yes, my dear, now and then. Your uncle, for instance, and the man yesterday in the cathedral."

"The only thing to do," said Mr. Kendal,

taking his coffee, "is to follow Murray. That is the conviction to which I have been brought. The French guide is very well, but not reliable like Murray. They have made a study of it; they know the things that suit English people. Just follow Murray, Mary, and I don't think you can go far wrong."

"I will do my best," she said, very demurely, "to follow your advice, William."

What a gleam of fun there was in her eyes! Yet she looked at him lovingly as he chipped his egg, eating his regulation English breakfast wherever he might happen to be. Whether Murray was reliable or not, he was. The foolish child on whom she had lavished so much love might turn upon her, but her old brother was always faithful. This was what I read under the laughter in Miss Kendal's eyes. She picked up her silk gown, and walked off with him after breakfast, as alert as any young girl—far more alert than Helen, who followed with me, and who did not conceal her indifference. We went about from church to church, and from gallery to gallery. Never do I remember such a well-spent day. He did not spare us a drawing, nor a doorway, nor a bit of ironwork; and his sister kept by his side, and "took an interest" in everything. Even as afternoon came on, and we all got tired, her face was still as bright as a summer morning. She kept looking at him with that subdued wonder and amusement, and tender humour in her eyes. The steady energy that there was in him, the perseverance—no caprice or foolish liking—his duty and his Murray and a clear conscience—these were Mr. William Kendal's guides.

He liked to hold forth a little to us women—what man does not?—to instruct us, and set us in the right way. And notwithstanding all the curiosities he was showing us, he had a great idea of our own day, and the progress the arts and sciences have made. "Nowadays a painter takes a nice, agreeable subject, and paints you a pretty face, or a pleasant group of people," he said; "and knows how to put everything in perspective. Who would paint a subject like that nowadays?" It was the flaying of a poor saint, which is a thing the Flemish imagination must have delighted in—and I agreed with Mr. Kendal; whereupon he began to blaspheme in his neat and orderly way.

"That lamb in the big picture you made such a fuss about yesterday, is exactly like a baby's toy. I remember buying one just like it for Helen; do you think any artist could paint a thing like that now, or get it sold if

it was sent to the Royal Academy? and then the perspective——”

“H—hsh!” Miss Kendal said with a shiver, stopping him. We were then, I think, turning into the Béguinage, a very new little conventual village, with nothing historical about it. And there it was that, notwithstanding her penitence and her admiration of him, my friend played her brother a malicious trick enough. We went to look at the lace made in the establishment, and which it is the traveller's duty to buy, by way of town-dues, or toll, for the good of the place. When it was all spread out upon the table, Miss Kendal spoke a word aside to the smiling sister with her Flemish accent and limited stock of French, who displayed it, and who presently withdrew, leaving us to examine the contemporary productions of the sisterhood. “I suppose, then, William, this lace must be better than the old?” Miss Kendal said, with hypocrisy in every tone. “Not a doubt of it,” said the unwary oracle, thinking of Nottingham. He gave a glance at the pretty boxes on the table, then turned to the grim pictures of the former superiors with which the room was hung. While he was thus engaged another smiling old nun, with a rosy, round face like a winter apple, came beaming into the room, carrying a parcel in her hand. She had no French at all, nothing but Flemish, this old lady, and she was the superior *de facto*, the queen regnant, guardian of all the treasures of the establishment. In that bundle was the wealth of the place; what shall I call them, cobwebs, gossamer, rags—some just holding together, no more—old Flanders, old Malines, old Valenciennes. Miss Kendal selected a fine piece of the new lace fresh and clean out of the workwoman's hands, as strong as linen, yet fine and light, the best our Béguines had to show; and along with it a fairy film of old *Flandres*, yellow and worn, two hundred years old or thereabouts. “Look at these,” she said, “William, and tell me which you like best.” I have always said there could not have been a higher test of his candour and truthfulness. Many a man would have stuck by his colours at all hazards, and declared the good strong *Duchesse*, as they call it, which would wash and wear like Mrs. Primrose's gown, to be the superior production. He looked at them, not perceiving at first the trap that was being laid for him; then touched the ancient cobweb with a shy finger, as if to assure himself that it was something more than an imagination, and then the excellent man turned away with a “pshaw!” of indig-

nation. It was a wicked trick. But she contented herself with having beaten, she did not exult over him. She laughed only with her eyes, giving a glance at me, who was, so to speak, in her confidence. And if ever two women enjoyed a little private victory over the instructor of our subject race, we were those women—though we were not so unkind, having made our *coup*, as to laugh out.

This lace, however, was the cause of a little lightening of the firmament, so far as the private comfort of these good people was concerned. We bought, among us, a great part of the old *Flandre's* delicate stores, and after dinner we gave ourselves the amusement of looking over it. “This will do for your mother, Helen,” Miss Kendal said. The head of the party had gone out to see the papers, he said, when we produced our treasures. She laid out a very delicate piece of the lace, measuring it. “It will do for her black satin, her dinner dress——”

This I heard as I was reading, withdrawing myself a little, as a stranger ought to do in the sanctuary of a book, from the communings of members of the same family; and I did not venture to look at them, though I listened, I confess, with some anxiety. There was a little rush, and a sound of crying—“Oh, auntie, you are too good! Send me away! do not have anything to do with me! I hate myself, but I cannot help it. Mamma, too! don't be kind to us any more!”

“Kind to you! Do you call me *kind*, Helen? I only—love you more than anything in the world.”

And then there was a long whispering, and crying, and clinging together. I heard some of it, not venturing to go away, lest that should disturb them more, but turning my back, and appearing to be very deep in my book. She had not wanted to come abroad, the girl said; she had been disappointed. She had thought, Anywhere, anywhere her dear aunt had pleased; but to come *abroad*, as if she wanted that! Helen was very penitent, very ready to confess a thousand faults; but it seemed to me that a hope of still getting her own way was in the girl's heart. Her aunt went to her room with her presently, soothing and caressing Helen. And when she came back her face was bright, yet tearful. “My poor child has gone to bed; she was overtired,” she said. And when Mr. Kendal came back, what did she do but lay before him the evident facts that Flanders was very flat, that the scenery was not interesting, and that to return by Antwerp and go to Scotland, as they had originally intended, would be,

on the whole, not a bad thing to do. It was a clear moonlight night, and I stood on the balcony looking out upon the dark tower of old St. Nicholas cutting the clear whiteness, and listening to the carillon which kept breaking out from minute to minute as it seemed, as if glad that the hours ran away so fast. "Go back by Antwerp?" Mr. Kendal said. "Nonsense! I have not had half my holiday; and you, who hate the sea! You will spoil the girl, Mary. But I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll take her to Paris to the exhibition;

only don't ruin her buying everything she admires. Go home in the middle of my long vacation! I know a trick worth two of that. I'll send for Walter, and let him have a holiday too."

Was it Walter that was wanting? I saw Miss Kendal slowly shake her head, without saying anything—and once more Mr. Kendal said "pshaw!"—but what that pshaw meant, or if it was a better argument in respect to Helen than in respect to the lace, I did not find out till next day.

TO ICELAND.

BY MRS. BLACKBURN ("J. B.").

PART I.



R. JOHN BURNS—the well-known partner of the Cunard Company—Mrs. Burns

and party, in all five ladies and eleven gentlemen, embarked for Iceland in the *Mastiff*, 870 tons, 220-horse power, a fine newscrew-steamer, built for the Glasgow and Bel-

fast trade, but used on this occasion as a yacht. The crew, numbering thirty-four, included a special pilot for the northern seas, Captain Ritchie from Leith, as the compass is not to be depended on near the coast of Iceland. In such a vessel, so appointed, the thought that it would take little short of a miracle to send us to the bottom was comforting to those who are timid at sea. The mind, thus at ease, had ample means for filling its vacuity or pleasing its taste from the various contents of the well-stored book-shelves; nor was ought lacking in the way of bodily

comforts that the thoughtful kindness of our host and hostess could provide.

We left Wemyss Bay on the Clyde at six o'clock on a beautiful evening, Saturday, 22nd June, 1878, and spent the night in Campbeltown harbour. On Sunday, a wet and dismal day, we went to the parish church, in one part of which there was a Gaelic service, in the other an English one, going on at the same time. The partition wall was not thick enough to prevent our hearing the sigh of the neighbouring psalmody. We attended the English section, and heard an excellent sermon, the text of which I have forgotten, but the main drift was to inculcate honesty in the affairs of every-day life, a subject worthy of more attention than it sometimes receives.

We started soon after midnight on the morning of Monday the 24th. It is a pleasing sound, that of weighing anchor; but more pleasing still is the sound when it is let go, after you have gained an experience that cannot be taken from you. The *Mastiff* began rolling at the Mull of Cantire, and continued to do so all the way to Iceland and back, till we got into the sheltered water between the Hebrides and the mainland on our return. We were never without the "fiddles" on the table, and, in spite of them, had many a cup of tea and glass of wine splashed over our dresses; our seats had to be made fast to the table or they would have slid with us all over the cabin. The weather during nearly the whole voyage was dry; and it was very enjoyable to sit on deck in sheltered places, or by the funnel, playing at chess or "go bang," or the more social games of "proverbs," "yes and no," "dumb crambo,"

A PARTY OF TRAVELLERS.

By MRS. OLIPHANT.

PART III.

IT was at the pretty little Dutch town of the Hague that the little story of my fellow-travellers came to an end.

We reached that place late on the evening of a chilly and wet day in August. The cold and the rain had already made us aware of the northern latitude whither our steps were tending, and it cannot be said that the Dutch landscape is cheering. The long swamp of damp green country stretching in one unbroken line to the horizon, bordered by ghostly windmills holding up their gaunt limbs in a sort of wooden appeal to all the points of the compass for the breezes necessary to them, with a grey sky above, equally flat, low, and unbroken, are not exhilarating. But whether it was from natural generosity, or from some other secret reason, a most benignant change came over one of the members of the party almost as soon as we had crossed upon the low long bridge which almost touches the water. That flat, broad, mud-coloured estuary is, though no one could recognise it (disguised under the muddy Dutch title of the Meuse), no other than the princely and historic Rhine. Thus do the finest things suffer a sort of (not sea but) mud-change in the country that draws thirty feet of water. But Helen, who had been up to this time the plague of the party, the cloud upon all its brightness, here threw off her gloom. She looked about her with quickened interest as if she expected to see some interesting figure under every cut poplar by the side of the ditches. The glimpses we had through the streets of the towns delighted her. And when we passed through Rotterdam, and looked down upon all the quays, her curiosity rose to excitement. She ran to the carriage windows entreating us all to look out. "This is really interesting," she said, "not like your musty old churches. Where do all those steamboats come from? and how strange they look, so big and so shiny among the red houses and the green trees!"

Mr. Kendal was delighted to give her all the information she could desire. "These are ocean steamboats, Helen. They come from all parts of the world. The Dutch have not lost their enterprise; they are still——"

"Is that one from Scotland? Is that one from London?" Helen said. She did not

care for information. She gazed at the masts and funnels with eyes that shone, and lips parted with eagerness. She had a colour on her cheeks which made the rainy day less dismal—it was a transformation. Miss Kendal, I do not know why, was that day less on the watch than usual. She was reading "The Cloister and the Hearth," and I don't wonder that she took less notice of what was going on round her; but I, who had no book, was free to make my observations, and for the first time the girl became my first interest. A butterfly producing itself out of its cocoon could scarcely have been a greater revelation. When she caught my eye, Helen blushed crimson; but not the angry flush of past days, and a little smile crept to the corners of her mouth. She thought I had found out her meaning before I was by any means sure that there was a meaning to be found out, and even while half-annoyed by the idea that her secret was divined, was glad to have some one to whom she could give an unexpected confidence. Her eyes kept seeking mine all the day after this. They were very pretty eyes when they had the light in them, brown, and bright, and capable of dazzling the beholder. They kept glancing at me perpetually all the rest of the day, defying, coaxing, consulting, demanding my silence and my sympathy. Such a claim is always very attractive and attracting. It is like the unhesitating claim of a child. "You are quite mistaken," said Helen's eyes, "and impertinent. You are quite right, how could you be so clever as to find out? You are the only one that understands me. How dare you look at me as if you knew? You are my best friend, and you understand." All this she kept saying to me with her looks, adding many other side questions, as "Do you think?—What do you suppose?"—and so forth, to which my vague guesses at her secret could make no responses, and yet it seemed to me her secret was not very hard to divine.

We got rooms at the hotel with much difficulty, for the Hague was *en fête*, and there was a great deal going on which we had not anticipated. When he heard the name of the head of our party, the brisk and patronising porter brightened beyond even his usual professional acuteness. "Ah!" he

said, and laid his forefinger against his nose ; "that was the *nahem*—Mr. Kendal—that was the *nahem*." And then he explained that a gentleman had called to know if the party had arrived. A gentleman? what sort of gentleman? we all asked. Young, old, English? "Oh, yaas, English, very much." But that was all he could tell. No message had been left, no name given. The stranger had not explained what he wanted, or which of us he wanted. The brother and sister consulted in some surprise who it could be. But Helen turned her back to them, showing no interest in the question, and began to examine with great care a lithograph, radiant in blue and pink, of a Swiss hotel, surrounded by a circle of mountains. But as she turned round she gave me a glance. Red as a rose was she, and her eyes like two lamps ; but never were lamps, or even stars, that had the mingled delight and mischief in them that shone in those eyes ; they were dancing with eager happiness, yet there was something in them not unlike tears. When she had exhausted the Swiss hotel, she went on to another on the Lago Maggiore. The hall of the Bellevue at the Hague is hung with these masterpieces. "Did you ever see such lovely landscapes!" she said to me in the demurest voice, but she dared not show her conscious countenance to her aunt. She was transformed ; the glowing life in her was almost too much to be kept within decorous bounds. She would have liked to dance, to laugh, to weep all in a breath, and she could do nothing but cast further hurried glances at me.

That morning there was to be a royal entrance into the town, and the Hague, as I have said, was all *en fête*. From those hotel windows we saw Holland in little—at one side a canal with a row of tall houses bordering the line of water, with red and green barges moored by the quiet quays, on the other the trees and green turf of the park, all so green, so trim, so nicely kept. The houses were large and solid. The canal gave a long reflection of sky, a glimmer of light, and the barges had each a family party looking out with that air of semi-bewilderment and dreaminess which inland navigation seems to give, as if in the continued tranquil movement which fills their life there was always a silent question going on within them as to which was the shadow and which the substance. All Holland seemed to have poured itself forth into the streets of the Hague. Here and there the English-looking crowd was diversified by a peasant group,

the men in blue clothes, with large silver clasps to their belts, the women in short-sleeved gowns, their arms bare to the elbow. But the Dutch women's head-dress was the quaintest thing of all. This begins with a silver or gilt plate which encircles the back of the head from ear to ear. Over this is placed a loose cap, with two curious spiral pins projecting like horns from each temple, and over all in many cases—the metal plate, the loose cap and the horned pins—a bonnet, covered with a bristling wreath of flowers, and gay bows of ribbon. The scene would have been as gay and pretty as possible but for the threatening of the rain, which dashed over the whole bright crowd every half-hour or so, developing a sort of dingy Dutch efflorescence, a whole moving mass of umbrellas, but never awing or dispersing the steady, sober-minded, persistent crowd.

Helen had come to the window after a moment, though she professed not to care for the gay scene. We were leaning out from the balcony, looking at the people passing and re-passing below, and calculating with all the ease of personal safety how long it would be before the next downpour came. Suddenly I felt the rail on which we leaned quiver and vibrate, and looked round in amazement. Helen was standing by my side, looking straight across the crowded road. Her face had suddenly flushed with the rosiest colour, her eyes were shining, a smile lighting up her countenance. Some one was coming down the central walk of the little park, opposite to us. He was a well-looking young fellow enough, but nothing so remarkable that any one should have singled him out from all the rest. He was gazing eagerly at the big hotel opposite to him, inspecting all the windows, but, oddly enough, had not seen the group for which he was looking, though we were at one of the most conspicuous windows of all. He came on quite slowly, absorbed in his search, and Helen stood, her conscious face, her startled figure, the very lines of her gown behind her betraying her. At last he found her out! Was it well or ill? I wondered that Miss Kendal was looking the other way, and that Mr. Kendal behind was paying no attention. Only I saw this meeting. It was a meeting, though one of the parties was in the park under the trees, and the other high up at this window. The young man started, his countenance lighted up like Helen's, the flush on her pretty face had communicated itself to his; he put up his hand hastily to his hat, hesitated as if afraid of betraying himself, then,

mastered by the courteous and tender impulse, and (I thought) incapable of the deception, took it off, and stood for a minute bareheaded, with his youthful, blushing, radiant countenance full of happiness, under the damp and threatening skies. Helen did not move; and yet I think he could not have been disappointed with his reception—the blush, the tingle of happy excitement, one could see ran through and through her. The scene became fairyland, an enchanted country, though it was only a Dutch street, and the rain on the point of coming down, which it did the moment after in a vehement, vindictive torrent which sent the crowd swaying on all sides for a shelter. For my part, having been well disposed towards the lovers (for who could doubt that they were lovers?) beforehand, the fact of this salutation betraying a frank and generous mind which did not in itself capable even of this little bit of deception, which was necessary, won me over entirely. I forgave them all Helen's naughtiness and the trouble she had inflicted upon her relations, and at once became a violent partisan on the lovers' side.

"I surely saw some one take off his hat! Can there be any one here who knows us?" Miss Kendal said presently. "Ah! perhaps our mysterious inquirer——"

Mr. Kendal put away with some impatience the *Galignani* which he had picked up involuntarily. "Did you ever go anywhere, especially *abroad*, where there was not some one you knew?" he said testily. "If you want to meet all your idle acquaintances and he people you particularly don't want to see, my advice would be to come abroad."

Had he seen it too?—but he had not been looking out, and he made no further sign of consciousness. "I allow," said Miss Kendal, "that most people are abroad; still, a few must be left in England, for I heard to-day—oh! there it is again! Certainly some man among the crowd took off his hat."

"There are people at every window," said——and with a glance Helen thanked me for my explanation—"or it might be an acquaintance of my own. I know a few people," I added, hoping to better my first interference. At this a new light came into Helen's eyes; a new idea had evidently struck her.

"Yes, yes," she cried; "of course you have acquaintances too," which was a self-evident fact. It seemed to give an animation and energy, however, quite out of proportion to the weight of the discovery. "We never thought of that!" she added with great simplicity.

Now how it happened I do not pretend to say, but whereas the elder pair had been my friends hitherto, and I had indeed found them a great deal more interesting than the girl who gave them so much trouble, now my mind turned entirely round, and I thought no more of Mr. or Miss Kendal, except, I fear, with a very improper idea of foiling and defeating those excellent people. They knew all the circumstances, and I knew nothing at all about them. I did not even know who the young man was who had evidently followed Helen here, and as evidently (I thought) had been previously separated from her by the express action of her uncle and aunt. They were far too reasonable to have done it for nothing, and I was in complete ignorance of the circumstances; yet, notwithstanding, I took upon me to judge, and without hesitation ranged myself on what I ought to call the wrong side. The sole ground that I had for this change of sentiment was a smile or two from Helen (whom I had so thoroughly disapproved of), and the evidence of honesty which was involved in the fact of her lover's recognition. He had paused and thought it was the best policy not to seem to know her; but after all he had not been able to refrain from greeting her. Was it good policy or not? Upon this slender foundation I immediately built up a theory of my own on the subject, and decided that the side to be taken was the side of the young people. I do not offer any apology for my inconsistency—I only say that so it was.

In the meantime the procession passed, and we all gazed at it. The Prince is dead since then and the bride a widow. But then the Prince was no young hero to start with, and the wedding no romantic business; and all the enthusiasm of the people was, we were told, caused by the fact that this was a sort of opposition prince, whom to celebrate was to utter tacit defiance to the reigning monarch, and all his immediate belongings—a laudable motive. When it had all past, and the people in the streets were moving about once more in every gleam of the troubled sunshine, Helen gave me a look, and then went up-stairs. I followed her, making elaborate excuses like a conspirator. I found her in my room waiting for me. We had not been very great friends up to this time, but like a foolish romantic woman as I was, I felt no surprise at this sudden intimacy now.

"Oh!" she said, clasping her hands the moment I had closed the door, "will you help us? He has come here after us. You saw him—and what am I to do?"

"Yes, I saw him; but, my dear, you must know that I don't know anything about him."

Whereupon she told me the most usual perpetual story—but the poor girl thought it something quite novel and original—how her uncle did not approve of him—how there was some one else Uncle William liked, but whom she could never more think of—how just when all had seemed so happy and they were all going together to Scotland, and everything was in a fair way of being settled, all at once Uncle William had suspected something and changed all their plans, and carried her off, tearing her hair, "to this nasty, wretched place," Helen said. Though afterwards she cast a glance out upon the trees all glistening in the rain, and the long perspective of the canal with a certain compunction; "Though it is not so ugly after all," she added: for had not he appeared there making Holland in general a better world, a Christian country?

"I see," said I; "the nephew Walter is the other—he is the one Uncle William likes best?"

"Oh! how clever you are," Helen cried, opening her pretty eyes, and then she kissed me (for the first time, this little hypocrite), and besought me to come to her aid. She said *our* aid, with a pathetic appeal which I did not know how to resist.

"But what can I do?" I said, and compunctions ran into my mind in respect to Walter, who was the old people's candidate. "Perhaps," I said, "most likely, Helen, as they are so much wiser and older than you, it is your aunt and uncle who know best—and that other poor young man—"

"He does not care a bit," said Helen; "he is far happier at the office, counting out his money. And besides, if I was to consent to him, there would be another—oh, far nicer!—you saw him—who would be a poor young man."

What could I say to this argument? I had no strength at all against her; and when I asked again what could I do, she had quite a little plan ready cut and dry. "You might ask me to go out and take a walk. You might say you wanted—to buy those pins. You know you said you wanted some of those pins."

So all the fibbing was to be put on me. But I was so foolish now that I actually consented and put on my bonnet, and went down with a demure countenance, telling Miss Kendal that I was going to look for some of the pins which the peasant women wore in their caps, and that I had asked

Helen to go with me. My friend was certainly surprised. She looked at me with a bewildered look, like one suddenly awakened. "Helen!" she said, then recovered herself in a moment, and looked from one to the other of us with that gleam of fun which was habitual to them in her eyes. She divined in a moment, though she knew none of the circumstances, that I had gone over to the other side. "Yes, certainly," she said, "a walk will do her good." But I saw her looking after us from the window with a little suspicion as well as amusement. She did not understand the turn that things were taking. "Your aunt has found us out," I said. "Helen, she is too clever for us—her eyes are so keen, she divines everything." "Aunt Mary clever!" Helen said, with the greatest surprise. She looked at me with a careless glance as much as to say, It shows how simple you are yourself when you think *her* clever! But presently she forgot all about Aunt Mary. We crossed the great stream of holiday folks and got into a narrow street, which was one long line of colours, flags hanging everywhere, festoons of lamps from one side to another, in preparation for the evening, the shop windows all gay with orange ribbons, the thronging passengers all in their holiday best. My companion, however, had much more serious matter in hand. She was pursuing an imaginary figure through all these groups. "I wonder if we shall meet him after all," she said. "How was he to know we were coming here? Perhaps he has gone to the hotel; perhaps he thinks we are more likely to go to the park, or to the front of the palace, or to the picture-gallery. But then the picture-gallery is not open to-day, only he might not know that. How was he to know that we should come precisely here into this narrow street to buy pins—*pins*! How could any reasonable person suppose that we should want pins to-day?" Then she grew disdainful of the errand which had seemed to her the most appropriate and probable half an hour before. But suddenly, as Helen uttered these discontented words, a sudden gleam of life came over her face. She drew in her breath with a quick movement of happiness and satisfaction, and in a moment more there was some one by her side holding her hand. The difference in their height, which made one look up and the other down, was delightful to them. These circumstances concerted and made possible that clasp of the two hands which was as tender and impassioned as any embrace.

They could not speak to each other for a moment, and I think there were tears in both their eyes.

Then something happened which confirmed my hastily formed judgment of the stranger. As soon as he found his voice, he turned to Helen's companion, taking off his hat, "You will be surprised, Miss Kendal—" Then he paused, and turning to Helen with a wondering look, "It is not your aunt," he said.

"No," she said, in a tone which did not please me, "thank heaven! it is a friend."

"Do not speak so. Miss Kendal was always my friend," he said, and then turned to me again. "I cannot tell why her uncle parted Helen and me," he said. "We had been allowed to see a great deal of each other up to that moment; but then all at once, as soon as we had understood each other, they carried her off, changing all their plans. If I only knew why it was, something might be done."

"Does Mr. Kendal know what is between you?" I said.

"He would not let me tell him. He stopped me—no, he did not stop me, which would have been his right—but he interrupted me, and talked about one thing and another, and would not let me speak. We were all going to Scotland together," said the young man pathetically. He gazed at me with honest eyes, in which shone a wistful anxiety. "He put a stop to it all at once. If I could only know the cause!"

"Yes; we were all going to Scotland together," said Helen, shaking her head mournfully; "and instead of *that* to come to *this*!" The power of language could go no farther. They went on through the crowd, both very plaintive, wondering at the cruelty of human life which had thus defeated all their intentions, holding each other's hands. I could have laughed, but I did not dare.

"Do you not know the cause?" I asked.

"Oh, how should I? how could I? My uncle was not likely to tell me." Then, after a pause, "Unless it was Walter," Helen said.

"Whatever it was," said the young man, "will you help us; will you intercede for us? If Mr. Kendal would not hear me then, it is not likely he will hear me now; and what is to become of us? Instead of seeing each other every day, to be forced to meet—in the street—in secret, like this; and then, at the end—What is to happen? If I only knew—if there was anything I could do to get over their objections. There must be something that could be done," he cried.

"It is nonsense to talk of parting us. We cannot be parted now; it is too late."

"We never could have been parted—in that way," said Helen.

All this time the crowds were streaming past, one way and another, crossing us, sometimes eddying round us, sometimes sweeping me apart from them for a moment, but never separating the two, who clung to each other. Then suddenly there came over us another blast of rain. The street was so narrow, the waving flags so many, that it seemed scarcely possible the shower should reach us; but it did, pouring straight down from the strip of cloudy sky, and we took shelter in the first shop, which was a silversmith's, full of old silver and curious old-fashioned trinkets and peasant ornaments. Here an old Jew, with a big forehead and glaring eyes, but without any language but Dutch, engaged my attention. I was almost glad of the difficult negotiation which ensued, and which permitted the lovers to say a few words to each other undisturbed. And it was all very well to ask me to intercede for them, but what was I to say? I did not even know the young fellow's name. While I was trying, with about six words of bad German, to find out the prices of various articles, and to ask for various others, the Kendals themselves, brother and sister, went past the window, with umbrellas, she following him with that air of comic resignation on her face which meant that she was bound upon an instructive expedition, and was about to have her mind improved. I drew back, feeling almost a traitor. What would my good friends have said had they seen me then, aiding and abetting their discontented child? I turned upon them in the heat of my penitence.

"Whatever is to be done eventually," I said, "you must part now. We must not be traitors. Your case must be laid before them properly; but whatever we do you must not—you *must not* deceive them, Helen. How would you feel now if we were to meet them? I think I should sink into the earth with shame."

"I should not sink into the earth," Helen said with her little note of despair; but the young man had evidently a great deal of right feeling.

"It is very hard to part, but I believe you are right; I don't want to deceive them or any one. But you will lay our case before them; you will tell them—"

"Oh yes," I said, looking at him and making secret notes to help me in that impromptu advocacy—fair hair, brown eyes—

always a pleasant combination—an honest, good expression—not much more to boast of. “No more of him I know,” not even his name. How was it expected that I was to plead his cause? But I meant to do so, down hill and over date.

“But how did you venture to come to the hotel to ask for us?” Helen said.

And hereupon a new complication became evident. It was not he who had asked for us at the hotel. This bewildered us all for a moment, and occupied our thoughts as we went home. What other young Englishman could have come to seek the party out? However, Helen, with youthful facility, soon satisfied herself that it could have been no Englishman at all, but an old Dutchman, her uncle’s correspondent as he had divined.

When I went into the hotel to speak to the Kendals my limbs trembled under me. Who was I that I should take it upon me to interfere in their affairs? They had dismissed this suitor with full knowledge of all the facts, and I, forsooth, a mere stranger, allowed to join the party by a kind of hazard, I took it upon me to receive him back again! It was too preposterous; but yet I had pledged myself, and I could not draw back. They had come in from their walk, and Miss Kendal, evidently watchful and even anxious, looked up with curiosity when I came in. Her look went behind me expecting Helen, but when she saw that I was alone in a moment her quick mind jumped to a presumption of something new about to happen. She put down the book she had been pretending to read, and met me with a clear and straightforward look, in which, for the first time, there was a certain defiance. She divined all, though Helen could not understand how she could be supposed clever. What have you to do with it? she seemed to say. No suspicion, however, crossed her brother’s placid mind. He glanced up over his newspaper. The *Times* had only just come in, and it needs something of an exciting character to rouse your famished Englishman, hungry for news, from his *Times* when it comes to him at last like water in the desert in a foreign country. He gave me a little friendly nod, acknowledging my return, over the top of his paper. I came forward into the middle of the room and stood there like a bashful orator. There was nothing for it but to make the plunge at once.

“I want to say something to you,” I said hurriedly.

Mr. Kendal looked at me over the top of his paper. A mingled impatience and de-

spair came over his face. What could the woman have to say that was half as interesting as the *Times*? As for Miss Kendal, she could not have looked at me more closely, but the pointed smile (and there was a touch of contempt in it) came over her face.

“*Comme*,” she said, with soft disdain, “you have come to intercede for Helen. Helen has got you on her side.”

“Helen! on her side? What do you mean?” said Mr. Kendal testily. He let his paper drop on his knee. “What does Helen want with a ‘side’ between you and me, Mary?” he said.

“That is what I ask myself,” said Miss Kendal gravely.

And they both looked at me wondering, and somewhat severely. They had a good right. So would I too have looked had a stranger interfered in my affairs.

“Forgive me,” I said, “I have behaved badly. I have countenanced a meeting that I fear you will not approve, and now I have been sent in to speak for them. I see the presumption of it and the folly as well as you can. I yielded to the temptation of the moment. I have promised them to ask if nothing can be done; if you will not alter your resolution. Forgive me! but the two together—”

The Kendals started and looked at each other. “Two together!” Miss Kendal said with surprise.

“Yes, he has come,” I said, trembling; “it was he who passed the window. We met him in the street, and— they bewitched me. I have promised to speak to you, though I know nothing about it. All I know is that they love each other. It may be foolish, it may be wrong; it may be the most unsuitable connection in the world. And I have no right to interfere; but they love each other; that is all I will venture to say.”

I was in so agitated a condition by the time I had completed this little speech that I scarcely saw the others, or the effect it had upon them, but sat down, trembling, glad to have fulfilled my disagreeable office. So long as I had got it off my mind, I did not for the moment seem to care for anything more; and what was said after seemed to come to me as through a mist, voices without any connection with the speakers. I don’t suppose my friends paid half so much attention to what I said as I did myself. “Charley Graham here!” Mr. Kendal said; and “I felt sure of it,” his sister replied. They spoke to each other, not to me, and thus I had the time to recover from my giddiness. When I saw

plainly once more, I found that Mr. Kendal had thrown aside his paper, and was standing with a puckered brow, with his hands under his coat-tails, before the chimney, in which, of course, there was no fire. "I will send her back to her mother," he was saying. "I will wash my hands of her. Let her take her own way, as Susan did; but if she thinks I am to be appealed to at any possible moment, to bolster up her husband and support her family——"

"Hush, William, hush!" his sister said; and he gave a glance at her, with a hump! of indignant self-repression. But though he stopped there, he broke out instantly on the other side.

"It is Susan's fault," he said; "the child knows no better. After all, she is only a child. It is all her mother's fault. What we ought to do would be to leave them to themselves—to let them have it their own way. I have a great mind to cut off the supplies, to wash my hands of the whole concern."

"Oh, hush, William, hush!"

"Why should I? Are we to be crossed, contradicted, and made game of at every turn? If you can put up with it, Mary, I shan't, I promise you. Hush? why should I hu——"

At this moment the door was thrown open. "The dgentlemaan for Mr. Kendal," said a voice, and some one walked in. There was a simultaneous cry from the brother and sister. Miss Kendal got up and ran towards the new-comer. "Walter!" they said, with a tone of amazement which no words can express.

He was very like his uncle—a neat, rather small, perfectly composed and self-possessed young man. His dress had all Mr. Kendal's tidy formality. The hat in his hand was brushed to perfection. There was a little whisker upon each clean and healthful cheek. He shook hands with his relations cordially but quietly, and suffered Miss Kendal's kiss. "How do you do, Aunt Mary? How do you do, Uncle William?" he said. "Forgive me for taking you by surprise." Nothing could be more oddly out of harmony than the perfectly matter-of-fact ease of the new-comer, and the atmosphere of sentiment into which he had come; but, as was, perhaps, natural, he did not in the least perceive this. He felt himself the surprising apparition, the person whose appearance was likely to cause emotion, and began to explain it with the most frank certainty that this was the case.

"You see, uncle," he said, "though Paris

and the Exhibition will no doubt be very interesting, I have always taken a great interest in Holland. I don't know that I can read any book with more interest than I felt in Motley's 'Dutch Republic,' and I thought I had better take advantage of the opportunity. I arrived yesterday, but I suppose you were later than you expected. I hope you don't mind," he added, awakening to the fact that his relations were more pre-occupied than he expected. He put down his hat on the table, and looked round him with a little suspicion. Then, for the first time, he perceived me. "Oh, I beg your pardon! You were engaged," he said.

"No, Walter, oh no, we are very glad to see you," said Mr. Kendal, greatly disturbed, but endeavouring with all his might to conceal his perturbation. "On the contrary, I am delighted to have you. I wanted a companion; I wanted some one who would sympathise with me."

Mr. Walter Kendal took a seat. He did not allow himself to be disturbed, though he was evidently more or less curious and puzzled. "And how is Helen?" he said.

The introduction of this calm, interested, but quite indifferent spectator into the midst of all our agitation had the most strange effect imaginable. I was feeling that I had no business to be there, but Miss Kendal stopped me. "William," she said, "some answer must be given. We have been made miserable ever since we left England. I think you are deceiving yourself. Now that Walter is here, ask him. I know it is not the want of money or anything else that is in your mind, but this. Does he look as if he cared? Ask him, for heaven's sake, and let us come to some conclusion."

"Ask him what? To describe the state of his mind—to enter into his most sacred feelings before two—ladies?"

But for my presence Mr. Kendal, being exasperated, would have said women, but he could not, whatever happened, be other than polite.

"I will go away," I said, "I have no right to be here. Forgive me, nobody could be so unreasonable as to expect, your nephew having just arrived——"

"Stop!" Miss Kendal said. She looked at the new-comer—who had risen when I rose, and stood, calm and well-bred though surprised, waiting to open the door to me—with a faint glance of fun in her face. The contrast of his composure struck her so that she could not avoid that momentary merriment. "Walter," she said, "you ask for Helen; had

Helen anything to do with your coming? Don't hesitate to tell me the simple truth."

"Anything to do with my coming?" He looked very much surprised, then glanced at his uncle with a "What do these women mean?" sort of air. "Well, Aunt Mary, of course I knew she was here; we have always been very good friends. She is always a pleasant addition to the party. I don't know really what more you can mean."

"Did you mean nothing more? Walter, it is very serious; never mind my presence or my friend's. Was it for Helen you came?"

He looked at his uncle again. This time he shrugged his shoulders almost imperceptibly, protesting against feminine folly still more warmly than before.

"My dear Aunt Mary!" he said, with the slightest tone of impatience, "I hope I am fond of all my relations. I am sure they are all very good to me. But I can see Helen at home whenever I like. Why should I come to Holland for her? I came to see the country. I came to join you. I thought it would be a very pleasant party. By the way," he added, with a laugh, "though I did not come for Ellie, I rather think some one else did, if that will do as well. Charley Graham came over with me in the same boat, and a very disconsolate lover he looked," the excellent young man said. "What have you been doing to him? She has a great deal to answer for spoiling such a good fellow. He had not a word to throw at a dog."

We all stood looking at each other while the speech was being made. Mr. Kendal opened his eyes wide, then suddenly turned his back upon the speaker with a loud humph! of indignation. As for Miss Kendal she gave a sudden laugh. The ludicrousness of the whole situation struck her.

"This is exactly what I thought, William," Miss Kendal said.

"Pshaw!" cried her brother, disgusted with everything. He turned upon his heel, and walked to the window, shaking the whole room with his indignant tread; and what he saw there I cannot tell, but he retreated again instantly, turning his back upon the window as decidedly as he had turned it upon us before—"I wash my hands of it. I wash my hands of the whole business!"

This may be said to have been the conclusion of the conflict. Miss Kendal went upstairs to Helen, and I discreetly withdrew, glad to escape without drawing down upon myself any vials of wrath. There was a long, very long conference, and these ladies

did not appear till dinner, when they came in arm-in-arm with red eyes. Neither of them took the slightest notice of me, which was my just reward for my trouble. And after dinner Walter went out, and shortly came back again, bringing with him the anxious lover of the morning. "I found Graham loafing about" (this was the only word of slang I ever heard Walter Kendal use), "and I brought him in as he knows you all," the young man said with a grin. And then it was proposed that we should go out to see the illuminations. I am bound to say that young Walter Kendal made the most favourable impression upon me that evening. Though I am no longer young, he took the greatest care of me. We managed to lose ourselves in the crowd, with great discretion and effect, while Miss Kendal returned to the hotel with her brother. And as for the other two, who can tell where they went?—into a country shut to the rest of us, a land lit by something better than coloured lamps, but with which the coloured lamps and the popular joy, and the music and movement in the festal streets were no way out of harmony. All the world was rejoicing with them and for them. The clouds had floated all away and everything was well.

I need not enter into any description of our further wanderings. We went back, with many rambles here and there, to Paris and the Exhibition; Helen, who had been the ghost at our simple feast during the beginning of the journey, being now the light and joy of the party. She is not my child. I look on with unbiassed eyes at all her quips and jests and wreathed smiles, in which the others rejoice as in sunshine—and though she is a very pretty and a very charming young woman, I am just as well pleased that she does not belong to me. Her aunt, who showers a hundred gifts upon her and is so grateful to the girl for smiling and looking happy now that she has everything her own way, is to my mind a great deal more interesting than Helen; but then the world in general is not of my way of thinking, and prefers, as a matter of course, the young to the old.

The two Messieurs Kendal, uncle and nephew, have acquired an unparalleled amount of information in the Paris Exhibition. They have examined everything, tested everything, and know all about everything; and they have, in consequence, most thoroughly enjoyed it. In the summer Helen is to be married, with Walter's cordial consent; and I may add that all the party forgave my interference, even Helen, who asked for it.