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A Romance

BY

MARGARET OLIPHANT

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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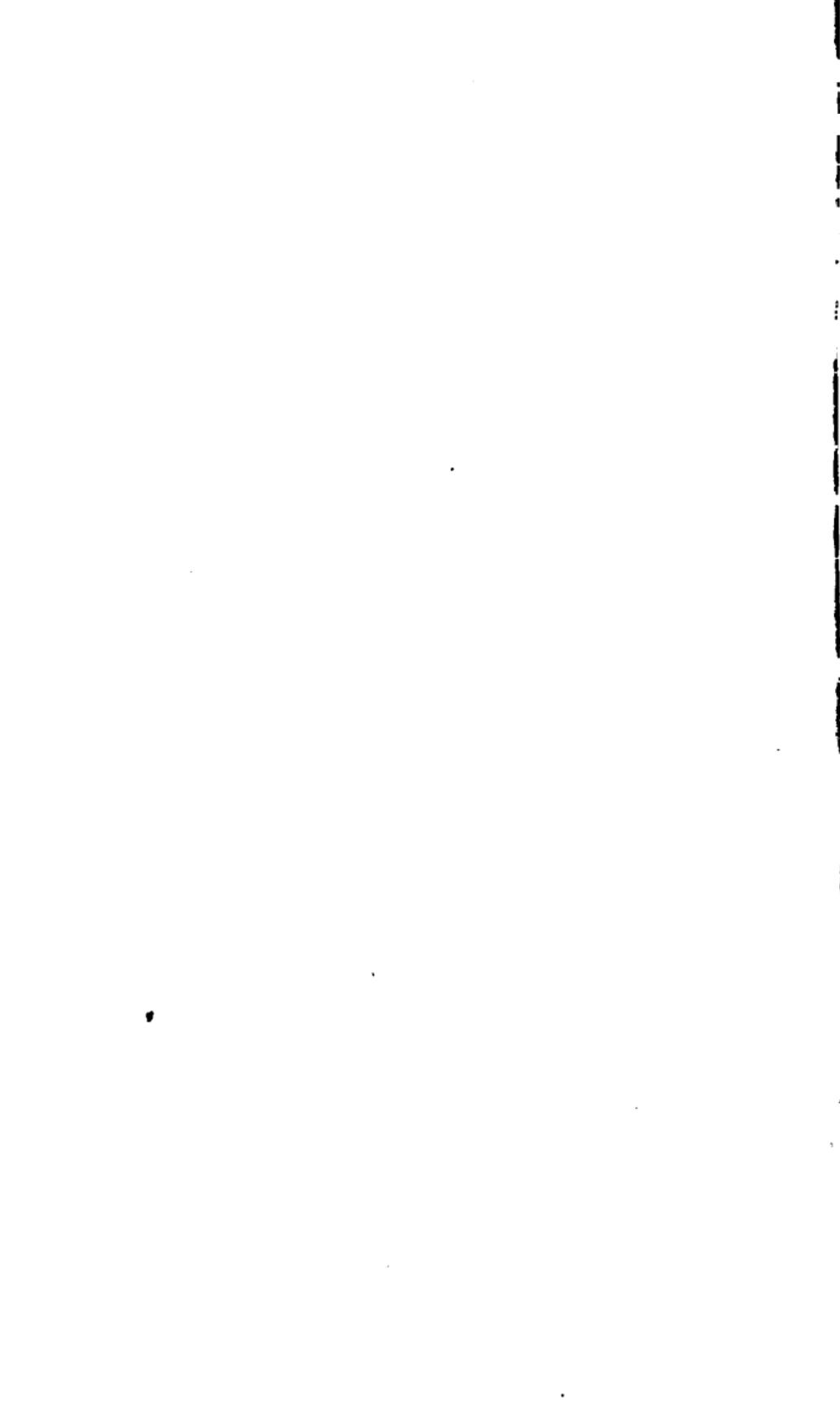
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Z A I D E E

BOOK III.



Z A I D E E .



BOOK III.—CHAPTER I.

A NEW HOME.

THE mysterious ocean-tide has sent its impulse into the full-flooded Thames far above the sea; the low branches dip into the stream, and the willows stand up to their knees in it, waving their long tresses upon the dark water which mocks at the sunshine. From one side to another the river swells full with a great throb of life and vigour in its expanded heart. So deep these depths look under the rounded curve of this overflowing surface, which the sunshine vainly tries to penetrate—so cool with the green shadow of those waving willows on them, and the tender quiver of those slanting rays which shine from the west! The sky has but a speck or two of white upon it, to break the pale and luminous blue of the great arch; but over

the other bank you can see a glimpse of how the clouds have gathered to that grand ceremonial of sunset which is about to be accomplished yonder. In the mean time, however, a lingering tender smile of light is on the river and its trees. Though he will see them all to-morrow, the sun is loth to part with these companions whom he loves so well to embellish and caress; and the glory with which he touches this broad water ere he leaves it, is like the smile of a full heart. It is evening on the Thames; there is scarcely a breath astir to flutter the willow-leaves, but there is a musical hum of home-coming and rest, in the sweet fragrant air, which is full of this pensive and tender smiling of the sun. From these beautiful English lawns and gardens which stretch to the water's edge, you can hear the voices of home enjoyment, young tones and sweet; and the wide country beyond, which is not visible from this charmed river, throws in a far-away cadence—a tribute of sound to the stream that blesses it, since of beauty he has no need. Wherries now and then, slim and swift like greyhounds, shoot up or down along the olive-complexioned current; and by-and-by there will come a river steamer full of pleasure-seekers, which will do no harm to the landscape. If it is your hap to be in this common conveyance, take heed that you do not envy these pretty houses coyly withdrawing among their

trees—those fortunate people who dwell beside the quiet waters, and see the willows dipping in the river with every tide that rises—or you may chance to break the peace of the subject of our story, at present looking out, and unconscious of envy, upon this noble stream.

The lawn reaches down to a sheltered nook, a little bay, beyond which the bank projects, protecting this sunny corner. Two great willow-trees, throwing their branches together in an arch, stand a little way into the water, making, with their twisted trunks and forest of pale leaves overhead, and with great branches sweeping on the river, supplementary arches on either side—as noble a Watergate as nature ever made with trees. The water ripples past these living pillars, and with a playful hand salutes the smooth green turf which creeps to its very edge. This turf is broken with nothing but daisies; there are no intrusive geometrical figures cut into its velvet sward, and you pass nothing but one beautiful youthful acacia till you come to the house. The house does not pretend much in its own person; it is nothing but a spectator of the scene, looking out night and day with its many eyes on the sunlight and the moonlight, and all the changes of the river, and is sober-suited and modest as a spectator should be, doing nothing to break the harmony of nature, though not much increasing its beauty. At

one side is a great bow-window, from which, by a single marble step, you can descend to the grassy terrace which forms the upper lawn, and within this bow-window you catch glimpses of white muslin gowns and ribbons. There are other spectators than the house itself, looking out upon the river; and the great window is open, and the sweet air flows in without let or hindrance, where we too follow, invisible as the air.

The room is large, and full of softened light. We are looking at the sunset smile upon the river, but we ourselves have lost it here—and the sky looking in at the windows behind grows paler and paler toward the rising of the moon. There is a large mirror on the wall reflecting everything; and its background of white curtains and waving branches, the pretty furniture standing about in its shadowy world, and the figures that come and go upon it, make the great shining surface more interesting than any picture. Looking into it, you can see the river with its bending willows, its boats and its sunbeams; you can see the white petals of the acacia-blossom flutter down upon the grass. The world without and the world within live in its calm reflection; and you think of the lady of the ballad and her charmed existence, the mystic towers of Camelot burning in the sunshine, and the little boat swaying on the stream, when you look into the mirror on the wall.

It is so large, and hangs so low upon the wall, that this mirror is the great feature of the apartment, which for the rest is only a handsome drawing-room, furnished as it is a necessity for handsome drawing-rooms to be. Wealth and profusion, a taste slightly foreign, and a good deal of fanciful embellishment, are visible everywhere. The room is almost as full as Mrs Jane Williams' little room was at Ulm, and evidences of modern diletantism are crowded within its walls. There is a cabinet of antiquities at one corner, a case of brilliant insects in another. One table is laden to overflowing with photographs and daguerreotypes, all more or less defective, and all taken by the active master of this house in his own person; while another table, solemnly standing apart, and encumbered with no ornaments, is a table by which the same inquiring mind anxiously endeavours to establish a correspondence with the invisible world. It performs a little waltz now and then at the behest of its master, this gifted piece of rose-wood, but cannot be persuaded to make any coherent communications, earnestly though it is solicited. There are phrenological heads, too, adorning little brackets and pedestals; there are casts of notorious villains and philosophers, murderers and kings; there are models of aerial machines and diabolical projectiles—all, you will say, very unsuitable for a drawing-room. It is very true, but Mr Cumberland is a family man, and

does not love the seclusion of his library, which in consequence is sacred only to wrecked and discarded relics of fancies past. He has been a botanist and a geologist, has set up a mammoth on his grounds, and built a palace for a Victoria Regia since he came to England; but these were rational diversions, and did not satisfy Mr Cumberland. An infinite quantity of bubbles have risen and burst to the eyes of our philosopher since we left him. At this present period he is deeply engaged with the extremely mystical subject of "spiritual manifestations," which promises to outlive its predecessors, since success does not seem disposed to come, to weary the experimenter with his new toy.

A windowed recess at the other end of the room, where the morning sun comes in, is filled with an embroidery frame, with a pretty footstool, and the easiest of easy-chairs. It is here Aunt Burtonshaw loves to sit, commanding all the room, and brightening it with the face which is older, but no less cheerful than when we saw it last. But the embroidery is covered up at this moment, and the corner is vacant. There are only two youthful personages in possession of the apartment, and both of them are close by the great bow-window, watching the sunshine gliding off the full river, and disappearing ray by ray into the glowing west.

The soft white muslin draperies press together, and

the hand of one rests upon the other's shoulder ; but this one is standing with a book in her hand, and smiling as she reads. It is not a very weighty volume which weighs down the hand of Mary Cumberland ; it is a slim *brochure*, whether in a green or yellow cover deponent saith not, but you may be sure it is one or other, our wicked wit or our gentler genius, whose pages beguile one of those friends out of the twilight talk which is so pleasant to both. Mary has not grown very tall in these seven years ; they have made her a woman, two-and-twenty years old—a pretty woman—a Hebe of young bloom and healthful spirit ; but they have made no great change in Mary, further than in gathering up her thick curls behind after a more womanly fashion, and making her natural self-dependence more seemly and more natural. Her well-formed features, her beautiful English complexion, her well-opened blue eyes, which have still some derision in them, and a great deal of good sense and shrewd intelligence, are as they were—and the hand that rests on her companion's shoulder is white and dimpled and delicate, and Mary's red lips open in their sweet laughter on the whitest pearly little teeth in the world. In the fulness of her womanhood, yet still with the freedom of a girl, Mary Cumberland stands before the open window reading, with her head slightly bent, her hand leaning on her friend, and you can see her pretty

figure in its white robes, and its unconscious ease and grace of attitude, reflected full in the mirror on the wall.

It is easy to identify Mary, but it is not so easy to make out who this is who sits within the open window—the companion on whom she leans; also a woman, yet a little younger in actual life, with a heart at once younger and older, full of knowledge which Mary knows not of, yet of a simplicity and universal faith, which Mary was never child enough to know, looking through those wonderful dark eyes. This is not Zaidee Vivian, brown and angular; this is not Elizabeth Francis, forlorn and dependent—but a magnificent beauty of the loftiest order—a natural-born princess and lady, born to a dominion greater than the Grange. Her white robes mingle in their soft folds with her friend's; her beautiful hair, half fallen out of its braid, droops upon Mary's hand; her own hands are clasped together, and she leans upon them this soft fair cheek, with its faint blush of colour, and watches with eyes full of sweet thoughts how the tender light recedes upon the stream. You will say she is thinking perhaps, but she is not thinking; it is the idlest of reveries which wraps its mist about the mind of Zaidee. She is only tracing the parting light from point to point—how it glides from the edge of a bough, and steals away from those wooing ripples in the river; how,

finding a crevice in the foliage, it throws down a stealthy smile of kindness within the gateway of those willows ; and how the pliant branches stretch along the stream to catch the latest farewell of this lingering light. Zaidee follows the ray with her eyes, as it mounts from the surface of the water in a longer and longer slant of departing glory. She is not thinking ; neither words nor call would be an interruption to her ; her mind is only winding its fancies playfully about the waning light.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY BEFORE US.

“Now, away with you, you romancer,” said Mary Cumberland, tossing the book upon the table. “What are you thinking of, Elizabeth? I feel as if I could not be glad enough that we have got a home at last.”

“And by the river, Mary,” said her companion.

“And by the river; but perhaps I do not care so much for the river as you do. I do care for home; and since we left Ulm—I shall always have a kind heart to Ulm, Lizzy, it was there we met each other first—we have wandered so long. I like to take a firm hold of what is mine. I do not care to go into raptures over other people’s pleasures; and papa has really bought this house, and it is ours—really ours; but I should rather it was to be your house, Elizabeth, than mine.”

“It can never be my house, though,” said Zaidee, looking up with a smile.

“Why not? I am sure they like you quite as well

as they like me ; indeed, to tell the truth, you have been a better daughter to them," said Mary Cumberland, with a blush. "Papa must leave it to you ; I will tell him so. I should not care for it so much as you would."

"Why should he leave it to any one?" said Zaidee. "We all have it together ; we live in it, and it belongs to us all. You are not to think of any change."

"No," said Mary dubiously. "No," she repeated, after a pause ; "but you know it would be foolish not to confess that there may be changes," continued Mary, with a slight and momentary embarrassment. "I suppose we are not to be at home all our lives. I suppose people are obliged to get houses of their own, you know, sometimes, and cannot always be living with a papa and a mamma."

Zaidee turned unmoved towards her companion, and it was evident she was not the person referred to. She looked up to Mary with a little anxiety. "I want you to tell me," said Zaidee. "They speak of Sylvo so often. Will you—will you *marry* Sylvo, Mary?"

Mary turned on her heel abruptly, but after a moment came back again. "Will it be something very dreadful if I do?" said Mary, shaking her curls about her ears to hide a burning colour, which was not the blush of happy maidenly shame.

"No," said Zaidee, and it was now her turn to

hesitate—"no, indeed; I like him very well," was the final conclusion she made, after a long pause.

"But—" said Mary Cumberland. "Oh, I know very well what *but* you would say, Lizzy," cried her friend, suddenly kneeling down beside her; "he is not like me, and I do not care for him, and a hundred other things. How can I help it, then? I suppose he is just as good as other men. They are all like the trees in a wood. *You* know an oak from a birch, for you were brought up among them, but I can never tell any difference. I do not care for any one out of this house. I am afraid I do not love any one very much, but Aunt Burtonshaw and you. If it must be, why should it not be Sylvio? I cannot help myself."

There was a little silence after that, and they sat looking out, the two heads close together, on the full stream, which began to glimmer darkly in the waning evening light. After a long pause Mary spoke again.

"It used to be an old Utopia of mine, when I was quite a girl," said Mary, drawing close to her friend, and speaking very low—"after all the trials I have had, Elizabeth, with my own mind, and with other people, I used to think, if ever I was married, it should only be to a wise man—a wise man, a true man, Lizzy—some one that might be respected to the

very heart. I don't know all your rubbish about love; I don't understand it, you know; but I should like to *honour* him—that is what I want to do. Am I not very foolish? I say what I want to do, yet I know I shall never do it all my life."

"I would if I were you," said Zaidee quickly.

"Would you?" cried Mary; and Mary clapped her hands, springing up with sudden mirth and delight. "Marry Sylvo, then, Lizzy! do! I will thank you all my life. He is a very good fellow, and he will be very glad, I am sure; and if you *would* honour him, why, you might be very happy, and set everything right."

But Zaidee only smiled as she raised her stooping head in its unconscious grace. "He is very good and very kind, poor Sylvo," cried Zaidee; "he ought to have some one who cares for him, Mary—not you nor me."

"*He* ought!" cried Sylvo's elected bride. "I think he would be very well off, begging your pardon, princess. I confess I was only thinking of myself," said Mary ruefully, after another little pause. "I wish you would let me be content, Elizabeth; I am quite content. He is as good as any one else: everybody wishes it; and then I am growing too old for Utopias. I might be thinking of obedience, perhaps—who knows—if I came so far as honour, and that would

not answer me ; and after I have accomplished my sacrifice, Lizzy, then it will be your turn."

" My turn ? " Zaidee's smile ran into a little quiet laugh. " It will be time enough when somebody asks me, Mary."

So it would—that was undeniable, and both the girls marvelled over this a little silently within themselves. Zaidee was no longer Miss Francis, Mary's companion, but Miss Elizabeth Cumberland, the adopted daughter of the house. This honour had been procured for her by the inadvertent compliment of a stranger, who, ignorant that one of the two young ladies he saw was not the child of the family, had complimented Mrs Cumberland on her beautiful daughter's resemblance to herself. Mrs Cumberland was greatly complimented by this, for Zaidee's growing beauty was already the pride of the household, and it was but a small trial to the young exile to part a second time with her name. Thus her position was greatly changed in every way, and indeed it was only the friends of the family who were aware that she was not in reality the daughter of those kind and whimsical people. But in spite of this, and in spite of her unusual beauty, it was certain that Zaidee had not yet met, in her own person, with the usual romance of youth. Mrs Cumberland's experience in woman's heart had deceived her, as it happened. Zaidee had neither

loved nor grieved after the fashion which her patroness predicted for her : her "fate" had not appeared yet out of the heavens ; and while Mary's suitors had been many, Zaidee, one-and-twenty years old, had none. She was slightly surprised at this herself, it must be confessed : she had no thought of her own beauty, but still wondered a little at her exemption from the universal lot. She was fancy-free, in the widest sense of the word ; she had only her own sweet pure thoughts for her companions, as she went and came in her daily course, and never yet had approached in the most distant way the great question of young life.

"We are to meet some very distinguished people, Lizzy," cried Mary Cumberland, "where we are going to-morrow—not people of rank, you know, but people who are very fatiguing, notwithstanding, — authors and artists and people of science, and I am not sure that there is not a patriot. You ought to go rather than me ; it pleases you, and I am so weary of papa's nonsense—I mean of papa's philosophy ; I don't mean anything undutiful—it is quite the same."

"But it does not please me very much," said Zaidee, with a reservation. "I do not ~~think~~ I care for philosophy either ; but you will like it when you go."

"Well, now, when Sylvo talks, he talks of *things*," said Mary Cumberland, musingly ; "it is not of this

one's poem or that one's sonnet. I like gossip better. I like to hear of who is born, and who is married, rather than of verses which are 'nice,' and stories which are not appreciated. Nobody sends Sylvo a poem to criticise, nobody thinks of asking his opinion on a work of art. When Sylvo is excited, it must be about something that has happened—it is sure not to be about a new book; and that is far best for me, Elizabeth. It is, indeed, I can tell you. I like everything to be true."

"Do you see the moon?" said Zaidee.

"Do I see the moon? But that is not answering me. The moon is behind the house yonder, shining upon papa's table that he keeps for the spirits. Suppose it should dance along to us now, it would convert me, I think. But I am speaking of Sylvo, Elizabeth, and you speak of the moon."

"Because I see her yonder glimmering on the river," said Zaidee. "I think there is many a thing true besides being born and being married. Dying, too, that is truest of all; but stories are made of these things, Mary, as well as life."

"I cannot help it. I am hopeless, I suppose," said Mary, shrugging her shoulders. "You can listen yet, by the hour, to Jane and her tales. I can bear Jane. I like gossip very much—it is a great refreshment to me—and so do you; but I cannot bear to hear a

parcel of stupid verses gravely discussed, as if they were things far more important than common life. Aunt Burtonshaw is worth all the authors in the world ; they think their invention is quite an improvement on Providence. I can tolerate Sylvo, Elizabeth. I can put up with him ; he is just as good as any other : but if mamma, by chance, had lighted on some famous author for me—some distinguished person, some genius ! I ought to be very thankful—I could never have tolerated that !”

And Mary, shrugging her shoulders once more, complained of the cold, and left the window, to ring the bell for lights. A low night-wind had crept upon the river, crisping its flooded surface into rippling waves, and the moonlight shone and glistened upon it, clearing a little circle of silvery light and motion from the dark surface of the stream. The breeze sighed through the gateway of those willow trees, the hush of night came down upon land and water. Specks of light came glittering into the windows of the scattered houses on the banks. Zaidee was content to sit there at her post, while Mary wandered about the room, singing as she went, waiting for light to take her book again. Zaidee was idle in her calm of heart. Sun and moon went over her as they went over the river ; she lost her time, as a mind at ease is glad to lose it, watching all those slow gradations, those changes so

softly blended into each other which passed upon the sky : it was but a confined bit of sky, with all those branches throwing across it their pleasant interruption ; but it was doubled on the river, and it was quite enough for the tranquillity of Zaidee's dream.

CHAPTER III.

MAIDEN MEDITATIONS.

THE sun has risen again upon a cloudless summer-day, and has shone unweariedly all the morning and through the noon upon the glowing Thames. Boats have been passing upon the river, and a continual flush and glory of sunbeams has given animation to all the scene. The willows throw their shadows upon the water; the water, which since last night has somewhat retreated, makes playful rushes at their uncovered feet; under the acacia the wind blows cool and fresh, dropping the blossoms upon Zaidee's hair. Mary has just gone with her father and mother to the party of "distinguished people," for it is a summer daylight party, a *déjeuner*, which last night she anticipated so ruefully, and Zaidee has been left at home to receive Aunt Burtonshaw, who is to return with her son from Sýlvo's "place" to-day.

All by herself under the acacia, with the white blossoms dropping on her hair, Zaidee sits in her idle

mood, her calm of heart and thought ; behind her the great bow-window is open, and Mary's pretty bouquet lies on the marble step, where Mary dropped it in her haste. The room is vacant within, and the great silent mirror takes cognisance of every movement of that beautiful figure on the lawn, of every waving bend of the foliage above her, and every petal it sheds upon her head. Zaidee's mind is like the mirror, silent, open, calm, reflecting everything about her with a passive observation. The river flows through her dream, the sun shines in it, the willows rustle on the silver wave. Through the arch of those long drooping boughs glimpses of the opposite bank and of the sky come in, to connect the populated earth and the great heaven with this fairy scene. She is not doing anything. She wants her eyes, but she does not want her mind, in this sweet quiet of hers. There is a book upon the grass, but Mary, and not Zaidee, has brought it there. The running of the great river is music and story together to this girl. She wants no further occupation ; if any far-sighted neighbour ventures to criticise, she wots not of it in her pleasant self-forgetting. Zaidee is quite alone—so much alone, that neither the past nor the future are with her. She is pausing on the present moment, idle, acquiescent, solitary, in a sweet reverie of musing, without thought.

For Zaidee's young life has outworn the past.

Fresh in her recollection, a succession of strange scenes, in which she can hardly believe herself the principal actor, are those days and months of struggle and suffering with which the poor child accomplished her innocent sacrifice. Now it is so long accomplished, that all that flush of girlish heroism which carried her through the trouble of the time, has fallen back to a shadow in her memory. Only one thing is warm in her heart—an unknown and pent-up force, which will never get issue, as she believes — her love for her old home, and all who are in it. Zaidee's heart beats high when she hears the name of Vivian; her cheek flushes when she reads her father's and *his* father's name — silent witnesses to her relinquished right to bear her own; and her busy imagination will sometimes still exhaust itself with wonders and schemes to make herself Zaidee Vivian once more. Sometimes, too, she dreams of meeting with her own friends in her disguised name and strange position, and wonders if any shadow of recognition would come to them when they saw her. But she has heard nothing of them since she left the Grange; they have been dead to her, as she has been dead to them, for all these years. She knows none of the great changes which have come upon the household, nor could believe how they take account of her in all their family doings, nor what a marvellous revolution that will of Grandfather

Vivian's, which in her simple heart she believes to have rendered harmless, has wrought in the ancient family home. The secrecy with which she has been obliged to surround her private history has given a strong and vivid force to the leading features of her life. As dearly as ever, and with a pensive visionary tenderness as we love the dead, does Zaidee love her lost friends ; and with a proud thrill, every time she uncovers her Bible, she feels the inheritance which father and grandfather have left to her. But Zaidee's memory has retained only these leading principles ; it has not retained its first dread of discovery, its first agony of sorrow : her young fair life is freed of its bondage—she has not relinquished all human possibilities and hopes, as she thought she had done, and intended to do. It is an inalienable possession this fresh spring of existence ; it will not yield to any resolution of youthful despair : but one thing she has certainly succeeded in doing ; her journey abroad, and her adoption by this kind family, have certainly been as good for her purpose as if she had died.

And thus sits Zaidee, conscious of the past, unaware and uninvestigating what the future may bring to her, though the touch of this very next to-morrow, which she anticipates without fear, may give the electric thrill of life once more to all her difficulties and dangers—though she may discover an hour hence how bootless

all her sacrifice has been, and may be thrown again into utter perplexity how to do justice, how to hinder wrong. Zaidee wots nothing of this—she never thinks of her own complicated position, nor how it would hap with her if tardy love came wooing to her bower. The acacia bloom lies motionless where it falls upon the beautiful head which is so still in this daylight dream—the softest calm and fragrance are about Zaidee—there is not a breath of evil to mar her perfect repose.

But this maiden meditation is broken by a noisy arrival; by Aunt Burtonshaw in her bright ribbons, and Sylvo bronzed and bearded still. Sylvo has made no great progress beyond his student period—he is some years older, but not a great deal wiser, nor much changed. But now he has a “place” in Essex—is a country gentleman; and it is hoped, when “he settles in life,” as all his friends are so anxious he should do, that Sylvo will make a very respectable squire, a good representative of the order. Aunt Burtonshaw has been on an errand of investigation to see that the place is in good order—she has come home in great spirits, delighted with it and with her son, but somewhat anxious withal. “My dear,” says Aunt Burtonshaw, “Mary is a dear, good child—she only needs to know Sylvo a little better to be quite happy with him. You don’t suppose I would desire anything that was

not to make Mary happy? and I hope we shall have it all over soon, my love. The very next estate to Sylvo's there is a young man who has been travelling among the savages — the real savages, my dear, who eat beefsteaks without cooking, and dress — I cannot mention how they dress. You will not believe it, but Sylvo has got quite intimate with this neighbour of his, and unless we can persuade Mary to let it be soon, I am very much afraid of Sylvo setting out to Africa with his new friend. Shooting, you know, and going where nobody has ever been before, and all sorts of adventure — and to think of Sylvo turning savage, going barefooted, and dressing one can't say how, as that Mr Mansfield says *he* used to do! Polite travel is quite a different thing. In my day, Elizabeth, the young men of education went abroad to finish. But to live in a mud hut, and put butter on one's hair! — and Sylvo might be tempted to do it — Sylvo was quite charmed with Mr Mansfield! I assure you I am quite anxious to have it all over, and see Sylvo settled down."

As Mrs Burtonshaw speaks, a little puff of blue smoke, visible among the trees, gives note where Sylvo smokes his cigar. His mother's eyes travel forth anxiously towards this point. "My Sylvo will make a good husband, Elizabeth — he has always been a good son," says Mrs Burtonshaw; "and I thank Providence

there is nothing here to put savage adventures into his head. Mr Mansfield has written a book, you know, and has really the most beautiful collection of birds, and no nonsense about him, Sylvo says. Ah, Elizabeth! Maria Anna does not know how much harm she has done. Sylvo would never have taken this into his head if it had not been for all those people who talk about books and poems. But then what a comfort that Mary is of the same mind, my dear!"

And as Mary tried to persuade herself into content with Sylvester, Aunt Burtonshaw talked down her misgivings about the wandering inclinations of her boy. She brightened immediately, describing Sylvo's "place," how comfortable and commodious it was, how elegant Mary might make it if she pleased. Then so near town, and so easily reached—every circumstance of good fortune combined to make Sylvo's place the most desirable place in the world. Good society, too, and even *that* Mr Mansfield, a very good neighbour if he would not lead Sylvo away. If Sylvo was settled, of course leading away would be quite out of the question; with a wife, and such a wife as Mary! the wilds of Africa would no longer have any attraction compared with home. "For you see the poor boy has positively no home just now, when I am so much here," continued Mrs Burtonshaw, in her perplexity: "my love, you must help me to persuade Mary to have it over soon."

The drawing-room was full of the gay summer light, and the breeze came in at the open window full of sweet sounds and fragrance—but the great mirror that reflected the little stream of smoke among the trees which marked the luxurious retirement of Sylvo, reflected also the anxious face of his mother as she walked up and down before it disclosing her fears and perplexities, and Zaidee sitting by in silent sympathy.

“I think Mary will make up her mind,” said Zaidee. “We were speaking only last night of Sylvo. Sylvo is very good and very kind, Aunt Burtonshaw—he will never harm any one wherever he goes.”

“Harm, my dear! no, indeed, Elizabeth; no fear of that,” said his concerned mother; “but some one may harm him, my love. To think now that we should choose that place in Essex, just close upon *that* Mr Mansfield. I do wish he had stayed away a year or two longer among his savages; and I do think it is a great shame to let such people write books, and lead away simple young men. All young men are fond of adventure, you know—it is quite natural; but there ought to be some law to suppress those travels that only put evil in people’s heads. You may be sure my Sylvo did not admire the savages at all, till he came to know Mr Mansfield. It is just Sylvo’s fancy, I suppose,—every one has some fancy of his own.”

CHAPTER IV.

SYLVO.

AUNT Burtonshaw is busy now with some housekeeping business, investigating what everybody has been doing during her absence, holding up her hands in amazement at the extraordinary new cooking-apparatus put up for certain economical experiments which Mr Cumberland has it in his mind to try, condoling with the indignant ruler of the kitchen, visiting her feathered family in a little poultry-yard fitted up with the most luxurious appliances, and, last of all, making a pilgrimage to Mary's room, to leave upon Mary's table a pretty trifle she has brought for her. These pleasant surprises are quite in Aunt Burtonshaw's way—she is always bringing presents to her favourites; and even Zaidee's store of ornaments, supplied by the same kind hand, is far from contemptible. While Aunt Burtonshaw goes about the house thus in her pleasant kindly bustle, Sylvo has joined Zaidee in the drawing-room. Sylvo sits in a great chair, stretching his long limbs

across the breadth of the open window. The only thing that could enhance Sylvo's comfort at this moment is a cigar—an impossible indulgence here; so he is content to watch his companion instead. Zaidee is seated on a low chair, her soft muslin dress falling upon the carpet in a maze of folds, and her beautiful head stooping over the work she has in her hands. The young gentleman has an indolent satisfaction in looking at her,—she is as good as a cigar.

“So Mary could not stay to welcome us, but you could: what's the reason, now?” said Sylvo. Sylvo looked somewhat complacent, and extremely satisfied with his beautiful companion.

“Mary is Miss Cumberland, and I am only Miss Elizabeth,” said Zaidee, smiling at Sylvo's reflection in the mirror. The mirror was malicious, and gave a shade of ridicule to its representation of this indolent hero, omitting no detail of him from his clump of mustache and look of satisfaction to the boots which occupied the foreground in the faithful picture.

“When are you girls coming to see my place?” said Sylvo. “There's Mansfield, now, a famous fellow—he'd like to see you, I know.”

“Aunt Burtonshaw does not like him, Sylvo,” said Zaidee.

“My mother has told you all that already, has she?”

said Sylvo, with a ha-ha from behind his mustache, which sounded as if from a long way off. "What would she give, now, do you think, to any one who could keep me at home?"

"It would make her very glad," said Zaidee. "I know that, too; but people may be savages at home as well as in Africa, I think, especially when your friend knows the way."

"I say, none of that, now!" said Sylvo, "or I shall think you as bad as Mary. So you know, do you? They are perpetually conspiring to marry Mary and me, who don't care a straw for each other. I'd rather marry you a long way,—will you have me?"

"I!—what should I do with you, Sylvo?" said Zaidee, looking up in genuine astonishment.

"Do with me?—more than anybody else could, I can tell you. Why, you could keep me at home, and make a man of me. Mary's a very good girl, I don't deny it; but you're a regular beauty, Elizabeth!—now, you know you are."

"Am I?" Zaidee took the compliment with perfect equanimity, and laughed a little low laugh to herself as she glanced at Sylvo in the mirror. Sylvo began to be very red, and not quite comfortable. He drew in his long limbs, and became more upright in his chair. "I suppose you don't mind what I say to you—I am not fine enough for you," said Sylvo. The

great fellow was decidedly sulky, and no longer thought Zaidee as good as a cigar.

“I do mind what you say,” said Zaidee, raising her head with unconscious dignity; “but I am not a child now, you know, and there are some things which must not be said to me. Do not go away with Mr Mansfield, Sylvo—Aunt Burtonshaw will be so much disappointed if you leave her again; and I am sure there is nowhere so good as home.”

“Much you care whether I go or stay,” said the mortified Sylvo, with a growl, as he lifted himself out of his chair, and stood direct between Zaidee and the light. He had no idea that his great shadow made an end of her fine needlework. He shook himself a little like a great dog, growled under his breath, and looked out upon the river for a new idea. The new idea at last dawned upon him, but it was not an original one. “I’ll go and have a cigar,” said Sylvo, as he strode forth upon the lawn, and went away to his haunt among the trees. The complacency and the satisfaction had equally vanished from Sylvo’s face. He swore a small oath—what the deuce did she stay in for, then?—lighted one cigar and tossed it into the river—amused himself with the hiss of indignation with which it disappeared—lighted another, and gradually composed himself into returning good-humour with its consolatory influences. The river, bland and

impartial, gave all the music to Sylvo's soul which it had given this morning to the soul of Zaidee. If these two made different uses of it, the result was an indifferent matter to the Thames, which wandered at its own sweet will, and heeded none of the evanescent human moods chiming in with its perennial tide. Sylvo Burtonshaw, stretching out his lazy length upon the greensward, made his own use of this great melody; it soothed him out of his annoyance, and it soothed him into a cordial half-hour's repose.

Zaidee did not fare quite so well when she was left alone. Then the consciousness which had not come soon enough to embarrass this interview came very strongly in shame and annoyance, and a feeling of friendship betrayed. She had done nothing, certainly, to divert from Mary, who was very indifferent to them, the thoughts of Sylvester; but it was at once disagreeable, and ludicrous, and embarrassing, the position in which she found herself. Sylvo was Mary's property—a lawful chattel—yet had thought proper to put himself at the disposal of another. Sylvo had been virtually engaged for three long years to his cousin, and his cousin was making up her mind reluctantly to put up with him, when, lo! Sylvo took the matter in his own hands, and made a choice independent of Mary. Zaidee glanced into the mirror which reflected in its silent panorama the waving

boughs upon the water-side and the smoke of Sylvo's cigar. In its pictured breadth herself was the principal object, sitting in her low chair, with her soft dress sweeping round her. Zaidee met the glance of her own eyes as she looked into the mirror, and shrank from them with a momentary shyness and a rising blush. She did not know what to think of Sylvo's compliment, now when it returned upon her. She was quite familiar with her own face, and knew when she looked ill and when she looked well as well as another; but she faltered somewhat at this moment, and had an uneasy consciousness as she looked at herself. She felt that she would rather not take this question into consideration, or decide what a "regular beauty" meant.

But there, in this reflected landscape, is good Aunt Burtonshaw crossing the lawn. Aunt Burtonshaw comes towards the house from the direction of that little pennon of smoke, which, however, is no longer to be seen among the trees. Very guilty feels Zaidee, bending with doubled assiduity over her delicate work, hoping Aunt Burtonshaw will not look at her, and eager not to betray herself. But the good lady pauses now and then in her way across that beautiful slope of greensward, and, picking up the book from the grass where Mary had left it this morning, and where Zaidee has permitted it to lie, shakes her head in dis-

approval, as she turns round for a moment to the window. Then she stands still, book in hand, below the acacia, where the evening sun comes sweetly on her, and the breeze ruffles her bright ribbons, looking down the river for her favourite's return. Zaidee shrinks within the window, and more than ever labours at her needle, not anxious either for Aunt Burtonshaw's entrance or Mary's return. What can Sylvo be about that there is no smoke among the trees? Sylvo is not much like a love-sick suitor given to meditation and melancholy. Is he so much cast down that he finds no comfort in his cigar? While Mrs Burtonshaw watches under the acacia, Zaidee grows distressed and nervous over her needle-work. Poor Sylvo! he ought not to be always laughed at—he ought not to be rejected cavalierly, or put up with as a necessity—it is not fair—he is good enough to have some one care for him. Zaidee has great compunctions as she looks to these trees, longing vainly to see the ascending smoke. Now comes Mrs Burtonshaw leisurely towards the terrace, with the book in one hand, and in the other a sprig of sweet-brier. Zaidee is sure Mrs Burtonshaw will call to her, "What is the matter with Sylvo? the poor boy is moping by himself among the trees," when she comes near enough—and the young culprit feels quite guilty and afraid.

But Mrs Burtonshaw is within reach of the window, and has not called to her, and at last comes in quite leisurely, as if nothing was the matter. "I thought Sylvo was sitting here with you, my dear," says Mrs Burtonshaw; "and where do you think I found the lazy great fellow? not even smoking—lying all his length on the grass, fast asleep."

Mrs Burtonshaw did not quite understand the tremulous laughter—which was quite as much at herself and her own vain apprehensions as at Sylvo—with which Zaidee greeted this announcement; but the good lady went into the room to replace the book she carried, without the least note of Zaidee's unsuspected embarrassment. "I daresay he finds it dull waiting, poor fellow," said Mrs Burtonshaw; "he wants to see Mary—it is quite natural. It is six months now since they met, my dear. I think my Sylvo is improved, and I hope Mary will think so. Oh, Elizabeth, my love! if I only saw those two stand together hand in hand, I think I should care for nothing more in this world."

Poor Zaidee, who could have laughed and cried in the same breath, as she varied between regret at Aunt Burtonshaw's disappointment and a sense of the ludicrous, could make no answer. Mrs Burtonshaw had the whole of the conversation to keep up by herself.

"Everything is so suitable, you know," continued

this kind schemer ; “and, my dear child, I only wish I saw as good a settlement for you as I do for Mary. There are, no doubt, a great many people who admire you, Elizabeth, but you must not be led away by that, my dear. I would almost as soon be married for my money as married for my beauty, if I were you. People may admire you, and be proud of you, without any real regard for you. You must take great care, and we must take care for you, my dear child.”

CHAPTER V.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

“WHAT do they mean, I wonder?” *They* were only Sylvio and Aunt Burtonshaw, but they were enough to fill Zaidee’s mind with novel thoughts. She sat again in this second twilight by the window, looking out upon the darkening river, and into the dim and glimmering world, which the night wind kept in perpetual motion in the mirror on the wall. Was *she* then in danger of being sought for her beauty? Had this strange and much-prized gift come all unawares to her? With a natural humility which would not receive this strange doctrine, Zaidee shyly threw it off, and her cheek burned with a blush of shame for the dawning vanity. Her mind was stirred and disquieted; she had lost the calmness of her morning reverie. Years had passed over her since disturbing events were in Zaidee’s life. Since then she had seen half of the countries of the Continent, had learned a gradual youthful experience, and had come to many

conclusions of her own. But since she recovered from her illness, and put away Grandfather Vivian's sacred legacy, her days had known no occurrence to startle them into maturity. As she sat by the window alone in this English home by the Thames, she looked around and behind her with an indefinite awe. It seemed the eve of some discovery—the beginning of some new estate. She could not answer the vague presentiment which ran through her mind echoing and questioning. Something surely was about to happen to her—her placid life was to be disturbed once more.

But now there is a sound of arrival without, and some one hurries in to light the drawing-room. Zaidee rises slowly, not very eager for this one night to meet with Mary Cumberland; but before she has reached the door she is arrested by a loud exclamation of disappointment. "Not come home—left behind! Why did you leave Mary behind, Maria Anna? I know the dear child would never stay of herself when she knew her old Aunt Elizabeth was waiting for her—and at so important a time! Why did you leave Mary behind?"

"My dear Elizabeth, I am rejoiced to see you," said Mrs Cumberland; "and you too, Sylvo. You forget how delicate I am, my dear boy, when you shake hands so fiercely. Yes, it was foolish of Mary to stay behind, but the society is delightful: there is a large party

staying there, and it is, I assure you, only for her good. There is a note somewhere that she wrote for you, and one for Elizabeth ; my love, you will find them in the great bag with my things. Was it not a sweet disinterested thing of this child to stay at home for you, Elizabeth ?—and she would have been so delighted had she been there.”

As Mrs Cumberland spoke, Sylvo’s sidelong glance sought Zaidee once more ; he could not persuade himself that his manifold attractions had not something to do with this staying at home.

“Extraordinary thing, now, sister Burtonshaw, that *I* can’t succeed as I hear other people do,” said Mr Cumberland, who had hastened to his favourite table, and was delicately manipulating this stubborn piece of furniture which would not speak. “Mrs What-do-you-call-her—that professor’s wife, Maria Anna ?—carries on a conversation—positive conversation, I tell you—by means of just such another table ; and that other lanky poet, who looks so like a weaver, spins the thing about like a living creature. Very odd that it will do nothing for me !—extremely odd that there is no recognition of my conscientious endeavours ! Hush ! did you hear a rap, sister Burtonshaw ? Silence ! are there any spirits here ?”

“Are you mad, Mr Cumberland ?” cried poor Mrs Burtonshaw, gazing aghast upon the great fathomless

blank of the mirror. "For mercy's sake do not frighten us out of the house with your spirits and your raps! Are you not afraid to tempt Providence? It is a sin—I am sure it is; but Maria Anna always will give in to you."

"A sin, sister Elizabeth?" said the philosopher briskly; "we have just had a discussion on that subject. The poet says it's sorcery, and that the old gentleman down below has a hand in it. Somebody else says there's no such person: his satanic majesty is the grand Mrs Harris. The devil's exploded, Sylvo! By the way, now, there's a curious question in metaphysics. Hallo! where are you going, sister Burtonshaw?"

"I am going to read my dear child's note—a great deal better than listening to you talking wickedness, Mr Cumberland," said Mrs Burtonshaw with unusual severity. "I say it is all a great sin, your rapping and your manifestations. Do you mean to say it is right to bring up an evil spirit into a rosewood table, and set it dancing all over a Christian drawing-room? I will not have my Sylvo taught such lessons. Do you call that nature?—if it is, she ought to be ashamed of herself; and when I want to hear where you have left my sweet Mary, and how the dear child was persuaded to stay, and a hundred other things—to talk of a spirit, and sorcery, and the evil one himself!—at night too!

I daresay that child will not sleep all night thinking of it. My love, come here out of the dark, and sit by me."

Zaidee rose from her corner very quietly, and obeyed. Mrs Cumberland was reclining on a sofa. Mr Cumberland, seated before his sacred table, was playing daintily upon it with the tips of his fingers. Sylvo stood by, his great figure overshadowing his uncle, and with a set of the finest teeth in the world appearing under his clump of mustache. "You should see Mansfield," said Sylvo; "Mansfield knows a lot of fetish tricks. He's a capital fellow, uncle; shall I bring him here?"

"Why should you bring Mr Mansfield here, Sylvo?" said his mother, interposing, struck by the dreaded name, though she held Mary's letter open in her hand. "Mr Mansfield is Sylvo's next neighbour, Maria Anna. He has been travelling ever since he was a boy. He is a young man, with no *ties*, you know—nothing to keep him at home; and all that he cares for is savage life, where there is no such thing as cookery or costume either, Mr Cumberland—where all the great people do for a grand toilet is to put a pot of butter on their heads, and where you lie on a mud couch, and walk barefooted, and forget there is a civilised country in the world. It is all freedom and liberty, he says. I don't understand what freedom means, I suppose.

Sylvo, I tell you you are not to bring any savages here."

The perspective view of Sylvo's admirable teeth enlarges a little, while Mr Cumberland glances up from his inaudible piano-playing on the table.

"I beg your pardon, sister Burtonshaw; Sylvo's friend shall be very welcome—a genuine savage is a rare creature," said Mr Cumberland. "What do you call fetish tricks, Sylvo?—ignorance is always contemptuous, my boy—observances of an ancient religion, perhaps. Let us have this Mr Mansfield, by all means. I am a candid man, sister Elizabeth. I believe there are a thousand truths of Nature which a savage could teach me."

"Did you say a savage, Elizabeth?" said Mrs Cumberland, brightening a little out of the doze which it pleased her to call languor. "Would he wear his costume, do you think?—foreigners are so plentiful in society now, and we are all so conventional—there is no freshness in the civilised world. A true child of the woods! Yes, Sylvo, my dear boy, you must bring him here."

"Elizabeth, come to my room," said Mrs Burtonshaw, in indignant haste. "I can bear a good deal, Maria Anna, but a saint could not bear all this, you know. I am going to my own room to read my dear child's letter. When Mary is here there is always some dis-

cretion in the house. She can give things their proper value. Elizabeth, when you are ready you can come to me."

And Mrs Burtonshaw hurried to her own apartment to read Mary's letter without interruption. Zaidee, whose attention was not so easily disturbed, had already read hers, and was puzzled by it. It was not quite like Mary; Zaidee did not know how to understand either the unexpected staying behind, or the little epistle which professed to explain it.

"My princess, I am to stay for a day," said Mary's note. "You will be surprised, no doubt, though I don't see anything wonderful in it. The people are very pleasant people, and are kind, and want me to stay. I am not often away from home, and though very likely it will not turn out a pleasure, I may as well try. I have no time now, as mamma is just starting. I intended to have written an hour ago, but have been obliged to listen to an author talking. Such quantities of talk they do here, Lizzy, and roar you like any nightingale; for I give you to wit I am in the midst of a menagerie—one genuine lion and a great many make-believes. No more time. I am to be home the day after to-morrow. In the greatest haste, mamma waiting and papa calling, good night. M.C."

"Mary is sure to have told you who we met, my love, so I need not enlarge upon him," said Mrs Cum-

berland. "It was quite unexpected; but since he has come, they will not let him away. He said positively he would not stay at first, but afterwards yielded. He was very polite, and took Mary in to dinner. Well, of course, it was not called *dinner*, you know, but quite the same thing, my dear. Their rooms are very small; they had a great tent on the lawn, and Mary enjoyed the party, I am sure. I am glad to see Mary's taste improving, Elizabeth. I believe it is your influence, my dear child. She seemed quite pleased with this very refined and intellectual company to-day, and kept up quite an animated conversation. With such a companion, you will say, it is no great wonder; but she has always avoided our distinguished visitors heretofore. My dear child, I know *you* were never insensible to the claims of genius, but Mary has always followed her Aunt Burtonshaw so closely. I never saw her so interested as she was by this most charming young man to-day."

"By *whom*, Maria Anna?" cried Mrs Burtonshaw, in a voice of terror. Mrs Burtonshaw had read her letter, and could not be sulky; so, as it chanced, she re-entered the room in time to hear the conclusion of this speech. "Who was Mary interested in, did you say? I don't understand what you all mean, for my part. You go on sacrificing everything for the whim of the moment. There is my Sylvo," said Mrs Burton-

shaw, lowering her voice ; “ you tell him he is to bring his friend here, *that* Mr Mansfield who is tempting the poor boy away ; and you come home quite calmly, and leave my sweet Mary, and talk of her being interested, and of charming young men. I cannot help being quite shocked, Maria Anna ! I cannot understand what you all mean.”

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANGE OF OPINION.

DURING the following day the mirror on the wall of Mr Cumberland's drawing-room reflected a most disturbed and solicitous face, surrounded with the pretty lace and bright ribbons of Mrs Burtonshaw. The good lady could not veil her anxiety. She was constantly-looking out from her window, or making pilgrimages to the lawn for a little view of the road by which Mary, tired of her visit, possibly might return. But Mary, as it seemed, was not tired of her visit, for that evening there came a note desiring that she might be sent for on the following night—not sooner. Mrs Burtonshaw was much perplexed and troubled; she stood at the open window watching the little blue pennon of smoke from Sylvo's retreat among the trees, and grieving herself at thought of the visions of savagery and wild adventure with which the deserted lover might be solacing his solitude. The most alarming visions of charming young men assailed Mrs Bur-

tonshaw's fancy ; she beheld her dearest Mary in imagination beset by as many suitors as the heroine of the song, " Wooing at her, pu'ing at her." The Scotch language was an unintelligible language to this anxious mother ; she did not quote the classic lyric, but she appropriated the idea, and it filled her with inexpressible terror.

" You see, my love, one never can answer for such things," says the distressed Mrs Burtonshaw. " Three days ! I have known a great deal of mischief done in three days, Elizabeth. People get to feel quite like old friends when they spend a day or two together in the country. Why was Maria Anna so foolish ?—of course, the dear child could not know her own danger. Why, my dear, I have known men quite clever enough to have everything over, and a poor girl engaged to be married, in three days !"

" But you always say Mary is so sensible—and so she is, Aunt Burtonshaw," said Zaidee.

" Yes, my love," said Mrs Burtonshaw, shaking her head, " but I am sorry to say good sense is not always a protection. In these matters, Elizabeth—it is quite extraordinary—the wisest people do the most foolish things. If I only had come a day sooner ! I never ought to go away from home—Maria Anna is so thoughtless—there is no one to take care of my sweet Mary when I am away."

The time of Mrs Burtonshaw's anxiety, however, came to an end; the second day rose and shone, and darkened into twilight, and Mrs Burtonshaw herself gave orders for the carriage which was to bring Mary home. When it was quite ready, this anxious guardian threw a great shawl over Zaidee, tied a boa round her neck, kissed her, and pleaded in a whisper that she should go for the truant. "And tell me if you see any one taking leave of her, my love," said the suspicious Mrs Burtonshaw. It was a beautiful summer night, just after sunset, and Zaidee was not unwilling. This quiet drive through these pleasant dewy lanes and along the high-road, which at every turn caught silvery glimpses of the river, would at any time have rewarded Zaidee, to whom this silent motion and solitude had a singular charm, for a more disagreeable errand than bringing Mary home. Her embarrassments on the subject of Sylvo had worn off by this time, since Sylvo himself, though somewhat piqued, and still a little rude to her, showed his remembrance of it in no other way. When she had released herself from the boa, and loosened the shawl, Zaidee leaned back in her luxurious corner, and watched the soft darkness gathering on the dewy hedgerows, and the soft stars, one by one, appearing in that pale, warm, luminous sky. Her quietness was only broken by a little thrill of anticipation, a pleasurable excitement

for her thoughts. What was it that could charm the sensible Mary into remaining among these people, whom she professed to dislike and be impatient of?—what effect on the prospects of Sylvo Burtonshaw might this inopportune visit have?—and who was the dangerous antagonist whom Mary's long affianced but happily indifferent bridegroom had to fear? The drive was a long one, and she amused herself with many speculations. She had no such interest in the matter as Aunt Burtonshaw had—she was in no degree inclined to advocate the claims of Sylvo; so Zaidee's interest and curiosity and expectation had no drawback—they gave her full occupation as she sped along the darkening way.

The carriage stopt at last before a large low house, surrounded by a still lower wall, and the trimmest of holly hedges; some one rich enough to build a mansion in the form of a cottage was Mary Cumberland's hospitable host. Zaidee, looking out with great curiosity, saw a number of figures on the lawn; the moon had risen by this time, and the night was one of those balmy nights which it is hard to leave for artificial light and closed-up rooms. Then some one called Miss Cumberland, and Mary's voice, not with an accent of delight, said, "Ah, they have come for me!" Then Zaidee saw her friend approaching the carriage, already dressed, as it appeared, as if she had been

waiting for them : a lamp from the house shed an indistinct light upon the scene—on the trellised walls of the house itself, covered with green leaves and budding roses—on the vacant hall, where some white sculptured figures stood solitary under the light—and upon the group which slowly advanced to the carriage-door from the lawn. “Farewell, my love”—“Good-by, Miss Cumberland”—“Love to mamma,” cried one voice and another ; but Zaidee’s ear only caught the under-tone of one still closer to the window, which said nothing but “Good-night.” Neither good-by, nor farewell—nothing that sounded like parting—only “Good-night ;” and Mary, glancing back with a timid glance under her eyelids, sank into the nearest corner of the carriage, and did not perceive that Zaidee was there till they had driven from the door and were out of sight.

“Who was that, Mary ?” asked Zaidee with great interest, after Mary, with a momentary fright and some embarrassment, had discovered that she was not alone.

“That ?—you must be more precise in your questions, for indeed I cannot tell who *that* was,” said Mary, laughing, but with no small degree of confusion. “Who could have supposed you would come, Elizabeth ?—though I am sure it is very good of you.”

Now Mary’s tone did not quite confirm her words, and Zaidee saw that the thanks were very equivocal.

She was otherwise occupied, however, than with this question of thanks. "I wonder where I have seen him before," said Zaidee, hurriedly. "Not very tall or big, like Sylvo, with all that wavy hair, and the cloud upon his face, that comes and goes—and eyes so brilliant and fitful—Mary, tell me who he was. I wonder where I have seen him, Mary—he who said, Good-night?"

"You have never seen him—it is impossible," said Mary. "He who said Good-night?—why, they all said Good-night."

"No, indeed; 'Good-by,' and 'Farewell,' and 'Miss Cumberland,'" said Zaidee, whose old habits of close observation had never deserted her; "he only said, 'Good-night.' Mary, tell me who he was."

"He is a very famous man," said Mary. There was no satire in Mary's voice; on the contrary, she elevated herself with involuntary pride, and her companion could see a dewy gleam, altogether new to them, in her blue eyes. Zaidee waited for something farther, but nothing came, and Mary had dwelt upon the words with a secret exultation and joy, which the quick perceptions of her friend discovered in a moment. Zaidee looked into Mary's corner, but now could see nothing save the white and jewelled hand which held the shawl round her. It was very strange—it certainly was not Mary's way.

“I thought there were a great many famous men there. Is this your real lion?” said Zaidee;—“but even lions have names. Tell me what he is called.”

“There are a great many shadows and imitations,” said Mary, with a little scorn,—“that is why one learns to mistrust everything which people call great; but there cannot be many famous men in the world, not to speak of Hollylee, Elizabeth—one is distinction enough.”

With a marvelling gaze, Zaidee turned once more to the corner—was it Mary Cumberland that spoke? Yes, there is the jewelled clasp that poor Aunt Burtonshaw gave her sparkling at Mary’s neck; and there are Mary’s curls, warm and fair, that cluster over it, hiding the glitter of its precious stones. Zaidee is wise enough not to make comments on this wonderful conversion and change of sentiment; she can only repeat the question—“Tell me his name.”

“There is no chance that you have ever seen him before,” said Mary, “not the slightest chance, for I am certain I never did; but we have read his books many a time. They say he is half-a-dozen men, Lizzy; that he makes one reputation after another in play, and is a poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a philosopher; they say he could be the greatest of his time, if he would but devote himself to one thing; but instead of that, he scatters his riches round him like the princess that

had pearls and roses dropping from her lips in the fairy tale. I do think Mr Vivian is a spendthrift, Elizabeth—he dazzles you with everything, his mind is so full.”

“Mr Vivian !” A change came upon Zaidee still more sudden than Mary’s quick conversion ; she made no attempt to ask another question, but sat leaning forward, breathless, eager, and silent, while Mary, whose mouth was opened, went on.

“It is quite strange to hear how they speak of him : whenever he is successful in what he is trying, there he stops—and, of course, such a man is successful in everything. He publishes one book, and everybody is eager for the next ; but instead of taking advantage of that, one gentleman told me, he is off as far as possible in another direction, and appears where nobody expects him, and has just such another success again. Some people say he is volatile, and some that he is superficial. Oh, of course all sorts of ill-natured things are said of him ; *he* does not mind ; he knows what he can do himself, and it is nothing to him.”

Mary was too much interested with the subject to observe that Zaidee asked no more questions, and in the darkness she could not see how the colour went and came upon the beautiful face beside her ; how Zaidee’s eyes were lighted up and expanding with a glad surprise, and how a quiver of emotion was on her

lip. Mary took no notice of her companion ; she went on almost without a pause.

“ Yes, his name is Percy Vivian,” said Mary slowly, and dwelling somewhat on the sound : “ he is a gentleman, the son of a good family ; but they say he has not any fortune. It would have been too much to give him fortune—*all* the gifts of Providence ; no, such a man ought to be poor.”

Zaidee made no answer, she could not have spoken for her life ; a host of overpowering recollections poured upon her. Was it Percy ?—he who bade his mother take courage because she had “ two sons ? ”—he whose frolicsome boyhood was the life of the house ?—Percy, who was to be a student in the Temple, a counsel learned in the law ? She fancied she heard his playful call to her—the host of nicknames by which the youngest child was known. An indescribable flush of pride came to poor solitary Zaidee, whom Percy Vivian would meet as a stranger. Notwithstanding, he was “ our Percy ; ” she had a secret right to exult over him—to recall what he was, with family triumph. Mary, with no more questions to answer, sank back into her corner, into a silence charmed and full of visions ; but Zaidee had forgotten to think of Mary—forgotten to smile, or wonder, or ask what strange new influence was upon her friend. The wavy hair tossing in the fresh Cheshire gale—the

eyes that were like Elizabeth's—how well she remembered the privileged wit and household scapegrace. Yes, at Mary's certainty that *she* could never have seen Mr Vivian, Zaidee did smile again.

But the river again became audible through the coming darkness, as they approached those shadowy banks of Twickenham—they were close upon home.

“Mary,” said Zaidee, starting suddenly from her reverie, “I have something to say to you of Sylvo Burtonshaw.”

With a still more violent start, Mary turned away from her, holding up her hands in vehement deprecation. “For pity's sake, Elizabeth!—for pity! let me never hear Sylvo's name again!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE TROUBLING OF THE WATERS.

BUT while Zaidee, thus suddenly checked, endeavours with great surprise to put this and that together, they have suddenly entered the grounds, and are at home. Mrs Burtonshaw is at the door, and you can see by an intense red spark in the distance, which suddenly darts through the bushes like a falling star, that Sylvo also is in attendance, and that Mary's entreaty never to hear his name again is quite an impossible prayer. But Mary goes through these salutations with very proper composure, shakes hands with Sylvo, and meets the warm embrace of Mrs Burtonshaw. "My dear, you look quite beautiful," cries this kind voice, with its tones of affectionate gladness; "such a colour, and your eyes so bright: but I was very much disappointed not to find you at home, Mary; we were so anxious to see you, both Sylvo and I. Speak to Sylvo, my love; he has been by himself all day wishing for you. Though Elizabeth is a very dear, good

girl, my love, the house is always dark to me without you, Mary. I do not know what I should do, if there was any chance of you marrying out of the family, and going away."

To this Mary makes no answer, but, after having been quite an unnecessary time away in her own room taking off her bonnet, comes down with her eyes somewhat dazzled by the light, yet with an unusual illumination in them. Mrs Cumberland takes greatly to her sofa now in the evening, and is much afflicted with "languor;" she is reclining with a shawl round her, and her eyes shaded from the light. Mrs Burtonshaw sits by the table not doing anything, but disposed for conversation. Sylvo is yawning over the photographs. Mr Cumberland, with spectacles upon his curious eyes, holds up a book before him so as to catch the light, and reads. Zaidee is reading, too, if trifling with a book and looking for Mary can be called reading. When Mary enters at last, she does not bring the degree of animation to this little company which all of them expected. Instead of giving that account of her visit which Aunt Burtonshaw looked for, Mary hastily takes a piece of work from her work-table, and, sitting down close by the light, begins working very assiduously. There is a variable glow, too, on her cheeks, and her eyes are unusually bright. Kind Aunt Burtonshaw is disappointed; this

is not very kind of her favourite ; and Mrs Burtonshaw's good heart excuses Mary by an immediate fear that she is ill.

“ Did you wrap yourself well up, my love ? ” asks the solicitous guardian ; “ are you sure you were not in any draught ? You look a little feverish, Mary ; why don't you say anything ? I have had so much to talk to you about since ever I came home. ”

“ Then do talk to me, Aunt Burtonshaw, ” said Mary, pursuing her work, and scarcely raising her head. “ You know I always like to listen to you. ”

“ Did you see many people at Hollylee, Mary ? ” asked Mrs Cumberland, waking up. “ That delightful young man, did he remain all the time ? and did you say anything to him about coming here ? ”

“ I told him where we lived, ” said Mary. Mary was unusually low-toned and gentle to-night, and had not the ghost of a mock for her mother's delightful young man.

“ Who is *he*, pray ? ” said Mrs Burtonshaw, with a little asperity. “ I think that is a very improper way to speak, Maria Anna. I thought there were a great many people at Hollylee, Mary. I never expected to have heard of *one* person ; and I don't think a young lady is the proper person to ask gentlemen here. ”

Mary had not a word to say in her own defence ; she grew very red, and bent down over her sewing.

All her saucy mirth was hushed for to-night. With wonderful meekness she bore the lecture of Aunt Burtonshaw.

“He is a great author,” said Zaidee, interposing on her friend’s behalf; “he is a very famous man, Aunt Burtonshaw.”

And Zaidee’s beautiful head was elevated unconsciously, and her face glowed with a generous pride; she had scarcely recovered the startling effect of this great author’s name; but so great was her feminine liking for applause, that she could not lose the first opportunity of exulting over Percy, and proclaiming his fame.

“You all seem to think it a very great thing to be an author,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “I suppose we all might be authors, if we only would put down on paper everything that came into our heads, as some people do. It is all very well for you to seek famous men, Maria Anna, but Mary cares nothing for them, I know, and Mary is a well-educated girl, and knows what is due to her. It is quite out of the question for her to ask such people here.”

“But I did not ask him to come here, Aunt Burtonshaw,” said Mary, with guilt in her voice.

There was a considerable silence after that. Mrs Burtonshaw looked round the room, and round it again, pausing a little on every individual. Then the

good lady rose with a little demonstration, and went for the paper which lay neglected on a side-table. "If nobody has anything to say, I cannot help myself," said Aunt Burtonshaw, and she applied herself with great devotion to the *Times*.

The light flickers a little by reason of a breath of air coming in through a half-opened window, and gives a wavy unsteadiness to that reflection in the mirror. The room looks somewhat dim, as fireless rooms will look after long days of sunshine, and again the malicious mirror exaggerates Sylvo, who lies back on his chair with his long limbs extended, holding up a photograph to hide that yawning gulf and those magnificent teeth widely revealed under his mustache. Mrs Cumberland has just dropped off into her "languor" once more,—Mr Cumberland is reading very rapidly, so great is his interest in his book,—while Mary's needle flies through her fingers as if she worked for a wager; and though Mary is so silent, and no one addresses her, the colour wavers on her cheek as the light wavers on the mirror, and she is still unable to raise frankly to the light her dazzled eyes.

Zaidee is not so industrious as Mary; she has her pretence of reading still, and now and then idly turns over the pages of the book before her, but without the least idea what it treats of. Aunt Burtonshaw, now

that she has fairly got into the newspaper, cannot keep the intelligence she finds there to herself. She is breaking upon the silence constantly, to read "just this half-dozen lines," "only this paragraph," and, even when hushed into silence by Mr Cumberland's complaint, breaks forth in little exclamations: "Why, there is something about Mr Mansfield; Sylvo, why did you not tell me? Come here and read this, Mary, my love; I would read it to you, if it were not for disturbing Mr Cumberland,"—a succession of irritating small attacks upon the patience of the head of the house. When Mr Cumberland can go on no longer, he glances over his spectacles at the offender, and closes his book upon his hand. "I am sure I do not care for the paper," says Mrs Burtonshaw, taking the first word; "but I really cannot be so hard-hearted as to read all to myself, and that dear child labouring there without any amusement. Sylvo, you great fellow, why do you not talk, and help to wake us? I think we are all going to sleep to-night."

So far is this from being the case, however, that when the household has actually retired to rest, three different watchers in three adjoining chambers find it quite impossible to sleep. Sylvo, it is true, faintly dreaming of the African wilds, and a hundred indefinite delights, sleeps like a tired hunter, much too soundly to have any disquiet in *his* slumbers; but

his mother lies awake planning how she shall execute her final attack, and "settle" the unconscious Sylvo. At another chamber window a white figure looks out upon the moonlight—it is Mary Cumberland, quite unused to watching, who has too many thoughts pressing upon her mind to go to sleep. These thoughts, if they could but be disclosed to the astonished vision of Mrs Burtonshaw, would banish sleep from that good mother's apartment once for all to-night. But Mrs Burtonshaw wots not of the charmed maze in which her dearest Mary wanders, and could not understand this thronging detail of recollection, this indefinite mist of anticipation, which Mary does not know how to strive against. It is all new to Mary Cumberland's surprised and fluttered heart—life looks so tame and commonplace on the other side of these three magical days, and on this side expands into such a marvellous world of possibility and hope. Who has done it all, or what has done it all, Mary is not sufficiently enlightened to whisper to herself; but somehow there shines before her an ethereal existence—a way that is glorified and changed out of the common way—a life that lies upon a higher level than any she has known. With a strange and agitated pleasure her heart returns to this enchanted circle, this world of three days' duration. What has made these different from all the other days of Mary's experience? Hush!

Mary is looking at the moonlight on the river, looking at the stars shining down upon the willow-trees, listening to the rustling of the boughs, and the sighing of the stream. She has no answer to give to this un-called-for question, which no one has any right to ask of her. "Rational answers" are not quite in Mary's way at this present moment, although they have been a daily necessity with her for two-and-twenty years. She evades the question in her new-born love for this sweet, bright glimmer on the stream, and leaning out of her open window with her fair hair blowing over her cheek, and the soft night-air cooling her brow, is still looking forth upon this glorious quiet, this wakeful sky and slumbering country, when Aunt Burtonshaw, perplexed and anxious, is just about to yield to sleep.

And in the next room, Zaidee, with the candle before her on her little table, reads her chapter in her father's bible, bends down her beautiful head upon its sacred pages, and with tears in her eyes, not bitter enough to fall, prays the prayer of her childhood for those at home. God bless Percy whom God has gifted; God bless all of them, every one. Name by name comes to the mind of Zaidee. Name by name dwells in her heart. Grandfather Vivian's book is on the table beside her—she has been looking once more at the name which is hers too, as well as Percy's, and

thinking of this sacred and precious legacy, a legacy nobler than lands or gold, which is her share of the family inheritance. Zaidee does not need to close her bible when her prayers are over, and when she enters *her* enchanted land of thought. She thinks how at home they will rejoice over Percy — how his young fame will gladden their hearts. Her own heart warms with the family joy, the pride of love and kindred ; under her breath, when no one can hear her, she dares to say “our Percy !” she dares to express the fulness of her wonder and her pride. Even Aunt Burtonshaw now, disquieted and anxious, has fallen asleep against her will before her plans are half completed, and Mary closes her window, and steals in softly out of the moonlight to betake herself to rest ; but Zaidee still bends over her open bible, and is still busy with thoughts of her long-forsaken home. Percy Vivian has no suspicion of how he has roused this beautiful stranger, nor of those prayers of simple faith that rise for him to heaven. It may be that his own thoughts reward the unwilling fascination of Mary Cumberland, but he has no thought of Zaidee, the long-lost and unknown.

CHAPTER VIII.

VISITORS.

“ARE we to have a party here to-day, Maria Anna?” asks Mrs Burtonshaw. “I might have had a decent cap on, you know, if anybody had taken the trouble to mention it. What is it to be?”

“Not a party, my dear Elizabeth, only a few friends from town to spend the day—a country repast, and a stroll by the river,” says Mrs Cumberland.

“A *few* friends—there’s no end of people at the gate,” cried Sylvo, stretching himself out before the mirror. Appearances there are not unsatisfactory, it is to be presumed, for Sylvo sets himself up as a pillar at one side of the open bow-window, and waits with great composure for the inroad of guests.

The flowing of the tide immediately becomes audible by a great many voices and footsteps in the hall. This hall is square like the house, well-sized and airy, and decorated with some “images,” as Mrs Burtonshaw calls them, and a series of casts of the friezes of the

Parthenon. The indefinite sounds merge into a universal laugh, and then the door is opened, and Mr Cumberland enters at the head of a numerous party—a party much too numerous to be announced one by one. It is “Steele’s last” which brings in Mr Cumberland’s company with such a breath of laughter. “Some one remarked how cool the hall was,” said a stout gentleman, with a chuckle. “No wonder,” says he, “look at all the friezes ;” whereupon Sylvo’s teeth appear once more under the clump of brushwood, and a great “ha, ha,” from the bow-window swells the universal mirth.

“Who is Mr Steele?” asked Mrs Burtonshaw.

“A poor rascal of a painter—any work to do, ma’am?” says somebody, putting up his hand to his forehead, and pulling a lock of long hair in mock obeisance. “Got a wife and family—do it as cheap as another. Miss Cumberland here will speak to my character—servant, ma’am.”

“Poor old Steele, he is coming to poverty in his old days,” said somebody else behind. With unmingled consternation Mrs Burtonshaw looked on and listened. If the poor gentleman was coming to poverty, was that a subject to be mentioned in polite society to hurt his feelings?—and old! The “poor gentleman” in question was of a slim and pliant figure, closely buttoned up, with long hair untouched by grey, and a face of

beardless youthfulness. "It will give me great pleasure, sir, I am sure, to be able to help you in any way," said Mrs Burtonshaw, with a curtsy of antique politeness, puzzled, yet compassionate; and Mrs Burtonshaw gave the cut direct to the unfeeling personage who proclaimed the poverty of Mr Steele, and whom Mr Cumberland was now presenting to her. "I have no patience with men who trifle with other people's feelings, my love," said Mrs Burtonshaw, retiring to give her countenance to Zaidee—"of course, though he is an artist, the poor gentleman does not wish any one to know his poverty. I wonder, for my part, how people can have such bad hearts!"

But a great many other persons fill the room to distract the attention of Mrs Burtonshaw. There are ladies in gorgeous brocade, and ladies in simple muslin; there are little parterres of bonnets so leafy and flowery that they might almost do to replace the clusters of floral ornament in these rustic baskets on the lawn. There are gentlemen in all the varieties of morning costume, and gentlemen in full dress, looking very odd and uncomfortable in the fresh early daylight—*young* gentlemen with clumps of mustache like Sylvo, who have nothing particular to say; and elderly gentlemen, who are rampant, each on his particular hobby, riding very hard by the side of Mr Cumberland, who, in his

delightful candour, is ready to trot with all. A cluster of the most distinguished members of the company have gathered round Mrs Cumberland, and Mary is surrounded by a gay crowd, on the extreme border of which stands Zaidee with Aunt Burtonshaw by her side; everybody is asking who everybody is, or answering the same. The mirror sparkles with the figures that move upon it—the gay colours and universal animation. Mrs Burtonshaw in her turn becomes interested, and plies Zaidee with questions. Who is this gentleman, for instance, who is a little bald, and prys about with an eye-glass? Perhaps he hears the question, for he immediately advances to Miss Elizabeth Cumberland, to whom he has been presented, and makes his bow.

“Have you seen Mrs Montague Crawson?” asks this personage, peering eagerly through his eye-glass. “Have you not been introduced to my wife, Miss Elizabeth? That is Mrs Montague Crawson yonder, that lady in the green shawl.”

“Then *he* has only his wife, I suppose, and nothing more, my dear?” says the puzzled Mrs Burtonshaw, when Mr Crawson has taken himself away. “Oh yes, he has his eye-glass,” says an adjacent young lady, “just as these young gentlemen who support the window have a mustache, each of them.” The speaker

laughs innocently, unwitting that this is Sylvo's mother who refuses to smile upon her. Mrs Burtonshaw draws herself apart in kindling wrath.

"Tell us how you did about that picture—that great old master. Is it a Steele or a Zurbaran?" asks somebody in the crowd, addressing the former hero of Mrs Burtonshaw's sympathy.

"Yes, it's quite true, I put in the wood," acknowledges Mr Steele. "Do you think I haven't timber enough in my head to paint another? How is Mrs Steele? Mrs Steele is not here, she's gone over the Channel. Don't mention it—but I have as good a chance as another; *all* the ships in the world don't get safe to their journey's end."

Zaidee, who was looking on with a smile, felt her hand vehemently grasped by the indignant hand of Aunt Burtonshaw. "Come away from that inhuman man, child!" cried the good lady, under her breath. "What does Maria Anna mean, I wonder, by bringing such people here? enough to destroy the morals of her children. Mary! Why, Mary is laughing with him, as if he were the most innocent person in the world. Who is this poor Mrs Steele, Elizabeth, my love?" asked Mrs Burtonshaw, with sad solemnity.

"She is a very pretty lady, aunt," said Zaidee, laughing a little at the very matter-of-fact understanding of good Aunt Burtonshaw.

“Well, it is very sad for her, poor thing,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, “but I am glad enough that he is married, for Mary’s sake, and all these young people. You are a great deal too frank, you young ladies. Come here and sit by me, Elizabeth. I cannot let you go near that dreadful man.”

But they continue to hear this dreadful man notwithstanding, and he is telling some *bon mots* and puns of his own with the simplest glee in the world. “‘What are you doing copying this?’ says Hilton to me one day. It was a sketch of a bull’s head in the British Institution—what is the British Institution now, you know,” said Mr Steele. “‘Why, there’s no interest in it.’ ‘No,’ says I, ‘no interest,—it’s all capital!’” To Mrs Burtonshaw’s infinite disgust, everybody laughed, and everybody continued to stand round Mr Steele, expecting something else to laugh at. He had just begun another of his reports, when a little lady standing by touched him on the arm. “I see you have quite forgotten me,” said the little lady, who was plump and pretty. “I met you once at Hollylee, Mr Steele—Mrs Michael.”

Mr Steele receded a step, and made one of his bows of mock humility. “I knew it was one of the angels,” said the wit with a characteristic hesitation, “but I *had* forgot the name.”

In the severity of exasperated virtue, Mrs Burton-

shaw rose. "Mary, you ought not to listen to such a person," cried Mrs Burtonshaw audibly. "I cannot tell what Maria Anna means by it—it is dreadful; and there is a Mrs Steele too!"

"There has been a Mrs Steele, I am happy to say, any time these thirty years," said the object of Mrs Burtonshaw's wrath, with a perfectly innocent smile.

Mrs Burtonshaw turned round upon him once more with open-eyed astonishment. "Do you mean that he's a wandering Jew?" cried poor Mrs Burtonshaw, who was put to her wit's end.

"You are quite right; no one knows how old he is." "I hear he has got great-grandchildren," cried one and another, eager to promote the good lady's delusion. "The more shame for him!" said Mrs Burtonshaw solemnly, "to speak in that way of a very pretty lady, and to make compliments to other people. I shall never give such things *my* sanction, you may be sure."

Amid much suppressed and restrained laughter Mrs Burtonshaw turned away; but the charm of the joke remained in the fact that this privileged talker, who happened to be a man of the most tender conscience, was struck with compunction forthwith. This gay spirit, with its fund of invention and retort, its wit and mirth and daring sallies, was a spirit imbued with the most susceptible and trembling piety. "A Steele" was just as good a synonyme for a joke as for a

picture in the understanding of those who knew the artist best. He had relinquished a hundred other "carnal inclinations," very innocent to other men, with the purest self-denial, but he could not get his wit weeded out from his life as he could his play-going. With the most unpretending simplicity he bewailed this sad necessity to "talk nonsense," which he could not overcome; and Mrs Burtonshaw's indignation awoke the slumbering self-reproof. He who called himself a religious man had compromised his character!—perhaps he had crossed the borders of innocent jesting—perhaps jesting was never at all an innocent amusement. Mr Steele did not recover himself till his audience were wearied of waiting, and it was only when the power of his self-condemnation was expended that the fresh heart which kept him youthful came back with a rebound; he passed out into the sunshine—among the gay young voices, the sounds and the fragrances of summer—and was himself again.

There was no end of people, as Sylvo said, and there was no end to the tastes and inclinations which animated them. Mr Cumberland's beautiful lawn was dotted with gay groups, and the white blossoms of the acacia fell upon other heads than the musing head of Zaidee. Then came an afternoon dinner—"a country repast," as Mrs Cumberland called it—and then a

great deal of talk and music, of flirtation and criticism, indoors and out of doors. But there was no Mr Vivian to make the day a charmed day for Mary Cumberland, or a day of terror to Aunt Burtonshaw. The invasion of guests proved a sedative to the fears of the old lady, and kept the younger one out of the enchanted world of her own thoughts.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVILS OF KNOWING AN AUTHOR.

“WHAT are you reading, Mary? I want you to come and take a drive with me, my love,” said Aunt Burtonshaw. “You ought to have a rest to-day, after entertaining all these people. Come, my darling, and drive with me. What are you reading?”

“It is a novel, Aunt Burtonshaw,” said Mary with humility.

“It is that beautiful book of Mr Vivian’s. I am delighted to see how Mary’s taste improves,” said Mrs Cumberland from her sofa; “one always feels more interest in a book when one knows the author. I shall ask him to put his autograph upon our copy when he comes here.”

“And pray what are *you* reading, Elizabeth?” asked Mrs Burtonshaw.

“It is Mr Vivian’s poems, aunt,” said Zaidee.

“Upon my word, I should be glad to know who Mr Vivian is, or what he means,” said Mrs Burton-

shaw ; “ you used to be glad of rational occupations—you used to do your needlework, and take drives and walks, and like a little conversation : now you have books all day long—books morning and evening ; and it is always Mr Vivian. Who is Mr Vivian, then ? will nobody tell me ? Is he only an author ? Now, I don’t want to hear that he is a delightful young man, Maria Anna. I don’t think such things are fit to be said before these children. Who is Mr Vivian ? that is what I want to know.”

“ It is not because of Mr Vivian I am reading,” said Mary, faltering at this unusual fib ; “ if you only would look here, Aunt Burtonshaw, there is some one so like Elizabeth here.”

Involuntarily Zaidee started ; she felt so much disposed to answer Aunt Burtonshaw’s question, and tell her who Percy was—but how should she know ? So Zaidee was silent, putting constraint upon herself. Aunt Burtonshaw was not satisfied.

“ If you will please me, Mary, you will come and let me have my drive, and I will look at your book to-morrow,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. It was a great effort of self-sacrifice on Mary’s part. She rose reluctantly, and with much deliberation put her book aside. She could not tell Sylvo’s mother never to speak to her of Sylvo again, and Mary remembered with a blush her almost determination to put up with

Sylvo before he arrived at Twickenham. Things had changed wonderfully since that time—there was an immense gulf between her feelings now and her feelings then. Sylvo had not altered the least in her estimation ; he was the same good fellow he always was ; but Mary would rather have dropped quietly into the river under the willows than made up her mind to marry Sylvo now.

When Mary left the room with Aunt Burtonshaw, Zaidee continued to read the Poems of Percy Vivian ; these were mostly fragments—snatches of wild song—sketches of great things incomplete, versatile and brilliant and changeable. She thought no one else could understand as she did the chance allusions to the family history which ran through Percy's verses ; no one could recognise like her that wild tumultuous atmosphere, the rush of wind and mass of cloud, which filled the firmament of Percy's song. This was not like Margaret's landscape ; it was nature, every word of it, alive with air and motion ; no rigid portrait, but an animated reflection of the scenes familiar to him. While Zaidee read, her heart went back out of this mild and gentle landscape, with its noble river and its verdant woods. She saw those oaks Agonistes, every one of them, with the red leaves stiffening on their branches, and the young foliage thrusting slowly through the last year's garments, which were so slow

to fall. Instead of the drooping blossoms of that beautiful acacia, Zaidee saw yonder fierce little hill of Briarford, with all its golden and purple glories, its gorse and heather, and that old warm family home lifting its face to the winds, wistfully gazing on the flat country into the cloudy horizon and the far-off sea. Her mind was far away, wandering over those well-remembered places, which memory invested with an imaginative charm. She had no recollection of this wealthy home at Twickenham, Mrs Cumberland upon her sofa, or Sylvo out of doors with his cigar, or the great mirror which gathered everything together within its pictured breadth. The mirror caught her own beauty unawares, and held it up to every one who entered, though Zaidee's face was turned away from the door; but Zaidee thought of nothing but of what she found within those pages, the atmosphere and heart of her early home.

“Elizabeth!” said Mrs Cumberland.

Zaidee looked up with a momentary pang. She felt as if called back from the Grange suddenly, and called back from her recollections. Mrs Cumberland was beckoning to her with her hand.

“Come here, Elizabeth, my love; I have something to say to you. Sit down,” said the lady of the house, pointing to a stool beside her. Zaidee obeyed quietly, as it was her custom to obey. Mrs Cumber-

land cleared her throat, and seemed to have a momentary difficulty in making a beginning.

“ My dear child, Mr Vivian will be coming here one of these days, I trust,” said Mrs Cumberland, still with a little hesitation.

“ Yes,” said Zaidee. Zaidee grasped the edge of her seat with her hands in dismayed apprehension. Could her secret be known ?

“ Of course you are sure to be much struck with him,” said Mrs Cumberland. “ Already you are pre-possessed in his favour ; and I can safely say he is a most delightful young man. Now, my dear love, tell me candidly, is your heart quite free, Elizabeth ? Be frank with me, my dear.”

The deepest crimson flushed over Zaidee’s face ; she raised her head with an involuntary dignity. “ Perfectly free,” said Zaidee somewhat emphatically, though in a hurried under-tone. She felt a little ashamed of questioning like this.

“ I have thought of you a great deal, Elizabeth,” said Mrs Cumberland. “ You are not quite like other girls, my dear. When you marry, it will be proper that your bridegroom should know your real name, and all your circumstances ; and perhaps finding that you were not really our daughter—though I am sure I love you like one, my dear child—you must not be offended—might make a difference with some young

men. But there is one way in which you have more advantages than Mary ; and I feel certain that Mr Vivian, for example, who is a poet and an enthusiast, will be sure to admire you very much. I should not like you to make a common match, Elizabeth. I have always set my heart on something quite out of the usual way for you. Now, you would please me very much, my dear child, by encouraging Mr Vivian a little, if he seems disposed to pay his addresses to you ; and do not be too shy, but let him see you, and form a proper opinion of you when he comes here. My love, you need not blush and frown, and look so disturbed ; what I am saying to you is quite proper, and not compromising you in any way. Will you attend to what I say, Elizabeth, my dear ? ”

“ Oh, no, no ; do not bid me. I do not want ever to go away ; let me stay always at home,” said Zaidee, turning her flushed and agitated face towards Mrs Cumberland, but not venturing to raise her eyes. “ You have been very good to me so many years ; let me stay, if it is only to be your servant, and take care of you when Mary is married. I wish for nothing else—do not speak to me of anything else ; let me stay at home.”

Mrs Cumberland patted softly with her thin fingers upon Zaidee’s hand. “ That is all very well, my love ; that is what all young ladies say at first,” said Mrs

Cumberland with a smile. "I will not say any more at present. You know my wishes ; I leave the rest to time and your own heart, and—Mr Vivian. Now, my dear child, go back to your book ; I have said all I have to say."

When Zaidee rose, the first thing which caught her eye was the reflection in the mirror of Mary Cumberland standing within the half-opened door. As Zaidee raised her troubled face to the light, she caught through this medium the keen look of her friend fixed upon her. Mary's lips were closed tight ; Mary's face was very pale, and her hair fell down strangely lank and disordered upon her cheek. It looked like an impersonation of startled suspicion and self-defence ; it did not look like pretty Mary Cumberland returning with fresh roses on her cheeks from her drive with Aunt Burtonshaw. Zaidee's beautiful face, full of dismay and agitation, but of no evil emotion, met with a gaze of astonishment the angry scrutiny of Mary. It struck her with a painful surprise ; and she went quickly forward to ascertain, if it was ascertainable, what the import of this silent defiance might be ; but Mary turned before her friend could reach her, and Zaidee only saw her figure disappearing up the stair when she came to the door. Pausing a moment to give Mary time to reach her retirement, Zaidee hastily sought her own room. She was uneasy

and disturbed by Mary's look ; but Mrs Cumberland had quite unintentionally thrown a new light upon Zaidee's life. Her real name and all her circumstances—Zaidee shuddered at the possibility of any one having a right and a necessity to be informed of these. The sudden revelation sent her back with a shudder from all the dreams of youthful existence. That any one could think of Percy paying his addresses to her,—“our Percy,” of whose fame she was so proud—was a hallucination at which Zaidee only smiled. But with quite a different regard she looked at the great principle which Mrs Cumberland had stated as a thing of course, and which her own judgment immediately approved. Who but Zaidee Vivian could understand why Zaidee Vivian fled from home and name and fortune ? Who but herself could feel the weight of Grandfather Vivian's legacy ? the dreadful burden and guiltiness of disinheriting Philip ? Zaidee turned to go down stairs again, with a blank in her face and in her heart. She must guard herself now with a strange and jealous care. She must suffer no stranger to come into her young affections. She must never put her secret in the power of another—nor betray her home and name.

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT AUTHOR.

ALL that day Zaidee was left alone—it did not occur to her to inquire why Mary so pertinaciously avoided her company, rather sitting by herself or leaving the room than sharing Zaidee's seat and occupation, as was usual to them. Mary's pretty face did not look the fairer for the sullen cloud upon it, and her manners, already strangely changed, grew still more perplexing under this veil of resentful silence. When she addressed her mother, it was with scarcely restrained impatience, and Zaidee she did not address at all, except in case of necessity. This added another shade to Zaidee's heaviness. She felt that something was amiss, though, in perfect innocence of all offence, she could not tell what the something was ; the house was out of joint ; there was a universal jarring of all its members. Mrs Burtonshaw, too, was clouded and perturbed, by turns anxious and angry ; and Mary had deserted all her usual amusements, and sat per-

petually by her work-table plying her needle, while Zaidee all unwittingly fanned the flame which Mrs Cumberland had kindled, by a continual study of Mr Vivian's book.

When things were in this condition—when, between her fears for Sylvo and her doubts of Mary, Aunt Burtonshaw led a very troubled existence, and Zaidee and Mary, each of them, fell into strange solitude—it was intimated one day with great solemnity that Mr Vivian was coming to dinner. Mr Cumberland had encountered him in London, had taken advantage of the opportunity, and the great author was to dine with them to-day. Zaidee, who could not help looking up with great and sudden interest at this announcement, found Mrs Cumberland looking at her with a smile of private communication, while Mary's face, full of clouds and storms, was also full of the keenest observation, though she had turned her head away. Zaidee coloured painfully, and cast down her eyes full of tears. She felt herself in an unnatural and false position between this mother and daughter. It was impossible to avoid being interested, impossible to resist a rising eagerness and anxiety. She could not anticipate Percy's visit with the tranquil expectation of a stranger; but Mrs Cumberland's smile and audible whisper of the dress she should wear to-day gave her singular pain. Aunt Burtonshaw said

“ humph,” and Sylvo yawned in anticipation over Mr Vivian’s visit, while a gleam of excitement in consequence came into Mary’s gloom ; but Zaidee withdrew very sadly from the family assemblage. She did not know how to subdue these jarring elements into concord, or how to place herself in her natural position again.

Zaidee was in the drawing-room early, in Aunt Burtonshaw’s corner by the embroidery-frame, hoping to escape the especial notice which she must have gained had she entered the room after Mr Vivian’s arrival. Mary, on the contrary, was late of making her appearance. Mr Vivian arrived with a dash of wheels, drawing up a high-stepping horse before the gate, in a manner which called forth the cordial plaudits of Sylvo, who hurried through the trees to report him “ none of your spooney fellows after all ” before the stranger made his formal entrance. Then the door opened with great solemnity, and Mr Percy Vivian entered the room. Zaidee, bending over the embroidery, looked up with great eagerness from under the shelter of her curved hand. He was but nineteen when she left the Grange ; she thought he was no older still in his bright and versatile youth. The eyes that were full of a hundred laughing fancies ; the white brow all lined and puckered under its wiry hair ; the cloud that rose and descended upon his face like a

veil, making the sunshine all the brighter by its dubiousness ; the curved expressive lip which was never quite at rest—these were all unchanged ; and Percy could not well be more easy in his acquired eminence than he had been in his natural boyish place at home ; yet something there was that told a man accustomed to the world—much that denoted one aware of his own brilliant powers, and of the universal notice which followed him. Yes, it was Percy ; but it was Percy the Poet—Percy the Author—Percy the man of fame ; he had come down to dwell among everyday people, and win reputation for himself among them. It was not quite that boyish, triumphant Percy, looking forth upon the world which lay before him to be conquered, and spurning all its difficulties in his glorious youthful scorn.

And then he addressed himself to the commonplaces of introduction with such a laughing saucy contempt of them in his eye, and solemnly commented on the weather, and on Mr Cumberland's beautiful place, with a sort of mock formality, which called a smile even to the lips of Aunt Burtonshaw. "Do you know, I think he could say something very clever, if it were not just for form's sake, my dear," said the good lady, whispering over the embroidery-frame. The stranger had half disarmed Mrs Burtonshaw already ; and Sylvo, with Mr Vivian's cab in his

mind's eye, and the splendid action of the high-stepping horse, was much disposed to make Mr Vivian's acquaintance, and had already intimated to the company from behind his mustache that "to-day was as good as Italy." In pursuance of the same laudable object, Mrs Cumberland sat placidly listening to Mr Vivian's commonplaces, and Zaidee was un-introduced. She watched the stranger with exceeding interest over Aunt Burtonshaw's embroidery-frame.

And now the door slowly opened, and Zaidee saw Mary, somewhat pale, and with questioning eyes, pause a moment, and look round the room. Her cheek gradually flushed with returning colour, though it was evidently not Mr Vivian she was looking for. It was Zaidee whom Mary sought, and Zaidee was safe in the corner, rather more simply dressed than usual, and veiling her beauty in her remote position and earnest employment. Mary entered the room after that so noiselessly, and with such a burning blush, that Zaidee saw she was ashamed of something. What was she ashamed of? The unwitting offender watched her friend passing with that sudden air of humility about her, across the shining surface of the mirror—watched her slight and hurried salutation of the guest as she passed and sat down, out of sight of him, at her work-table. The secret shame of repentance was on Mary's face; her better nature had

asserted itself ; and when the elders of the party had moved forward in their solemn procession to the dinner-table, Mary put Sylvo away, and laid her soft dimpled hand on Zaidee's arm. There was nothing said between them, but they were friends again—and Mary had heroically resolved, if need was, to stand aside, and suffer her beautiful adopted sister to win the day.

This resolution gave a touch of pathos and tenderness to Mary's own fair face. She saw Mr Vivian start with a singular astonishment when he first observed her companion. She perceived his eyes turn to Zaidee again and again, not so much with admiration, as with wondering curiosity and interest. Every time she perceived this look, she repeated her struggle with herself. She was so intent upon Zaidee that she did not perceive how the great author manœuvred to be placed near herself, and how his wit was perpetually shooting chance arrows over her to rouse her to answer him. Mary's mind was too much absorbed by far for the sprightly retorts with which she had met him at Hollylee. She scarcely spoke, except to Zaidee, all this lingering time of dinner, and felt so heavy and oppressed with the mirth round her that it was quite a relief to her excited feelings when the door of the dining-room closed upon them, and made a temporary pause in the excitement of the night.

“Now, pray, Mr Vivian, how do you do when you are going to write a book?” asked Mrs Burtonshaw, with serious curiosity, when the gentlemen came to the drawing-room. “Do you just sit down with a clean sheet of paper before you, and a pen in your hand, without knowing what you are to say?”

“I think he is a happy man who knows what he has had to say, after he is done saying it,” said the young author. “Now, fancy the misery, Mrs Burtonshaw, of having nothing to say at all.”

“Yes, that is exactly what I was thinking of,” said Mrs Burtonshaw: “for instance, writing a letter, it is only polite to fill three sides. I never think a letter is a letter that is shorter than that—and how if you have said everything in the first page?”

“You sympathise with bookmakers, I can see,” said Percy, laughing. “To say all in the first volume, yet have two more to write—and nothing before you but that aforesaid sheet of clean paper, and no inspiration in the poor goose-quill, Mrs Burtonshaw—only a reminiscence of its primitive possessor—that is a state of things which we poor scribblers have to deplore every day.”

“You write with quills, then, Mr Vivian?” said Aunt Burtonshaw. “I always call your gold pens and your steel pens disagreeable things, Maria Anna, and here Mr Vivian is of my opinion. Is it not very hard now

to put such distresses upon people as you do in your books? I should think one trouble at a time was very good measure for *me*; but one after another, how you do pile them upon that poor dear in the book that Mary made me read to-day."

"I should think one trouble quite over measure for you; I should certainly vote you none at all of that disagreeable commodity, if I had any voice in the matter," said Percy, smiling and bowing to Mrs Burtonshaw, all unconscious that he himself was a fruitful source of disturbance to his kindly critic; "but life and Providence have another deliverance to make on the matter," continued the young man, his eyes flashing from gay to grave: "in our reflected world we must dispense as Heaven dispenses, and Heaven has no terror of such words as inconsistency or extravagance. 'When sorrows come, they come, not single spies, but in battalions.' There is that knave Shakespeare," said Percy, brightening once more into his former tone, "who wrote plays, and has been accused of poaching;—who gave him any right, I wonder, to be the next truest after the apostles and prophets in his knowledge of man?"

"You must excuse my sister—Mrs Burtonshaw has very homely ideas," said Mrs Cumberland. "Tell me, my dear Mr Vivian, that sweet Lucy in your book—did you not quite love her yourself before you were done?"

Percy laughed, yet was so unsophisticated as to blush too all over the puckers of his forehead. "Is she such a sweet Lucy?" said Percy; "the young lady did not strike me much; but since you recommend her, Mrs Cumberland, I will consider her claims again."

"Mansfield puts all his book down out of his journals—isn't that the truest way—eh?" said Sylvo from behind his mustache.

"Mr Mansfield's book is only adventure, Sylvo," said Mary, with a little indignation.

"Well, adventure's the thing, isn't it?" said Sylvo, who, in the strength of Mr Vivian's smile, kept his place.

"Adventure is the thing," said Percy solemnly; "and by far the truest way is to put down one's book out of one's journal; there can be no doubt of that. Mr Mansfield lived his book before he wrote it; that is the true charm of success."

"Ah, Mr Vivian, you give us a rare principle to judge you by," said Mrs Cumberland, with a sigh of sympathy and admiration. "What a life yours must have been; how full of love and emotion, of passion and sorrow, before you could have written as you have done!"

Once more Percy Vivian blushed uneasily, and through this blush there struggled a laugh of irre-

strainable but somewhat annoyed self-ridicule. "Pray, Mrs Cumberland, do not make me the hero of these stupid books," he said, with comical distress. "My own life is the last thing I shall write novels about, and I should find it an extremely barren subject; no, we will do it in spasmodic poetry;—that's the medium for remorse and horrors, the true vehicle for autobiography, Mrs Burtonshaw," said Percy with solemnity, once more returning to his first questioner.

"You speak of remorse and horrors," said that lady, looking apprehensively at this dangerous neighbour of hers; "and I found a book lately, I am sorry to say, upon that very table—is it possible, Mr Vivian—can you be *that* T. Percy Jones?"

"No, upon my honour," said Percy Vivian, taking care to restrain the laughter which made Mary Cumberland's blue eyes dance for the first time this evening. "No, I am not that redoubtable incognito—there's your man now, who puts down his book out of his journal—a tragedy in his own person, a walking fate with inexorable shears; but I plead not guilty. I am a Percy, but I am not the genuine Hotspur—this is not me!"

"There's somebody ill in the kitchen, Maria Anna," said Mr Cumberland, entering hurriedly; "some fool of a girl who has been trying experiments on my galvanic machine. I gave her another shock to set her right,

but she wants some of your doctoring, sister Burtonshaw. Know anything of galvanism, Mr Vivian?—a beautiful influence, sir—a beautiful influence—though startling a little when you come upon it unawares. I've a great mind to propose a new system for the prevention of robberies in houses—connect the doors and windows with so many wires from a galvanic battery. Step this way a moment, and you shall see. I defy the bravest housebreaker in Christendom to go beyond the electric string."

But almost while Mr Cumberland speaks, and while Mrs Burtonshaw bustles away to minister to the hapless victim of curiosity in the kitchen, Mr Vivian has managed, in the course of conversation, to glide outside the opened window, and stands there in conversation with Mary Cumberland; she, somewhat shy and timid, with eyes once more dazzled and a cheek of varying colour, stands within. Mr Vivian is looking in with his wayward brilliant glances into the deep alcove of this lighted room, and again his eyes fall upon the beautiful face of Zaidee reading by the table. It is his book she is reading, but the young poet has far too strong and youthful a spring of life within him to confine himself to his own books; he heeds nothing what the volume is, but he wonders over her beautiful face. "Your beautiful sister Elizabeth is strangely like my beautiful sister Elizabeth," he says to Mary

abruptly; "I almost think I can go back ten years, and that it is our own sweet Lizzy I am looking at, before Bernard Morton came with his dark face to carry her away. We were all very proud of our Elizabeth, and every time I look at your sister, every word and look reminds me more and more of her—very strange!"

CHAPTER XI.

MISUNDERSTANDING.

“MR VIVIAN says that he and I have each a beautiful sister, Elizabeth, and they are very like each other—he thinks it quite strange,” said Mary.

She was standing with her arm folded tightly round Zaidee’s waist, holding her before the mirror; the mirror gave a dim reflection of the great room half lighted, of a morsel of blue sky, and “a little lot of stars” looking through the window; of the chairs standing about in disorder where everybody had left them, and of only those two figures and no more within the room. Mary, with a good deal of resolution, and a colour which varied rapidly from these sudden flushes of crimson to the whitest paleness, held Zaidee closely with her arm. Zaidee, in much astonishment, with even a slight degree of fear, resisted this grasp a little, and looked, not into the mirror, but into her friend’s face. She did not know what to make of Mary’s

singular demeanour, nor why they two should be here alone together, when every one else had gone to rest. But at this speech Zaidee started—she could not but be startled—*she* was like her cousin Elizabeth, her beautiful cousin; she, poor little brown Zaidee, was like the pride of the Grange, the flower of all the country round! Unsuspicious of evil, Zaidee did not know how Mary Cumberland watched her face, and misinterpreted the rising flush of gratification and family pride—for she could not restrain her secret and innocent pleasure in being thought like Elizabeth. This pure natural emotion came to her eyes with a sweet, surprised, and almost tearful gladness, and with a flush of delicate colour to her cheek. Mary looked at her steadily, and almost sternly; Mary held her fast with the strong grasp of her arm. Secure in her good resolution, in pride at once, and in friendship, of sacrificing herself, Mary could see no harm in severely interrogating Zaidee. She would yield up to her the early dream which had just begun to gild and to brighten her own life; but she would not yield up the authority of a senior, the superiority of a patroness, and Mary was harsh and imperious in the sadness of her thoughts.

“Speak to me just once, Elizabeth. Look at yourself; will you not do as I tell you? Do you think you are beautiful? Do you think, like Mr Vivian

and all the rest of them, that there is scarcely any one so beautiful as you?"

"No," said Zaidee, looking up eagerly. "Mary, I have made you angry—do you think I am vain? I do not think it; but indeed I never thought of this at all till they spoke something about me the day Aunt Burtonshaw came home."

"They! who were they?" asked Mary.

"It was—Aunt Burtonshaw." Zaidee faltered a little, and turned half away from the arm that held her. She would rather not have said any more.

"Aunt Burtonshaw is not *they*," said Mary, with her merciless logic. "Who was the other? or others, perhaps, I should say, Elizabeth—for a great many people admire my beautiful sister; who were they?"

"I do not know what harm you think of me," said Zaidee, roused at last, and growing pale as she turned her shining dark eyes on Mary's face. "This word 'beauty' was twice mentioned to me that day; Aunt Burtonshaw said it, and so did Sylvo. I had never thought of it before, and did not think of it then—I do not think of it now," and Zaidee lifted a glance of brave defiance at the mirror. "I may be like Mr Vivian's beautiful sister, and not be beautiful; but however that is, I am as God made me: if He sends one thing or another, I have nothing to say, Mary—it is God, it is not me."

“Look in the glass, Elizabeth,” said Mary Cumberland.

Zaidee looked up ; her face was pale, her eyes a little dilated, her hair falling down upon her slender stately neck. She was more beautiful than Mary had ever seen her. While Zaidee met the sorrowful startled gaze of her own eyes, Mary looked at her in the mirror with an intent and steady look, owning in the depths of her heart, and against her will, the magic influence which broke forth from the “Why” of logic, with contemptuous triumph. Why admire this form of feature, this shade of complexion?—why be charmed with this face more than with any other? Mary could not answer the question ; but she could not look at that beautiful reflection in the mirror, at the grieved and tearful look, the silent wonder, the patience, and the innocence of evil which shone upon her in those wonderful eyes, and remain unmoved. She suddenly bent down as she stood thus, and gave a cold but yet tender kiss to Zaidee’s brow—loosened her grasp of her, and with a sigh of weariness held out her hand, and said, Good night. Zaidee followed her slowly up the silent echoing stairs. Those two young figures, each so young and so fair in their differing degrees and kinds of beauty, each carrying a light in her hand, went up the broad staircase, one after the other, like vestals in a procession. When

they had parted, and found shelter in their separate apartments, poor Mary Cumberland, disturbed with evil thoughts, with mortified and jealous pride, and with a bitter fear that in heedless prodigality she had thrown away her heart, sat gloomily at her table for a moment, and then rose to pace about the room in hasty wanderings. She had not been reasonable or prudent, as the whole scope of her previous life had been. She had suffered a fanciful and unfounded liking to creep close to her heart, and now Mary was sadly conscious that evil spirits had come into it malice and envy, and all uncharitableness. She had no human guide to appeal to for counsel, and Mary had not Zaidee's early training; nor, in spite of Zaidee's long influence upon her, did this more stubborn spirit dare to have recourse to Heaven when earth was incompetent, as her companion did. She only said her prayers as usual that night; she did not pour out her heart, which was sorely rent and wounded; and so went sullen and uncomfortable to a rest which was broken with dreams and starts of wakeful loneliness; for Mary's heart was sore within her, and sore with a gnawing, cankering pain.

Zaidee, who was deeply distressed, bewildered, and wondering, fared better, for neither malice nor envy had found a place in her maiden thoughts. She could not understand Mary, but was glad to forget

this strange conduct of hers in a burst of pleasant wonder over what she said. Zaidee came to her toilet-glass, and looked into it shyly. "Am I indeed like Elizabeth?—like Elizabeth!" said Zaidee. And as she looked upon herself with her eyes thus enlightened, she discovered the resemblance. It filled her with the purest simple delight; it was a new visionary trace of this mysterious link of blood, a confirmation of her title to be Zaidee Vivian still—a sign of the family name, and lofty long descent, secretly marked upon her brow. It was not the beauty which Zaidee rejoiced over in her solitude. She was like Elizabeth, who was the present representative of all those lovely Vivians of many generations, whose sweet looks had embellished the name. Her very face was her charter of family right and kindred. She could not sufficiently rejoice at this; and as she sat down to think over Percy's visit, she remembered her cousin with yet a kinder heart.

Yes, this Percy was *our* Percy, and Zaidee's heart warmed to him like a sister's, and rejoiced in his fame; but she began to think of Philip, who was not famous—Philip, who, though the head of the house, would only be "Mr Vivian's brother" in the world which made an idol of Mr Vivian; and Zaidee began to think, looking back upon her young experience, that she had never seen any one like the Head of the

House—never another who came near to her ideal of manhood—so simple, so noble, so full of truth and honour. Percy was a poet and a genius, but he was not Philip; yet, perhaps, Philip was not half so brilliant as Percy, and certainly was not known to the world like his younger brother. With a woman's pride she regarded the family hero; but, looking back with her child's imagination, she thought she could put her hand in Philip's hand, and suffer him to lead her over the world.

These two friends woke in the morning to look with a little dismay on the proceedings of the night. Mary, who was guilty and self-humiliated, carried matters with a high hand. She came down, resolved to have a condescending conversation with her "beautiful sister," and speak to her of Mr Vivian—to be so entirely self-restrained and decorous that Zaidee should think the harshness of last night only a dream—and to follow up her mother's counsel so warmly that the poor girl should be ashamed to meet Mr Vivian again. All this Mary resolved to do, because she felt herself in the wrong, and with natural perversity persisted in it, though her heart longed to be set right. Zaidee, on the contrary, was very humble, and full of anxious solicitude. She had no weight on her conscience. She could afford to make overtures of kindness, and little sisterly submissions, to win the offender. She,

who had not harmed her companion either in deed or thought, anxiously sought Mary's eye and Mary's hand, and watched for a return of cordiality—such a silent reconciliation as that which brought Mary to her side the previous day, in the journey from the dining-room to the drawing-room. Looking out from behind the grate of misunderstanding and wounded pride which imprisoned it, Mary's frank and candid natural heart looked on and observed all this ; but Mary was not delivered from her "black dog," her evil spirit ; she had something more to undergo to work a thorough cure.

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CHAPTER XII.

ECONOMY.

“ I DO not know what this dish may be called, Maria Anna, but I know it is Mr Cumberland’s cookery,” said Mrs Burtonshaw at the breakfast-table, looking suspiciously over the coffee-pot from her presiding chair. “ I can recommend the fresh new-laid eggs : the shell is as pure as cream, you see, Sylvo—but I really will not undertake to say what Mr Cumberland’s dish may be.”

“ An adaptation of the ancient machine called Papin’s digester, sister Burtonshaw,” said Mr Cumberland briskly, “ with our modern means and appliances, will be an infinite benefit to every family by-and-by. The digester is the very impersonation of thrift, sister Elizabeth—pure economy, I assure you. What do you suppose this is made of, now ? Why, a couple of fowls are in it, every morsel, yet I defy you to find a bone. The action of heat is a marvellous thing when properly applied. Take a chicken now, in the ordi-

nary way of cooking. I grant you it may be valuable as a lesson in anatomy, but it's poor picking for a dinner ; whereas, here is the richest savoury jelly in the world, the result of a little care and trouble. Ignorance manures its land with bones, Sylvo. We shall have all England getting fat upon them when my machine is properly known."

"A couple of fowls ! and you call *that* economy ?" cried Mrs Burtonshaw in dismay. "When poor Roberts, the cook, told me she had got a pair of fat capons for Mr Cumberland, did I think that was what the poor birds were to come to ? Economy ! a tea-cupful of potted stuff out of two beautiful capons ! Do you mean to ruin yourself, Mr Cumberland ? and Maria Anna to give in to you !"

"Pure prejudice, sister Burtonshaw. Women are the most bigoted of conservatives," said the philosopher, with his chuckle of laughter. "You may innovate as you will in other spheres, but touch their privileged department, and there is no quarter for you. But the sacred institution of the kitchen must bow to science, my good sister. Wait till I have proved the powers of my digester on the larger-boned animals. Wait till I present the English peasant with such a delicacy as this, made of the beef-bone which your ignorance would throw to your dogs, Sylvo, my boy. I look for a testimonial of national gratitude by

that time, sister Elizabeth. My digester is a long way improved from Papin's, I assure you. That was incomplete—decidedly incomplete; that is why it failed to make a revolution in our cookery two hundred years ago.”

“ I am sure I thought I had given up being surprised at anything,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, with a sigh of resignation. “ But I am sorry for Roberts—I confess I am sorry for Roberts, poor thing; to see such destruction before her very eyes. I suppose it would be all the same to you, Maria Anna, if Mr Cumberland were making jelly of the trees !”

“ That is a suggestion to be considered, sister Elizabeth,” said Mr Cumberland. “ The vegetable juices and the animal are considerably different, you see, but worth an experiment—decidedly worth an experiment—and of singular utility, too, if it should happen to be practicable. Your mother has invention, Sylvo,” said the philosopher, taking a memorandum on his tablets of this valuable suggestion. “ I might have talked a month, I assure you, to these girls and to Maria Anna, without the ghost of an idea from one of them.”

Mrs Burtonshaw's indignation was too great to be softened by this compliment. “ If breakfast is over, I will go to the drawing-room,” said Mrs Burtonshaw solemnly; “ and I think, Mary and Elizabeth, you

will be a great deal better doing something than sitting here."

They followed her one by one as she took her way to this favourite apartment. It was Zaidee's turn to-day to seek the solace of needlework. Mary, too restless for this thoughtful occupation, seated herself on the marble step outside the window, with a book on her lap. Zaidee sat sewing within. Sylvo lounged about the room, not knowing what to do with himself, and much inclined to set out again without delay for his "place." It was he, poor fellow, in innocent vacancy, who propounded the *questio vexata*, the tabooed subject of the morning, by declaring his opinion that Mr Vivian was a "regular good fellow—none of your die-away men—a fellow that was up to everything."

When Sylvo took himself away after this enlightened estimate of character, Mary turned from gazing at the river. "Speaking of Mr Vivian," said Mary with the voice of elderly experience, addressing Zaidee, "I forgot to mention to you that I overheard what mamma said to you one day before he came here. It was about encouraging him, you know, if he should think of paying his addresses to you. Now, of course, as he admires you so much, that is quite likely, Elizabeth," said Mary, with dry lips and a forced smile; "and I hope you will not let any foolish

scruples weigh with you, but will guide your conduct by mamma's advice. I quite agree with her; it would be an admirable match—'Beauty and genius, you know.'" And Mary sang, with scornful levity, the burden of the ballad, "Be honoured aye the bravest knight, beloved the fairest fair."

"Mary," said Zaidee earnestly, "I do not know why it is that I am so much pained to hear you speaking so. I suppose it is no harm to speak so; it is two strangers talking to each other; it is not you and me. But I have grown a woman," said Zaidee, raising her head with the simplicity of a child, "and there are some things which must not be said to me. No one must tell me to encourage Mr Vivian; no one must talk to me of paying addresses. I cannot bear it, indeed, and I must not," continued Zaidee, warming into strange decision. "If I am like Mr Vivian's sister, he is like some one whom I knew when I was a child. If it were not so, I should be ashamed to see Mr Vivian again; but now I should be glad to be friends with him, if he pleased. I was very proud and very glad to see him here with you last night; and I think I will try not to be affronted, nor shut myself up when he comes. But there is to be no more of addresses, if you please. I am sure I should quite as soon think of paying my addresses to Mr Vivian as he to me."

Mary Cumberland, with her book lying open on her lap, followed the motion of Zaidee's lips, and her slight unconscious gestures, with the extremest astonishment. Mary felt the ground suddenly taken from beneath her feet. She was entirely disconcerted and thrown back upon herself by this simple decision — by the words which, spoken with so little pretension, had yet all the authority which words could have coming from the lips of a queen. Her own scornful satire and uncharitable mood were thrown far into the distance. Zaidee, resenting nothing, but only putting an end to it, passed by like a young princess, and left Mary far behind her in the way. Their position was reversed in a moment; Mary's scornful and unkindly advice was quite thrown out of court: it returned upon herself with double mortification and annoyance. She felt so guilty that she attempted no answer, but only said "Oh," with a last attempt at superiority, and, leaving the window, wandered down the lawn, as ill at ease as it was possible to be, to take her place under the falling blossoms of the acacia, and consume her heart with bootless vexation and shame.

Meanwhile Zaidee, grieved and silent, sat at her work alone. Mr Vivian had thrown a great gulf between these girlish intimates, the friends of many years. It was the first indication of that maturer life

in which their hearts could no longer dwell together, and their young existence run on in one common stream. To the trusting and simple heart of Zaidee it was a very harsh disjunction—a rending asunder causeless and cruel. If Mr Vivian had not been “our Percy,” Mary must have incurred for him the positive dislike of her “beautiful sister.” As it was, Zaidee only thought of him with the kindest thoughts.

“I am going to town, to call on Mr Vivian’s sister,” said Mrs Cumberland, the same day; “he was so good as to ask me, Mary, my love; and you may be sure I shall be only too happy to show some attention to Mrs Morton. I think you should both come with me, you young ladies; you are neither of you in great spirits, I perceive, this morning. Ah, I can make allowance for youthful feelings, my sweet Elizabeth; and Mary’s gravity, with so many things to consider—the crisis of her life—is equally excusable. Go and get your bonnets, my dear children; the drive will refresh us all to-day.”

They went to do her bidding silently; Mary contracting her brow and setting her pretty teeth together in the very impatience of passion, as she heard her own circumstances—“the crisis of her life”—thus alluded to. For the first time Mary shed bitter tears when she had reached her own apartment, and concealed herself and her secret heartbreak within its

closed door. "They give me to Sylvo without a thought ; this is all the care they have for their daughter," cried Mary, with unrestrainable complaint ; "and Elizabeth, Elizabeth ! the sunshine of this life is all for her, and there is only Sylvo for me !"

The tears poured down heavily over Mary's cheeks ; it *was* the crisis of her life, though Mrs Cumberland wot not of it. With a hasty motion she went to the darkest corner of the room, and, hid by the curtains of her bed, bent her knee. They were waiting for her down stairs in wonder—Mary's toilet was seldom such a lengthy operation—but the floodgates of her heart were opened, and all her emotions, good and evil, were pouring forth in a deluge. She forgot everything except her own guiltiness, and the relief and ease it was to unburden herself—to confess and empty all her heart. When she rose from her knees she had to bathe her face, so many traces of tears were on it. "Now, I will be good," said Mary, with a smile which was bright and childlike, though it was tearful ; and she tied on her bonnet with trembling hands, and went down to the little party that waited for her. The day was a brilliant one, fresh and sweet, and the river flashed gaily in the sunshine. After that preparation Mary's heart was open to be refreshed by the cheerful shining of the universal light.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VISIT.

MRS CUMBERLAND, reclining back in her comfortable corner, as they pursued their way to town, had given herself up to "languor," or to thought. Her young companions were very silent both of them; for Mary did not find it suitable to disperse her better thoughts by talking of them, and Zaidee was full of silent anticipation, timidity, and longing. She was safe in her changed looks and name—she had come through the scrutiny of Percy, and remained undiscovered; and though she trembled a little with eagerness and anxious interest, she was not afraid of Elizabeth. Elizabeth! Elizabeth had been the idol of Zaidee's childish fancy, as of every other member of the family of the Grange; her wonderful beauty, her simplicity, the humbleness of her perfect womanhood, had given her a magical sway over all these fresh young hearts. Perhaps there was not one of them but had a wider range and a stronger impulse

of life than she had, but within her own boundary there was a perfection and sweet repose in the mind of Elizabeth which every one was soothed and strengthened by. Her young cousin's thoughts dwelt upon her image in the past—wondered how far Mrs Bernard Morton might prove different from Elizabeth Vivian—marvelled at her own resemblance to her. There was no lack of occupation for Zaidee's mind and memory as they drove towards town.

And Captain Bernard was a member of Parliament, one of the legislators of the country—a man stepping forward to the sober precincts of middle age. They lived in a little house near the Parks, of which the fashion was more satisfactory than the size. When Mrs Cumberland and her young companions entered the small drawing-room, the first person who met their eyes was Mr Vivian, with a rosy boy seated astride on his shoulders, holding his wavy hair for a bridle. Percy was flushed with the canter at which he had been carrying this small equestrian round the very limited circle of the apartment, and was, moreover, being called back by two small nieces at the window, who referred some dispute to Uncle Percy. A little girl of five years old sat on a footstool close by her mother, looking at a childish picture-book with an air of childish abstraction and thoughtfulness, and Mrs Morton herself rose to meet her visitors as they

entered. Mary Cumberland's quick eye, guided by what Percy had said, made an instant comparison between these two faces, which were said to resemble each other. It was indeed very strange. Mrs Morton's expanded and matronly beauty was in the fulness of its bloom. Zaidee had still the shelter and the sweetness of the bud, coy and half-disclosed ; and there were individual differences marked and visible—but the resemblance was enough to bewilder the looker-on. It seemed the same face in different circumstances and linked to different spirits—the same, and yet another—something cast from the same mould, yet strangely diversified by a change of material. It was a very remarkable resemblance—quite enough to account for Percy's wondering looks and interest in the beautiful sister who was so like his own.

Zaidee, on her part, after her first recognition of Elizabeth—the eager glance from under her eyelids, which showed how little her beautiful cousin was changed—was completely engrossed by the children, those wonderful little unknown existences of whom she had never dreamed. In Zaidee's thoughts life had stood still with the family at the Grange ; her fancy consented indeed to Elizabeth's marriage and to Percy's fame, but her mind had gone no further ; and this rosy boy and these pretty girls burst upon her

like a revelation : she could not withdraw her eyes from these new children—these members of the family for whom she was totally unprepared. She had been the youngest herself at home in the old days, and she was conscious of an amusing rivalry with this intrusive new generation. Perhaps they were not the only ones ; perhaps there were other children besides these claiming an interest in the Grange ; and Zaidee shyly took a seat in a corner with comical dismay.

“No, Philip, my boy, no more rides,” said Percy, setting down his little cavalier. “Go and make your obeisance, you small rebel, and apologise for the use you have put your respectable uncle to. I am better than any pony, and half as good as an Arab, in Philip’s apprehension, Mrs Cumberland. The children estimate my powers very highly, I am glad to say—I am quite invaluable to them.”

“Genius unbending—Genius in its sportive mood,” said Mrs Cumberland. “You are so fortunate, my dear Mrs Morton ; I envy you the constant society of one so richly endowed.”

“Do you mean Percy ?” said Elizabeth Vivian with a smile. She was very proud of her younger brother, but he was her younger brother still, and she smiled a little at these commendations, though she liked the speaker all the better for them.

“Elizabeth is my *elder* sister, Miss Cumberland,”

said Percy, coming confidentially and with a little embarrassment to Mary's side—"Elizabeth is the ideal of domestic superiority for her brothers, at least. I cannot quite swallow applause in Elizabeth's presence; I have always a ludicrous sense of its inappropriateness. Mrs Cumberland is very kind, no doubt, but I would much rather she forgot those unfortunate books in presence of Elizabeth."

"Is she not proud of them, then?" asked Mary, with a glance of wonder.

"You defeat me, Miss Cumberland; you kill the precious blossoms of my humility," said Percy, but still in an under-tone; "how shall I refuse to be applauded, think you, when you intoxicate me after this barbarous fashion? Yes, Elizabeth likes very well to hear of them; and I have a home in the country, too, where I should like to show you how fiercely the feminine jury pronounce on the demerits of any hapless critic who falls upon Percy. Yes, that bubble reputation—they have real enjoyment of it, those good people in Cheshire. Do you know I should like you to see the Grange?"

Mary stammered something of being very glad; it took her by surprise to be so addressed.

"Yes: yet I am by no means sure that you would be pleased with it," said Percy, with one of his dubious glances; "our country is too bleak, and our climate

too boisterous for your fancy. I think I should succeed better in flowery Hampshire, or sweet Devon, in pleasing you. What do you think? Do I guess your taste? Sweet English calm and comfort, with the winds and the storms far away?"

"I have very common tastes," said Mary, shy of this conversation. "Does not every one prefer calm and comfort to the winds and the storms?"

"I do at least," said Percy; "I am of the Epicurean temper. My brother is of a different frame; the Cheshire gales are sweeter than Araby to him. Yet, poor fellow, he toils by the burning banks of the Ganges, and does kind things for everybody, and never thinks of himself. I am a very poor fellow to have such friends. A man who is brother to Philip Vivian and Elizabeth ought to be a better man."

The young listener to whom he was thus unbosoming himself looked up at Percy with shy glances and a swelling heart. More than all the self-assertion in the world, this compunction endeared him to Mary. She could not continue to close her heart, as she had vowed to do this morning. Involuntarily she smiled, wondering within herself at the humility which fancied some small Cheshire squire or Indian merchant, or this Mrs Morton, who was only the beautiful young wife of a middle-aged member of Parliament, superior to Percy Vivian, poet, author, man of letters. Litera-

ture had suddenly become the noblest of all professions to Mary—fame, the most dazzling of human possessions. She smiled at her hero's humility; it never entered into her head for an instant that Percy could be right.

But some one else was listening by her, with such a flush of interest and anxiety as scarcely could be controlled. Yes, Percy was right; but Zaidee was proud he had the nobleness to own this superior excellence; and Philip—why was Philip in India? What had the Squire of Briarford to do on the banks of the Ganges? What did this mean? It might betray her, but she could not restrain the question that came to her anxious lips. Percy had changed his position a little, and stood between them now. He was near enough to be addressed.

“What did your brother go to India for?” asked Zaidee, looking up with her old wistfulness.

Mr Vivian looked extremely astonished, and so did Mary Cumberland. Their amazement made no difference in the anxious curiosity of the questioner.

“We are not the richest family in the world,” said Percy, with a smile. “Philip is about a very commonplace business; he is making a fortune.”

But why did he need to make a fortune? The question was on Zaidee's lips; but she had prudence enough to restrain it. Her face grew troubled; her

heart was full of yearning curiosity. Why did Philip go away? She could not form an answer for herself.

“Zaidee, you must go up-stairs with Philip,” said the sweet voice of Elizabeth. With a start of terror Zaidee listened; but saw that it was the little studious girl with the picture-book, and not her changed and unknown self, who was addressed. This was almost too much for Zaidee’s forced composure. She felt her heart leaping to her throat; her face flushed and paled with extreme emotion; she could scarcely keep the voice of her yearning silent. Zaidee!—they had not forgotten her; they had commemorated even her name.

“What a sweet name!—what a strange unusual name!” cried Mrs Cumberland; “one may trace the poet’s suggestion there, I am sure.”

“No, indeed,” said Elizabeth seriously, yet with a smile; “my Zaidee is named for a dear child we lost from the Grange in a very extraordinary way—a little cousin, an orphan, who was very dear to us all. My little Zaidee is a great favourite at home for her name’s sake. Even Percy there, who has a hundred nick-names for everybody, is too tender of this name to mock at it. Our first Zaidee—our lost child—we had each of us a different contraction for her strange name; but no one likes to say Zay now—not even Sophy. We cannot play with poor Zaidee’s name.”

There was a little pause which no one interrupted,

and then Mrs Cumberland rose to take leave. Zaidee never knew how she reached the foot of that narrow staircase. She stumbled down the steps with a blindness upon her eyes, and a strange joy of grief about her heart. They remembered her—cared for—kept her name among them—in the family! But what misfortune was it which had driven Philip away?

CHAPTER XIV.

HEAVINESS.

THE excitement of these discoveries was almost too much for Zaidee ; her secret life—her secret world—her uncommunicated thoughts, pressed upon her heart like a nightmare. When she had only the past to look back upon, she could muse over it in quiet ; but here was the present, the living to-day, full of a world of surprises and undreamt-of chances, which her veiled and unknown existence must take no cognisance of, though they were nearest to her heart. It was to Zaidee as it might be to a spirit returned to the earth ; she walked side by side with those who mourned for her, sat at their table, heard them speaking of herself, yet durst not reveal herself to their lingering tenderness, or make known to them the heart which glowed with answering affection. She walked in a dream the live-long day, her inner life differing so strangely from her external one—as strangely as Elizabeth Cumberland, the beautiful

daughter of these kind people, differed from brown Zaidee Vivian, the heiress of the Grange. They saw her beauty pale, and her mind become preoccupied, and Mrs Cumberland "made allowance for youthful feelings;" and Mary, struck with penitence for her own conduct, made effort upon effort to win back the confidence she fancied she had alienated, and wondered with an anxious heart what Percy Vivian might have to do with this musing heaviness. Percy had a great deal to do with it, but not as Mary supposed; and now, when Percy came and went about the house perpetually, Mary was no longer excited with causeless doubts. That the young man felt a singular interest in her beautiful sister was sufficiently apparent—that he followed Zaidee's looks and movements with a wondering regard, for which he himself could not account;—but something else was still more evident, and still more satisfactory. Percy did not worship at the feet of this more lofty and poetic beauty; he brought his homage to the sunny eyes, the lighter heart, and less fanciful spirit of Mary Cumberland; he had only interest and admiration to bestow upon her beautiful sister Elizabeth. And never yet, though they were come to be on very confidential terms, had Percy the slightest opening for inquiry—the slightest reason to suspect that this beautiful Elizabeth was not the child of the house.

In other respects than this, the household was slightly jarring and uncomfortable. Mrs Burtonshaw did not have her son's claims acknowledged as they should have been; the good lady found everybody around her, and herself not less than everybody, unexpectedly fascinated with *this* Mr Percy Vivian, and she did not doubt that the young author would carry off Mary from under her very eyes, and amid the plaudits of Sylvo. Sylvo still looked with delight on Mr Vivian's high-stepping horse, and admired the dashing style in which Mr Vivian drew up at Mr Cumberland's gate. Sylvo never suspected when his new friend laughed at him—never grew suspicious of the solemn assent which Mr Vivian gave to his brilliant suggestions; and he had not the slightest objection to the new-comer's devotion to Mary, nor grumbled that her ear was engrossed and her attention occupied night after night. Mr Cumberland and Mrs Cumberland were equally indifferent; all the discretion in the house was embodied in the person of Mrs Burtonshaw, and even her remonstrances and representations failed to open the eyes of this careless father and mother to the danger of their child.

“I wanted very much to have a little girl myself when Sylvo was born,” said Mrs Burtonshaw solemnly; “but when I found that I had got a big boy, and when by-and-by the little girl came to Maria Anna, of

course I very soon came to a decision, my love. I set my heart upon it when you were in your cradle, Mary. I said to myself, 'Here is my Sylvo now ; he shall wait for his little cousin. He is a good boy ; he will be guided by his mother, and I shall take care never to lose sight of this sweet little darling till she is my Sylvo's wife.' I have never lost sight of you, Mary, my dear child, and you could not be so cruel as to break my heart now."

"No, indeed, Aunt Burtonshaw," said Mary, laughing and blushing ; "but why should you break your heart ? Sylvo's heart would not break, I am sure, if I were to run away to-morrow, and I belong to you now as much as Sylvo does. Why should the poor boy have a wife ? He does not want a wife ; he would much rather be left to his travels and Mr Mansfield."

"That is the very thing I am afraid of," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "Why, Mary, my love, if it is not soon, Sylvo will go away."

"Dear Aunt Burtonshaw, it must not be soon," said Mary, growing red and serious ; "and indeed you must not speak of it again. Poor Sylvo, he deserves better than to have me laughing at him, and you speaking as if he were a child. You should hear what Elizabeth says."

"What does Elizabeth say ?" asked Mrs Burtonshaw, with great curiosity.

Zaidee had to be recalled from her own thoughts by a repetition of the question before she heard it. "I only say that Sylvo is very good and very kind, and ought to have some one who cares for him," said Zaidee, dismissing the subject quietly. It was more important to Aunt Burtonshaw than it was to Zaidee. She looked from one to the other with a new light thrown on her thoughts. "Mary does not care for Sylvo ; Elizabeth does," said Aunt Burtonshaw within herself. She was quite excited with her imagined discovery. She recalled the paleness, the abstraction, the many silent thoughts and hours of musing, which had slightly separated Zaidee from the family. Looking back, she found that these unquestionable tokens of "falling in love" had all made their appearance since Sylvo came to Twickenham. She could scarcely refrain from going at once to this pensive young martyr of a secret attachment, and caressing her into hope and cheerfulness. "I am sure Sylvo will be a happy man," said Mrs Burtonshaw with a little emphasis. Alas ! Sylvo was so unimportant a person in the eyes of those ungrateful young ladies, that neither of them observed how emphatic his mother's words were ; but Mrs Burtonshaw's own thoughts did not let the matter rest. She resolved that the "poor dear" should not pine in vain for Sylvo. She resolved that Sylvo's hopes should change their direction with-

out delay. Mary, indeed, had been destined for him from the cradle, but Elizabeth was certainly the next best when Mary did not care for him ; and then such a beauty ! Mrs Burtonshaw—a wise woman—finding that she could not have exactly what she would, instantly burst into delight with the substitute which she could have. She did not love Mary less, but she loved Elizabeth more. She abounded in caresses and in delicate allusions to her dear child's "feelings." Poor Zaidee had no mercy shown to her on one side or the other. Perfectly guiltless of "falling in love" as she was, she was concluded to be over head and ears in it by both parties in the house. Mrs Cumberland pathetically assured the wondering Zaidee. "Ah, my love, I know woman's heart." And Mrs Burtonshaw, with equal tenderness, said, "Come with me, my darling, and look for Sylvo." There was no refuge for her between the two ; she must either be smitten with the charms of Sylvester, or bound to Mr Vivian's chariot-wheels. Mary, who sometimes was a little troubled, fearing for the last of these misfortunes, had a wicked delight in the absurdity of the former one. She increased Aunt Burtonshaw's delusion with the greatest glee. Mary's conscience was clear now of all her own misbehaviour. She was once more Zaidee's most loving sister, and Zaidee had forgiven and forgotten her evil manners. Mary was in the highest

spirits, without a drawback upon her happiness, except the fear which sometimes glanced across her, that her companion really had an unfortunate liking for Mr Vivian. This, however, was too transitory, and had too slight a foundation to give any permanent trouble to her mind; and Mary was in the highest flow of her naturally happy disposition, and gave herself full scope. Aunt Burtonshaw's delusion grew more and more complete under her exertions. "I only trust you may be as happy yourself, my dear love," said Aunt Burtonshaw, "and then I will be content."

Meanwhile Zaidee wandered on through that other world of hers, of which they were all ignorant. Mrs Bernard Morton came to Twickenham to return Mrs Cumberland's visit. Mr Percy Vivian came almost every day. She heard them speak the names familiar to her—she listened to the family allusions now and then made by the brother and sister, which she alone understood in this company of strangers. Mrs Morton wondered why the beautiful Miss Cumberland would stay so pertinaciously in her corner, and Percy began to fancy that those sweet lips, which never opened, had really nothing to say. "She is very unlike the other members of the family," Elizabeth Vivian said; and they both felt so strange an interest in her—so much curiosity—that she puzzled their observation

exceedingly. Quite unconscious that any one remarked her, perfectly unaware of the interpretations given to her abstraction, Zaidee went upon her silent way. The secrecy which, when it concerned the past alone, was no burden to her, oppressed her now like a thundery and sultry atmosphere. The flush of secret excitement varied her paleness with a feverish hectic, her sweet composure was disturbed and broken, and all her life seemed subsidiary to those moments of intense and eager interest in which she sat listening to Elizabeth and Percy in their involuntary references to their home.

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW THOUGHT.

“THE use of ornament is to make us happy.” Mr Cumberland laid down his book, and looked around the room. “This is an extremely commonplace apartment, Maria Anna—the house altogether is the most prosaic affair in the world, sister Burtonshaw. Who could be happier, now, passing up or down the river, for the sight of such a house as this?”

“The house is a very comfortable house, Mr Cumberland,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “I do not see, for my part, what we have to do with the people in the steamboats, whether it makes them happy or not.”

“These are the degenerate ideas which belong to this age, sister Burtonshaw,” said the philosopher. “Do you mean to say that I discharge my duty to the commonwealth when I build a square box, and congratulate myself that it is comfortable? I do not see that the world, in general, has any concern with my

comfort. To the mass of people this is quite an indifferent subject, sister Elizabeth; but everybody knows the difference between an ugly house and a graceful one. Where does nature tolerate such angles as these four corners? and what are all her graceful curves and rounded outlines for, but that we should enjoy them? There is the line of a mountain, now, in this admirable book, and there is the line of a leaf; look at them, sister Burtonshaw, and then look at this square block of brick and mortar. The thing is a monster—it is at discord with everything.”

“So you will build a house shaped like a mountain, Mr Cumberland?” said Mrs Burtonshaw, who had made up her mind never to be astonished again.

“I shall employ such a selection of natural lines as will produce the most perfect whole,” said Mr Cumberland. “Never fear, sister Burtonshaw, we will bring something quite unique out of it—not a square box, I promise you. We will bring in a new era in domestic architecture. I am a candid man—I never shut my mind to conviction; and if there is no one else in England bold enough to embody these principles in stone and lime, I am. Sylvo, my boy, if you can’t rebuild, you can have your house decorated at least. How do you excuse yourself for presenting nothing to the eyes of your peasants but a larger hut—a cottage on a great scale? A landed proprietor

ought to be a public educator, Sylvo. You don't appreciate your position, sir."

Sylvo's "ha, ha" rung like a distant chorus upon the somewhat high-pitched treble of his respectable uncle, but Mrs Burtonshaw was roused for her son's honour. "If Sylvo pays a schoolmaster, I assure you he does very well, Mr Cumberland," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "What has he to do teaching classes? And you are extremely mistaken if you think Sylvo's place is only a cottage on a great scale. It is a very handsome mansion, Mr Cumberland—a gentlemanly residence, the advertisement said—it might do for any landed proprietor in England. Yes, Elizabeth, my love, it is a very excellent house."

"I am quite astonished that I can have shut my eyes to it so long," said Mr Cumberland, too zealous about his own house to care for Sylvo's. "There is an inhuman character, a hardness and pitilessness about our architecture, which is sufficiently striking when one comes to consider. Fancy some poor creature now passing this house in a storm, sister Burtonshaw—where is the roofed porch and the grateful seat to give shelter to the traveller? I must set about it at once."

"What is Mr Cumberland to set about at once?" said Mrs Burtonshaw, with a little scream. "A porch to shelter vagrants—at our very door—and you will

give in to him, Maria Anna! I have never been considered pitiless to the poor. I have always helped my fellow-creatures when I had opportunity," continued the good lady, raising her head with offence; "but to have a porch full of vagabonds on a rainy day, whoever might happen to call! It is a great deal too much, Mr Cumberland. It is not benevolence, it is only fancy that goes so far."

But Mr Cumberland, who was making magnificent designs on paper, gables and pinnacles enough to strike Nürnberg with envy, and carry off half his fortune, had no ear for the protest of Mrs Burtonshaw. The philosopher spurred his new Rosinante with the greatest ardour, and Mrs Cumberland, so far from objecting, was struck with the romantic beauty of the idea.

"So like those delightful feudal times," said Mrs Cumberland, "when of course the grateful dependants had a right to the shelter of their superior's threshold. That beautiful connection between the different classes which we all ought to promote; it is never so well advanced as by kind contrivances like these."

"Do you think it is a kind contrivance to fill the house with workmen," said Mrs Burtonshaw, "to have the furniture spoiled with dust, and our things not fit to put on, and quite impossible to ask any one here? You never think of the good of the family, or the

pleasure of these dear children, Maria Anna. People cannot come in through the window. Perhaps even the windows will not be left to us, my dears. I think we had better go away."

"The window left, sister Burtonshaw? I promise you the window shall not be left," said the philosopher. "The rest of the house is simply ugly, but this is detestable. No, we must have truth of form—that is the fundamental principle—and beauty of ornamentation follows, just as in the moral world pleasure comes when necessity is served. Architecture is not merely the art of building, sister Elizabeth. Architecture is a severely moral science; her mission is not so much to build churches and houses, as to form and reform the principles of her time. A square is a heathen ideal—pure paganism, Sylvio. Christian art rejects squares. You shall see, you shall see."

"You may say so if you like, Mr Cumberland—but a great many artists live in squares," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "Do you say your friend Mr Steele is not a Christian? for his house is in Fitzroy Square, I know. There he is, I believe. I was sure it was him when I heard the door open; and of course John will be doing all he can to keep from laughing when he brings Mr Steele here."

"Of course," as Mrs Burtonshaw said, John was in a state of extreme anguish from suppressed laughter

when he ushered Mr Steele into the drawing-room. The maids in the house pronounced Mr Steele "a very funny gentleman;" but John anathematised him when he retired to explode in private. John did not like making his appearance with all his laughter, painfully restrained, bursting in his face.

"I wish I could do it half as well," said Mr Steele, lifting his eyebrows as Mr Cumberland placed his sketch of a porch before him. "What is it for? Break out a light here"—and the artist mercilessly scribbled on the porch which the philosopher had been at so much pains with—"and you'll make it a famous painting-room. I've got a picture to paint now for the Duke of Scattergood; it's full of leafage and fruitage, and running to seed. What would you advise me to call it, eh?—the hardest thing in a picture is the name."

"Call it 'After the Harvest,'" said Mary.

"'After the Harvest.' Let's see, now: that ought to be a stubble-field, with some corn-flowers half dead, and a shower of apples. No; I want to give his grace a hint of a lecture. 'After the Harvest!'—no. 'Too Late for Reaping—scatter it,'—how would that do? He's Scattergood, you know—eh? Do you think he'll make it out?"

"I do," said Sylvo.

"Do you?" said the artist. It was evidently quite

satisfactory, since what Sylvo made out could not be very abstruse. All this while Mr Steele was scribbling at that pretty porch of Mr Cumberland's. It was a grievous trial to the temper of the philosopher.

"I'll tell you a thing that happened to me," said Mr Steele, without looking up from his work of mischief. "I saw a picture in a window the other day—a little sketch of my own—so I went in. 'Who's that by?' says I. 'Can't tell, sir,' says the dealer; 'said to be a Steele; but I don't pretend it's a Steele; you shall have it for six pounds.' Well, I knew my name was on it, so I turned to the back—'There's George Steele on it,' says I. 'Yes, to be sure, anybody could put that on,' says the dealer, so I gave him six pounds, and brought off the picture. Next day I sold it for a hundred. Now, do you know," said the artist, looking up with a face which had suddenly subsided, out of the satisfaction with which he had repeated this dialogue, into doubt and irresolution, "I can't rest since. I think I ought to go and give him half. What do you say?"

"Such beautiful disinterestedness!" said Mrs Cumberland, holding up her hands.

"Eh?" said Mr Steele. He was a great deal too much in earnest about what he said to notice that this was commendation. "I know where it came from; it had gone for next to nothing at a sale. The dealer

had his profit, of course : catch one of them selling a picture without a profit. Now, what do you think I should do ?”

“ You are spoiling my drawing, Steele,” said Mr Cumberland at last, worn out of patience ; “ how do you think any man is to work from it after all your flourishes ? Let me have it here.”

“ I am working *from* it myself,” said the artist, throwing out a succession of fanciful branches from Mr Cumberland’s Gothic porch. “ See now, because I’m ornamenting his shabby bit of outline, how he keeps in his counsel. I had rather work from it than for it, I can tell you. Don’t let him begin to build ; he’ll never be done : he’ll cumber land with his porches and his pinnacles, if he once begins.”

“ That is just what I say,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “ You are a painter ; you are always doing ornaments. Do ornaments make you happy, Mr Steele ?”

Mr Steele looked with some doubtfulness at Mrs Burtonshaw. She who had once brought the reproaches of his own conscience upon him was somewhat of an awful personage to this acute yet simple spirit. “ Now, what do *you* say I ought to do ?” said the artist. He was convinced this must be a very conscientious person—a mind still more upright than his own.

“ Do ?—why, give me back my drawing, to be sure,”

said Mr Cumberland. "Eh! why, Steele, what's this you've been about?" It was still Mr Cumberland's porch, but it was a porch luxuriantly mantled over with the fantastic wreathwork of a vine. The bit of paper was henceforth not an idea of Mr Cumberland's, but a thing called, in the dialect of picture-dealers, "a Steele." Mary seized upon it eagerly for the album, in which already Percy Vivian figured, and Mr Steele threw down his pencil.

"Come in and see my picture, will you?" said the artist; "I'll introduce you to Shenkin Powis, who makes all that row about architecture. That's his book, is it?—it's all along of him you are going to build. Does ornament make me happy, Mrs Burtonshaw?—now, when do you see an ornament on me? Ask him with his mustache there. Are you 'appy, young gentleman? He has a better right, his young squireship, than a poor old fellow like me."

CHAPTER XVI.

IMPROVEMENT.

BUT though Mr Cumberland's design had passed out of his hands, and become "a Steele," his intention was unchanged. Our philosopher drove into London, was introduced to Mr Shenkin Powis, and drove out again, bringing with him that luminary of architectural morality, while Mary's pretty face, full of sunny mirth, looked out from the bow-window, and Zaidee, reserved and silent, her ears tinkling once again to the stranger's familiar name, sat behind. Mr Cumberland stood on the lawn with his visitor, dooming to destruction this hapless square house, with its four corners, and projecting a Gothic castle in its stead. Mrs Cumberland, reclining on her sofa, comforted herself that it was a "beautiful idea;" but the whole feminine population of the house, except herself, watched the two gentlemen on the lawn as they might have watched an invading army, with earnest hostility and eager vigilance. "I wonder how they

can look at all these pretty innocent trees," said Mrs Burtonshaw, "and that grass that is like velvet, and everything so settled and comfortable;—I wonder they have the heart to look at them, Maria Anna! and to think that, in a day or two, there will be nothing but dust, and hammers, and masons, and all sorts of people. What does Mr Cumberland mean by a square being a heathen institution? We are not living in a square; and I am sure there is Belgravia, and Grosvenor Square, and all the rest of them, which are just the very best places one can live in; but Mr Cumberland, of course, will never be like other people. Mary, my love, we will have to go away."

"I would rather not go away, Aunt Burtonshaw," said Mary. Papa's new freak became somewhat more serious if it involved this necessity.

"But, my love, we cannot help ourselves," said Aunt Burtonshaw. "I think we will go to Sylvo's place, Elizabeth; you would like to see Sylvo's place, my dear child; now I am sure you would, though you do not like to say it."

"But I do like to say it," said Zaidee, with a smile of wonder; "I should like very well to see Sylvo's place, Aunt Burtonshaw, if we must leave home."

"Poor dear!" said Mrs Burtonshaw lovingly, smoothing Zaidee's beautiful hair, and thinking of the refractory Sylvo, who could not now be induced to

devote himself to Zaidee. Sylvo had his repulse fresh in his mind yet, but did not condescend to inform his mother why he regarded her recommendation so little ; so Mrs Burtonshaw expended a great deal of sympathy upon Zaidee's unfortunate attachment, and constantly called her " poor dear ! "

Mr Shenkin Powis was a man of some note in the world. Mrs Cumberland had a luncheon prepared for him, and waited to receive him with a very pretty compliment ; while old Jane Williams lingered on the staircase, anxious to waylay the visitor, and inspect him, to discover what relationship he bore to the house of Powisland. The disappointment of both these watchers was great, when Mr Shenkin Powis shook hands with Mr Cumberland on the lawn, and left this hospitable mansion undemolished and unvisited. " I have sent Parkins to drive him to Richmond," said Mr Cumberland, as he came in ; " he could not wait—he had an appointment. I am a little disappointed in him, sister Burtonshaw—clever undoubtedly, but a crotchety man—a crotchety man. The fact is, my genius will not go in leading-strings. Think of the man trying to convince me that, unless I pulled it down and rebuilt it from the foundations, it would be better to leave the house as it is. He does not approve of rounding an angle by thickening the masonry ; it is not sincere. I grant the necessity

of truth in form—that is the beauty of it ; but think of a sincere wall, sister Burtonshaw ! No : I find I must originate and execute by myself ; the result will show.”

“ Then you *will* go on, Mr Cumberland,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, “ though even Mr Shenkin Powis knows better ! Well, I am sure I have told you what I think, and if you will not hear common sense I cannot help it. But we must go away, you know ; we cannot stay when you have workmen all over the house. The children want a change, too ; they want change of air, poor dears. We will go to Sylvo’s place, Mr Cumberland ; and when you have cut up all the poor pretty lawn, and destroyed everything, you will send for us to come home.”

But Mr Cumberland was quite beyond the reach of Aunt Burtonshaw’s innocent sarcasm. He was measuring, and planning, and making very rude sketches with a great pencil which one of the workmen, brought here on an errand of investigation, had left this morning. Mr Cumberland made his design for the Gothic porch over again, putting particular emphasis on its roof and its benches. “ We should want no refuge for the destitute, no great indiscriminate shelter for the houseless poor, if this plan were universally adopted,” said Mr Cumberland ; the greatest possible incentive to private charity—the best

plan that could be adopted for giving each family a little community of friendly dependents. Depend upon it, sister Burtonshaw, you will hear of this before the year is out."

But Mrs Burtonshaw had gone to seek Sylvo, to prepare him for the honour about to be done to his place. Sylvo received the proposal somewhat gruffly, but not without satisfaction. He was pleased to have "a regular beauty," to make his place famous among his neighbours; and perhaps Sylvo had an idea that he had been sufficiently rude and resentful, and that now it might be time to melt a little towards Zaidee, and give her another chance. "People say you should never take a woman at her first word," muttered Sylvo, as he lounged with his cigar among the trees, and recalled with complacency his mother's flattering explanation of Zaidee's silence and thoughtfulness. "Why can't she be honest, and say as much?" said Sylvo; "but I suppose it's woman's way." He was very well satisfied with this conclusion. The young gentleman was not of an inquiring mind in general—and he graciously resolved upon giving Zaidee another chance.

"Sylvo's place! where the only society is the gentleman savage whom Aunt Burtonshaw is so much afraid of," said Mary; and Mary shrugged her shoulders, and pouted her red lip. "Yes, I shall be

very glad to see Sylvo's place, my dear Elizabeth," said Mrs Cumberland ; " we will carry female influence, and I trust refinement, there : it will do Sylvo good, I am sure." Only Zaidee said nothing either of satisfaction or approval. " She thinks the more, poor dear," said Aunt Burtonshaw.

And it was a very fortunate change for Zaidee this removal ; it carried her away from the daily excitement—the secret anxiety, which constantly had fresh fuel added to raise it higher. Mary might pout, but she could not help herself ; and perhaps it was no harm to Mary either, this going away. The preparations were made very hastily, for Mr Cumberland was taking vigorous measures. The door was impassable before the little party were ready : they had to make their escape by the window, after all, according to Mrs Burtonshaw's prophecy ; and even the window would not have been left to them had they stayed another day. From the noise and dust and disturbance of Mr Cumberland's improvements, they went gratefully through the bright country, on their short summer's day's journey to Sylvo's place. Sylvo was quite in great spirits, laughing great " ha, ha's " from under his mustache, no one could tell for what reason, and preparing himself for the most joyous hospitality ; he felt that he should rather astonish Mansfield, when that excellent savage came to visit him, on his arrival.

Two beautiful cousins do not fall to the lot of every man ; the curve of Sylvo's mustache relaxed, and those admirable teeth of his slightly revealed themselves ; he tried a pun after the fashion of Mr Steele, and made such a deplorable failure that the attempt was followed by infinite plaudits ; and on the whole he could not help a comfortable conviction of his own attractions, mental and physical. Sylvo was returning to his place, improved by the society of genius and feminine refinement, in the best temper and best hopes imaginable. It was quite a brilliant day for Sylvo, the day which made him sole cavalier of this little travelling party ; he grew quite elated with his important position as he drew nearer home.

And Sylvo was not disappointed in his expectations. Mr Mansfield *was* astonished when he stalked in, in his morning costume, redolent of cigars, and was ushered into a drawing-room full of ladies. Mr Mansfield's astonishment was so extreme indeed that he well-nigh made a quarrel with Sylvo, who "might have let a man know before he went right in among them," Mr Mansfield thought. The beautiful cousins made a great sensation in the neighbourhood of Sylvo's place, where they shook off his attendance rather unceremoniously, and wandered by themselves through the flowery lanes and fields. It was a great refreshment to each of these young hearts ; they expanded once more to each

other, and from this little pause and moment of observation looked back upon the time which had just passed. It was a time of infinite interest and importance to both of them : to Mary the crisis of her life ; to Zaidee a great and strange trial, by means of which the crisis of *her* life also was to come. While Mr Cumberland's porch rose with its odd Gothic pinnacles on the square gable, which it was his intention to mould into conformity with the lines of nature, Mr Cumberland's household found a very pleasant change in Sylvo's place ; and Sylvo had quite made up his mind, by this time, when and how he was to offer to Zaidee " another chance."

CHAPTER XVII.

WANDERINGS.

BUT Sylvo's place, which was very well for a visit of two or three weeks, did not retain its attractions for a longer residence, and there was no telling when the unhappy house at Twickenham might be habitable. Mr and Mrs Cumberland were people happily independent of fashion; it mattered very little to them that "the season" was ending, and people rushing everywhere out of London. Mrs Cumberland was suddenly seized with a desire to spend a few weeks in town; and Mary—albeit Mary was by no means so indifferent to fashion as her mother was—eagerly seconded the proposal. It was in vain that Sylvo, somewhat discomfited, echoed Mr Mansfield's protest that there was "nobody" in town. "There are a great many charming people, my dear Sylvo," said Mrs Cumberland. "I am thankful to say my friends are not of an exclusive caste; *I* can find some one worth visiting in London all the year round."

“London in August! I admire your taste, I am sure, Maria Anna,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. But even these dreadful sarcasms of Mrs Burtonshaw did not deter her sister. Sylvo had found no opportunity of giving Zaidee that other chance. He thought it might be as prudent to leave her time to contrast this place of his, and all the delights and honours of which its mistress would have full possession, with “some shabby house in London,” where his own graceful attentions would be wanting. One of Mrs Cumberland’s friends, who was on the wing for *her* place in the country, willingly handed over her house to Mrs Cumberland. If not a shabby house, it was rather a faded one, with little rooms, and no remarkable advantages of position, so far as these rustic people could judge. Mrs Burtonshaw was seized with shortness of breath the very first day of their entry into it; she thanked Providence she was not obliged to live in rooms of such proportions. “Very different from Sylvo’s place, my dear,” said Mrs Burtonshaw; “you are pale already, Elizabeth, my sweet love! Maria Anna ought to have more thought for you.”

And it was very true that Zaidee was pale, and that the mother of Sylvo was more and more impressed with the attachment to her son, which was so apparent. Mary’s soft cheek, too, owned a flutter of variable colour, but this Mrs Burtonshaw did not notice. The

good lady audibly wondered whether Mr Vivian, or that pretty sweet Mrs Bernard Morton, would still be in town ; but Mrs Burtonshaw was not quite aware how important a question this was to both her young companions, or how often their thoughts made the same inquiry. But when they had been a week or two in London, it grew sufficiently evident that Mr Percy Vivian was not in town. Several of Mrs Cumberland's "charming" acquaintances, who were of the circle of Percy's worshippers, reported that he had gone home to Cheshire ; and that Mrs Morton, though still detained by her husband's parliamentary duties, was also preparing to go—"everybody," indeed, was in the flutter of departure ; even the good people who could only afford a fortnight's holiday, and who were innocent of fashion, closed up their windows and "went out of town." The sunshine burned upon the London streets, upon the hosts of people who have no holiday, and pleasure-seekers from the country, innocently unaware that "all the world" had forsaken the busy Babylon. Mrs Cumberland almost repented of her visit to London ; and Mary, who was not above the horror of being unfashionable, began to urge retreat again with much perseverance. They drove down to Twickenham only to find Mr Cumberland peering over his spectacles with his curious eyes at the mass of indiscriminate rubbish which encumbered the lawn, and

attaching turrets and pinnacles and rounding corners at his own sweet will, fearless of criticism. Already, if the steamboat passengers up and down the Thames were not the happier for Mr Cumberland's improvements, they were the more amused; and it was even said that Mr Shenkin Powis had undertaken a voyage as far as Hampton Court, to survey with horror the extremely original specimen of domestic architecture which the philosopher was elaborating out of his comfortable square box. The holiday people on the river no longer passed this pretty corner with silent envy. There was always a crowd of gazers turning their attention to this grand effort of Mr Cumberland for the commonweal. The acacia on the lawn, being of a fastidious nature, had begun to droop and sicken in spite of the rude wooden railings put up to protect it, and shed its foliage in yellow flakes, no longer upon the beautiful head of Zaidee Vivian, or the clustering curls of Mary Cumberland, but upon the paper caps of plasterers, and carpenters, and sandy masonic locks. "We are getting on," said Mr Cumberland, rubbing his hands with glee as the ladies of his family stood by in horror-stricken silence—"already making progress, sister Burtonshaw. Before the winter frosts set in, you shall see a very different-looking building, I assure you, from the thing you left. This crocket is from York, and the work of this oriel window copied

from a beautiful example in Nürnberg. I do not reject authority—far be it from me to dispute the wisdom of the past—but I retain my own ideas notwithstanding, sister Elizabeth. But for my oversight and care, it would be impossible to harmonise the whole ; and I expect the science of domestic architecture to date this building as the first in a new period. The buildings of the age shall be harmonised, sister Burtonshaw ; a character of benevolent forethought shall be added to the conscientious morality of Mr Shenkin Powis : there is not an addition here which does not represent, really or symbolically, the celestial attribute of benevolence ; but I have no time to enter into detail. No, by no means, I do not wish you to come home ; women are always in the way of improvements ; and I am glad to tell you that I am perfectly satisfied with the way we are going on.”

The visitors got into their carriage, and drove away in respectful silence. Mrs Burtonshaw, panting for words in which to express her admiration of Mr Cumberland’s proceedings, could find none sufficiently terse and expressive ; and Mrs Cumberland contented herself with a sigh of relief when they emerged from the dust with which this benevolent architecture filled the atmosphere. They were quite cast out of their home, these unfortunate ladies. However benevolent the porch might be when completed, it threw most inhos-

pitiable obstacles in the mean time across the familiar threshold, and access by door or window was equally denied to them. When they reached their faded drawing-room, and looked out upon the closed shutters of this extremely fashionable and dingy little street, Mrs Burtonshaw thought it the best possible opportunity for urging a return to Sylvo's place.

"You will go back to Essex now, of course, Maria Anna," said Mrs Burtonshaw; "you will not shut up these dear children here, to pine away and lose their health again. Keep up your spirits, Elizabeth, my love—we shall soon return again—for I am sure you looked quite a different creature in Sylvo's place."

"But I cannot think of returning to Sylvo's place," said Mrs Cumberland from her sofa. "My dear Elizabeth, you are very kind, but we will take advantage of our opportunity, and have a change of scene. I have been thinking—we will not go to the coast, nor to Scotland, nor any place we have been before—we will go into the beautiful heart of England, my dear children. When your Aunt Burtonshaw and I were young, we were there once, many years ago; we will go to Malvern—we will quite enjoy ourselves being alone. My dear Elizabeth, I trust you have no objection; we shall be quite hermits, and enjoy that beautiful hill."

If Mrs Burtonshaw had objections, it did not seem that they were particularly important. Mary, being in the state of mind to which change of one sort or another was indispensable, eagerly lent her assistance, and within a few days the little party set out once more. "We know no one there—we will be quite alone, Lizzy," said Mary, with a sigh. Perhaps Miss Cumberland did not appreciate as her mother did the romantic delights of solitude, but Mary was eager to set out from this desolate London, echoing with emphasis the universal declaration that "no one was in town." An express North-Western train might have made London populous in a very few hours for Mary, but "nobody" was in it now.

"My dear love, we will not stay long—we will soon come back to Sylvo's place," said Mrs Burtonshaw, patting the beautiful head of Zaidee. Mrs Burtonshaw thought it was very cruel of Maria Anna to shut her eyes to the dear child's feelings so wantonly. What did any one care for Malvern? and it was easy to see how deeply interested this poor dear was in Sylvo's place.

But Zaidee bore with wonderful fortitude the journey which carried her farther and farther away from Sylvo. Zaidee's fresh young spirit, and eyes shining with life and interest, traced all these inland roads with pleasure. The apple-trees on the pathway

clustered with their russet fruit, and the pollard willows bristling over every little stream—the great Vale of Severn with its churches and towns, and that odd miniature mountain which has lost its way so strangely, and settled itself in the wide flat of this level country, where there is not another mound to break the horizon—were matters more interesting to Zaidee than to any of her companions. Mrs Cumberland was languid, and reclined in a corner of the carriage. Mrs Burtonshaw was interested, but depreciatory, making a perpetual comparison between Sylvo's place and this unfamiliar country. Mary was wandering in her own thoughts, and noticed external matters only by fits and starts; and no one knew how Zaidee's eyes brightened at the sight of gorse and heather, and how friendly looked these grassy heights of Malvern to one who had not seen for eight long years the rugged elevation of Briarford Hill.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MALVERN.

“ARE we growing old, Elizabeth? We are not girls as we used to be,” said Mary Cumberland. “Do you remember when we sat in that great room at Ulm, where mamma tried to make us think, and we would not, but quite made up for it when we were by ourselves? Do you remember all the sewing we used to do, and all our speculations? When Aunt Burtonshaw praised us for the one, she never dreamt of the other, Lizzy; but we never speculate now.”

“No,” said Zaidee. She was plucking up the short hill-side grass unwittingly with her hands, and thinking her own private thoughts.

“I suppose we were only looking at life then, and now we are in it,” said Mary musingly. “Nothing concerned us very much, and we could wonder at everything. Life is a strange thing, Lizzy—What is the good of all these humdrum quiet days, do you think? We never do anything—were we made for

any use, do you suppose? Elizabeth! why can you not answer me?"

For Mary was as much given as ever to a comparison of ideas, and as curious to know her companion's opinion; while Zaidee, for her part, was not very much more disposed to "rational answers" than before.

"I think God made the days," said Zaidee, "and He must see some use in them. We have to live our lives out, however long they may be. Do people sometimes wish for long life, Mary? If it was fifty years, or sixty years, what a dreary length of way!"

"Now, that is just in your old strain," said Mary Cumberland. "Why should it be a dreary length of way? I have no regard for churchyards and tombstones, for my part; I am not in a hurry to live my life out,—one may be a little dull now and then, and wonder what is the good of oneself, without such dismal thoughts as these."

Zaidee made no answer. They were seated upon the hill of Malvern, with some grey slopes towering above them, yet, at a considerable altitude; as far as they could see on every side, a vast level of cultivated country stretched into the skies,—low down at their feet lay the houses of the little town, the grey towers of the abbey, and the setting of rich orchards in which these habitations were enclosed,—while striking up

from the fertile flat were little far-off cities, sparkling with spires and gilded weathercocks, small ancient dignified cathedral towns,—and a faint line far away, of broken banks overlapping each other, with a thin silver thread here and there shining out between, gave note of the Severn, treeless and labourless, pursuing his path to the sea. The multitude of roads mapping this strange wide landscape in every direction—the morsels of village glistening in a chance ray of sunshine, and churches which in fancy you could lift in your hand, so dwarfed are they by the long distance,—give a strange attraction to the scene. Of itself it is not a beautiful scene, and a dull sky sweeps down upon it, blending its unfeatured breadths with the clouds of the horizon ; but the air, which has travelled many a mile since last it encountered any eminence, comes fresh and full upon this hill-side ; and the eye, which is never satisfied with seeing, takes in with a peculiar gratification this singular extent of space presented to it, and revels in the world of air and cloud upon that vast uninterrupted sky.

“ See, there is a bold road striking out by itself across all that wilderness of fields,” said Mary. “ What strange abrupt turns it takes ; but it is not even crossed by another, so far as I can see : that is a man’s road, Lizzy,—for my part, I do not like travelling alone.”

“It is not quite alone,” said Zaidee, speaking low. “There is a little footpath behind the hedge, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other: some one might walk perpetually under the hedgerow side by side with the traveller on the high-road, and he would never know.”

“Well, I cannot say that makes it much more comfortable,” said Mary, laughing. “You are mysterious to-day, Elizabeth. I do not like your secret people who travel under hedgerows. I like daylight and the broad highway for my own share. You like this place, do you not? I suppose I do; I don’t want any one to talk to me; I want to think, Lizzy. How far away you can look, straining your beautiful eyes, Mr Vivian would say. What a weary length these days are for August days. Heigh ho!”

But Zaidee was so little disposed to interrupt Mary’s thoughts by talking, that it was Mary herself who broke the silence first. Mary was in a strange mood of restless idleness; she was perpetually changing her position, as she half sat and half reclined upon this bank of luxuriant greensward; laughter that was rounded with a sigh, and sighing which incontinently burst into laughter, were the signs and symbols of Mary’s state of mind. She was greatly in want of some little piece of excitement; her mind had a great deal too much scope, wandering back and forward in

a restless haste, speculating on the future and on the past. Mary, half emerged from her first enchanted maze, was full of a restless disquietude; her whole life beyond seemed hanging upon some uncertain decision—a nervous, anxious, troublesome uncertainty—a decision which she would be ashamed to expedite by any measures of her own. Mary was not a little ashamed of herself for the length her thoughts had gone already, and scornfully scouted the idea that “any man” held her fate in his hands. Nevertheless, she had been an extremely imprudent guardian of her own happiness. Mr Percy Vivian, perhaps, might be quite unaware of this rich gift lavished on him; perhaps he was aware, and did not appreciate the possession: but whatever Mr Percy Vivian’s sentiments might be, there was no longer any safeguard for Mary; her good sense, as Aunt Burtonshaw predicted, had been no defence to her; she had thrown away her heart.

“I think you are very innocent, Lizzy,” said Mary, suddenly starting from an apparent contemplation of the landscape before her, of which landscape, in reality, she saw nothing. “You never understand at all, nor seek to understand, what all Aunt Burtonshaw’s hints and double meanings are full of. There, now, you look quite incredulous. Is it my fault if your thoughts are always at the end of the world? Who can *you* have to think of, Elizabeth? I suppose

you never found out that Aunt Burtonshaw had double meanings at all ? ”

“ No, indeed. I always understand Aunt Burtonshaw perfectly,” said Zaidee, with a smile.

“ Which means, that you are perfectly unconscious of all her endeavours,” said Mary. “ Aunt Burtonshaw thinks—I really ought not to tell you—Aunt Burtonshaw believes you are very much interested in Sylvo, Elizabeth.”

“ Very much interested ! I will not answer for the ‘ very much,’ ” said Zaidee ; “ but, indeed, I do think of Sylvo, Mary ; only Sylvo will find some one better for him than you.”

“ You are a simpleton, and I will not enlighten you,” said Mary. “ What do you think of Mrs Morton ? ” she asked abruptly, after a pause. Mary, but for very shame, would have been so glad to unbosom herself, and make a confidant of her friend—would have been so much relieved, indeed, if Zaidee had taken the initiative, and pressed into her confidence ; but Zaidee was quite as shy of the subject as Mary was, though she was sufficiently clearsighted to see how matters stood. Zaidee faltered a good deal. What did she think of Mrs Morton ?—what did she think of Elizabeth Vivian, her cousin, the beautiful Elizabeth of the Grange ? Zaidee felt herself change colour painfully—she scarcely knew what to say.

“I heard Mr Vivian say there was no woman like his sister ; he ought to know best,” said Zaidee.

It was an unfortunte speech in every way ; unfortunate in its hesitation and faltering tone—unfortunate in quoting Mr Vivian—and, lastly, in the opinion it conveyed. Mary Cumberland did not choose that Percy should think his sister the first of womankind. She did not at all appreciate such an extent of fraternal affection ; and Mary was piqued at the idea that any one knew better than she did what Percy’s opinion was.

“I asked what you thought yourself, not what Mr Percy Vivian thought,” said Mary. “One does not care for having Mr Percy Vivian’s opinions at second-hand. He is a very great author, perhaps ; but I would not quote him so often if I were you, Elizabeth.”

When Zaidee raised her eyes in astonishment, she saw Mary, very red, and with a disturbed and troubled face, gazing down the hilly path, while she plucked the grass by handfuls. Some one was toiling upward, looking about him anxiously, sometimes pausing to survey the wide landscape behind him, sometimes turning aside to gather a wildflower, but always on the alert, as if looking for some one on the hill. As his figure advanced, Mary Cumberland’s face varied like a changing sky ; as it drew near and nearer, she

rose to her feet with irrestrainable excitement. Zaidee looked at her pretty form, relieved against the dark background of the hill, and at the stranger advancing hastily, before she herself rose, with an instinctive impulse of reserve, to control and subdue her friend. Zaidee took Mary's hand with an involuntary grasp of caution, which Mary returned vehemently, and then the pretty fingers unclasped, and these two stood distinctly visible, waiting to greet Mr Percy Vivian as he appeared out of breath behind an angle of the path. In the moment's interval, Mary's good sense and Mary's pride had come to her rescue triumphantly. Percy thought the beautiful sister gave him the warmest welcome, and was much concerned to see Mary so reserved and stately; the young gentleman was extremely assiduous — extremely devoted; he fancied he had been losing time.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEGINNING OF DANGER.

“So you found the young ladies, Mr Vivian,” said Mrs Cumberland. “Dear children! they love nature. I was convinced they were on the hill. I tell them we have nearly as good a prospect from this window; but they are young, and have more enterprise than I have. Is it not a delightful surprise, my dear Mary, to see Mr Vivian here?”

“We were much astonished,” says Mary in an under-tone.

Mr Vivian, who has looked up to catch her answer, though people say he has a great knowledge of character, and though this constraint is the very thing with which he would endow his heroine in a novel, to evidence the state of her feelings in presence of her lover, has so totally lost his penetration that he is quite disappointed. “It was no pleasure to her, then,” muses Percy; “only a surprise.”

“For my part, I thought Mr Vivian had come to

tell us of some great misfortune," said Mrs Burtonshaw—"that the house had come down, or that Mr Cumberland had had a fall, or some accident; nothing else was to be looked for, I am sure."

"There has been no accident; Mr Cumberland was in excellent spirits," said Percy, "and feels that he is making progress. The porch, I assure you, would accommodate a couple of poor families already, Mrs Burtonshaw; and when Mr Cumberland has his heating apparatus in order, I have no doubt it will be greatly patronised in the cold weather. If you were nearer town, a benevolent institution like this might be subject to abuse, Mrs Cumberland. I am afraid a colony of London boys in immediate possession would not quite carry out your charitable views."

"Charitable views!" echoed Mrs Burtonshaw; "what sort of views shall we have from our windows when we get back to our poor, pretty, unfortunate house at Twickenham—if, indeed, there are any windows left? The little wretches will play at marbles and all sorts of games; it will not matter to them if the Queen should come to call. Mr Cumberland has all his own way, Mr Vivian. Maria Anna will give in to him, and I cannot describe to you the trouble I have. Do not speak to me, Maria Anna! I have no patience with it; and it will be all the same, of course, whoever comes to call."

“I had an interview with Mr Cumberland on the lawn over a heap of mortar,” said Percy, while Mrs Burtonshaw groaned aloud, “and heard from him you were at Malvern. I had business in this quarter. No lack of views here, Mrs Burtonshaw, though they are not charitable ones. This place reminds me a little, I scarcely can tell why, of my own home.”

“That delightful Grange which you described to us once?” said Mrs Cumberland from her sofa; “and of course I recognised it again in your last charming book. When are you going to favour us with another, Mr Vivian? But first tell me how this reminds you of your own ancient romantic home.”

“I suppose because it is perfectly unlike,” said Percy, with a little laugh. “There is no Grange on the hill of Malvern; but we stand upon a lesser eminence at home, and look out from our height upon a flat expanse, which this is just sufficient to recall to me. Our low country is not a cultivated plain, or a Vale of Severn; it is only a bleak stretch of Cheshire fields, a low sandy coast, and sullen sea. There are a multitude of roads, Mrs Burtonshaw, all leading to the Grange, as you would suppose, and never a wayfarer on one of them; and we have a fierce little hill for our henchman, bristling with gorse, and armed with broken rocks—and undergo a perpetual siege and cannonade from all the winds. There

are only inland gales at Malvern, but our visitors come fresh from the sea."

"It is very strange; that is like the place Elizabeth used to tell me of," said Mary.

And Mary, looking up, found Zaidee's eyes fixed upon her with such a trembling eagerness of entreaty, that her idea of resemblance between the two descriptions was quickened into instant certainty. She returned this beseeching look with a glance of the extremest surprise. Her curiosity was suddenly roused. What did it mean? When Mary's look left Zaidee, she met Mr Vivian's; and Mr Vivian had been watching this interchange of glances, and looked at her, earnestly repeating the question. Mary was quite perplexed; she could only look at Zaidee again.

"Perhaps Miss Elizabeth Cumberland has been in Cheshire," said Percy. Percy was very curious; but he always was, Mary remembered with wonder, in everything that concerned Elizabeth.

"No—no," said Zaidee hurriedly. She withdrew back out of the light of the window, and grew very pale. She dared not lift her eyes again, but sat trembling and in terror. Never had she been so near betrayed; and her ears tingled, almost expecting to hear the cry of "Zaidee! Zaidee!" with which Percy could throw her disguise to the winds.

For Zaidee did not think that Percy Vivian held her without a doubt for the daughter of this fantastic, kind Mrs Cumberland, reclining on her sofa—the sister of Mary, the niece of Aunt Burtonshaw. Percy could not account for his own interest in her, nor for sundry little occurrences which startled him with a vague wonder and suspicion. He never dreamed that she was Zaidee ; he had not even connected her with the lost child ; he had only a vague, floating curiosity about her, which he himself thought he had no right to have, and did not understand.

Zaidee dared not withdraw to her own apartment to subdue her agitation. She must sit still to watch the conversation, to hear what they said, to guard her secret at all hazards. She scarcely knew how the day went on as she sat among them watching them with this intense and steady vigilance : she made no sense of the buzz of words which rung in her ears. She only knew that her secret was not threatened, nor her possible knowledge of the Grange discussed again. There were a great many other subjects of interest to the other members of the party. There was one most absorbing topic in the minds of two of them, which, like Zaidee's secret anxiety, did not bear talking of ; and beyond the surprise of the moment, Zaidee's brief and hurried answer was not remarked by her companions. She kept with the little company obstinately

in her great anxiety. When Mary and Percy spoke aside for an instant, Zaidee was thrown into a secret agony ; and when the evening came, and Mr Vivian followed Miss Cumberland into the garden in the twilight to listen to the nightingales, Zaidee sat unseen by the window watching them, as they wandered through the trees. Her overpowering terror made her forget for the moment that they had other things to talk of than her secret—this secret which neither of them could have suspected till to-night, and which both had forgotten before now.

“These two young creatures, they are quite happy ; they forget how cold the night air has grown,” said Mrs Burtonshaw, coming behind the chair where Zaidee sat alone looking out into the dewy darkness of the garden. “My dear love, you are sighing ; you are all by yourself while Mary is away. Ah ! it is all very well to speak of business in this quarter. I suppose Mr Vivian is attending to his business among the trees yonder. These young men are such hypocrites, Elizabeth. I should be glad to see what lawful errand Mr Vivian had here.”

Relieved by remembering that there was no fear of her secret coming into discussion between two people who were busy with themselves, Zaidee bethought her of the disappointment of Sylvo’s anxious mother.

“I am afraid, indeed, Mary likes Mr Vivian, Aunt

Burtonshaw," said Zaidee. "I should be very glad, if it were not for you."

"You are a dear, unselfish child," said Mrs Burtonshaw, stooping to bestow a kiss on Zaidee's brow, "and you need not be sorry for me, my darling. I have quite made up my mind to lose Mary. I have other views for Sylvo now."

"I *am* very glad, then. I think Mary will be happy," said Zaidee musingly. "Percy would not grieve any one; no, I am sure of that."

"Did you say Sylvo would not grieve? I do not think he will, my love," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "You do not ask me what my views are for Sylvo, now, Elizabeth; but you are quite right, my dear child. I will not say anything of them; I will leave it all to Sylvo himself."

"Yes, Aunt Burtonshaw," said Zaidee. Sylvo was not farther from the scene in person than he was in imagination from Zaidee's thoughts—she was thinking of Mary and Percy, in this charmed twilight, with the sweet dew falling on their young heads, and the air full of the singing of nightingales. She was lingering for a moment in her maiden meditations upon that oldest and newest subject of romance—that universal love tale which somebody is always telling—that unknown witchcraft to which her own heart had never been tempted. Beguiled out of her mere per-

sonal agitation, Zaidee's heart beat with a wondering sympathy ; with a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye, she watched for Mary coming home out of the realm of fairyland, out of the enchanted twilight, to the lights and common life of this dusky room. Zaidee's own eyes were dazzled by these lights, and with a pensive wistful sweetness, through the tears that made them brighter, those beautiful eyes turned back again to the falling night. With a little visionary sadness, her thoughts too returned again to herself : all by herself, alone and solitary, this turning-point of youthful history must never come to Zaidee ; she must never wish, nay, more than that, she must so guard her daily living that no affection shall be drawn towards her. No one must love Zaidee, if Zaidee can help it, except those kind friends who shelter her and the innocent hearts of little children. She must do no more harm ; and it is strange to see her bending her beautiful face in the darkness, praying never to be tempted, praying to be left in her solitude, to harm no one any more.

CHAPTER XX.

MARY'S FATE.

ZAIDEE had gone to her own apartment thoughtful and somewhat anxious. Her mind, which had begun to recover its composure, was stirred to its depths once more, and her thoughts were full of a longing and wistful inquiry about Mary, who had been very silent and strangely reserved through all that evening. Sitting in the shadow where Zaidee could not see her face, answering in monosyllables, and in a voice so low and shy that even Aunt Burtonshaw was astonished, Mary had given no indication of Mr Vivian's business, nor of how it sped. As Zaidee went about her own chamber, preparing for rest, her ear was caught once or twice by a faint rustling in the passage outside. She turned to listen with quick curiosity, and in time to see Mary softly open the door and look in, with a momentary investigation. "I thought you had lain down by this time," said Mary. "I have been waiting till you were quiet, and the light out. Why don't

you go to bed, Elizabeth? Young people should not sit up so late at night—there, let me put out the light.”

Before Zaidee could remonstrate, the little light was extinguished, and in the faint radiance of the moon, Zaidee saw her friend drawing near her with a shy yet hasty step. “Sit down, Lizzy; I have a great deal to say to you,” said her visitor, and Mary herself drew a stool to Zaidee’s feet, and threw herself down beside her half kneeling, embracing her companion’s waist, and leaning on her knee. But though this satisfactory attitude was assumed, the great deal which Mary had to say remained still unsaid. She leaned her soft cheek on Zaidee’s hand, and Zaidee knew instinctively that it was warm with blushes of pride, and shame, and pleasure: she played with Zaidee’s fingers, folding them over her lips; she held Zaidee’s waist more closely with her arm; but Mary was quite content to lean here, as it seemed, and forget that she had anything to say.

“Mary, tell me,” said Zaidee—Zaidee’s own heart beat high with sympathy; for though she was quite new to it, and had never been made a confidant before, she had an instinctive perception of the tale which Mary came to tell.

“My mother never taught me to go to her; I cannot tell Aunt Burtonshaw. I never have had any one but you, Elizabeth, that knew all my heart!”

This was the beginning of Mary's confession, and then there followed a long pause—so long a pause that Zaidee feared this was all, and that there was nothing to follow.

“I have never been like you, Elizabeth. I do not think I deserve to have a very noble nature near me,” said Mary. “Instead of being very glad as I thought I should be, I think I am sad to-night—not sad either—I cannot tell how I am. It is so strange, so very strange. I think I am venturing into a new country. Perhaps I had better have been content with Sylvo, Elizabeth,” said Mary, rising into her more natural tone; “one could find out Sylvo's depth, poor fellow, and measure him to all his height—no one will be troubled with anything wonderful in Sylvo—but now!”

Mary's voice sank again, and so did Mary's cheek, once more resting on Zaidee's hand. The office of confidant and confessor to Mary was doomed to be rather a perplexing one.

“A common person,” said Mary again, with a little sigh of self-contempt. “Yes, I think I should only have had a common person. I cannot tell why this strange fortune has come to me. If I had been full of dreams and fancies, Elizabeth, like what one reads of—perhaps like what you have, my beautiful sister; but you are sitting here by yourself, Lizzy, with all

your sweet thoughts and your lovely face, and this has come to me."

"It is best for me to be alone," said Zaidee; "and this should come to you, for it is your proper fortune. I have been sure of it since ever Percy came."

"Do *you* call him Percy?" said Mary, raising her head in sudden wonder. "Well, but of course Lizzy had no reason to be ashamed, no need to be so precise as I was," she continued with a low laugh. "I was so much ashamed of myself, Elizabeth. Do you know, I thought he had found me out. I thought he was coming to enjoy his triumph. I really do think I could have killed myself sooner than have let him fancy I cared for him when he did not care for me."

It was not necessary for Zaidee to say anything—the stream of communication was interrupted, but continuous, and wanted no help as it flowed on.

"But instead of that!"—Mary paused, and lingered on the words, "instead of that! I think it can only be a poet who is so reverent of women," said Mary, touched to the heart by the deference of her betrothed. "We are no such great things after all, Elizabeth. We are very poor creatures, a great many of us. Fancy me standing listening to him. I am nobody; I am only Mary Cumberland; and he, bending that noble head of his, and speaking as if he spoke to a

princess,—he whom all the world honours ! I don't believe it is true after all, and that makes me melancholy," said Mary with a change in her voice—"it is his own eyes that see something else in me than what I have."

A long pause followed after this, which Zaidee only disturbed by a silent caress of sympathy and encouragement, and she resumed her monologue.

"Did you wonder what I meant putting out the light? I will be your maid now, Elizabeth, since I have left you in the dark ; but you do not think I could come in, and sit down opposite you, and tell you all this, looking in your face, with that inquisitive candle twinkling like a saucy listener. You cannot see how I am looking, Lizzy—it does me no harm that you are shining over me with those eyes of yours. It is very hard to have eyes looking into one's heart. Yes, I think he has enchantment in his, Lizzy ; they make beauty for themselves wherever they glance ; and suppose he should awake some time, and instead of the princess whom he spoke to to-night, find only *me* ! I do not think I was very humble before, but one grows humble in spite of oneself when one is addressed so grandly. He thinks I have a noble nature like his own, Elizabeth—a pure religious spirit, like what you are, Lizzy ; and when I try to convince him,

he only smiles and thinks the more of me. When he finds it is only plain working-day Mary Cumberland, what will he say?"

"That she is better than all the princesses," said Zaidee, clasping her friend round with her loving arms; and then Mary cried a little, with a sob half of joy and half of melancholy, and then ran off into low, sweet, tremulous laughter, as she raised her head from Zaidee's knee.

"You think I am very humble, do you not?" said Mary, "yet I am afraid I shall be as saucy as ever, and as stupid, and as perverse when to-morrow's daylight comes. Do you want to go to sleep, Elizabeth?—for I had rather stay here, if you are as wakeful as I am. I have made a great many resolutions to-night,—I should not like him to change his opinion of me, Lizzy; but I am afraid they will all vanish with to-morrow. One cannot overcome two-and-twenty years in a single day."

And thus they sat in the moonlight talking a great deal, and quite forgetful of the lapse of these swift-footed hours; their low voices whispered so lightly that no one woke in the neighbouring chambers to be aware of this innocent midnight conference. Mary did not leave Zaidee's room all that night,—truth to say, Mary did not wake after her unusual vigil till Mrs Burtonshaw had sighed over the breakfast-table

all alone for a full hour, and the sun was full in the sky. Zaidee was more wakeful ; *her* morning dreams were disturbed and broken by a strange pleasure, and a strange dread of this new connection. She was glad and proud that Percy and Mary were betrothed to each other. She pleased herself with thinking that “our Percy’s” manly care and tenderness would make amends to the real daughter of this house for all the love and kindness which she herself had met with at Mary’s hands. They had been very good to Zaidee Vivian, all these kind people ; and Percy Vivian’s devotion would repay them for the great debt his cousin owed. But a darker consideration mingled with this ; Mary was now of course on terms of perfect confidence with Percy. Mary would tell him that her beautiful sister was a stranger, a poor little orphan adopted of the house ; and Percy and Elizabeth, who remembered so well the lost Zaidee, would discover her secret ere she was aware. This fancy filled her mind with dreary anticipations. Only one resource seemed open to Zaidee ; once more she must go out unfriended upon the world,—she must not be taken home to annul all previous sacrifices—to make this seven years’ banishment of none effect. No longer a child, a woman with that perilous inheritance of beauty to make her way harder, she must once more break from the grasp of affection and friendliness, and

go forth to the unknown. Zaidee looked at Mary's face sleeping under the morning light, with its sweet colour and its unconscious smiles; she could not grudge the happiness of Mary; she could not be otherwise than glad for this consummation, whatever the result might be to herself. Zaidee's generous heart never faltered in its congratulations for the sore and hapless chance which she perceived approaching in the distance; however it might fare with her, she was glad for Mary. A distinct and pleasant future full of sunshine lay before the footsteps of her friend; for herself Zaidee saw nothing but a world of clouds and shadows—a forlorn path leading away through the solitude towards the horizon. Lover nor friend was none, to stretch out a hand to her; she had no possession in the world but her father's Bible, and that book of Grandfather Vivian's,—no sweet fortune descending out of the tender twilight skies, but an inexorable necessity, a pursuing fate. To the end of the world, if need were—to the unfriendly crowds of London, or the stranger solitudes of some distant country,—anywhere rather than here, where she was in danger of discovery,—anywhere sooner than the Grange.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONSENT.

THE next morning overwhelmed Mrs Cumberland with surprise and doubtful pleasure. "I should have been very glad had it been Elizabeth," said Mrs Cumberland; "but Mary!—how could you possibly think of *Mary*, my dear Mr Vivian! I am sure I will not stand in the way of your happiness—one to whom the whole world of readers owes so much!—and I assure you it will make me very proud to call the author of those delightful volumes my son-in-law. But Mary!—Mary has no genius, Mr Vivian. She is a child of very plain tastes, and takes strangely after her Aunt Burtonshaw. I am extremely surprised; I cannot understand it: Mary! Are you sure you have made a wise choice?"

"I am very sure I have no other choice in my power," said Percy, somewhat astonished at this novel reception of his addresses. "Choice is a fiction, I suspect; at all events, I am quite beyond that agreeable freedom."

“I assure you I will never stand in the way of your happiness,” said Mrs Cumberland; “on the contrary, I am only too much delighted to have it in my power to aid your wishes. Mary is a good child; but she has no genius, Mr Vivian.”

“I fancy I prefer having all the genius myself,” said Percy with a saucy smile. This was for the benefit of Mary, who entered at the moment, abruptly concluding Mr Vivian’s audience. Mrs Cumberland, much bewildered, followed her daughter through the room with her eyes. Mary!—How could the distinguished author by any possibility think of *her*?

But Mrs Cumberland had no alternative but assent, and the concurrence of Mr Cumberland was certain; even Mrs Burtonshaw gave her approval of this conclusive blow to all her former hopes. “But it is some time since I made up my mind to lose Mary. I have other views for Sylvo now, my love,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. Again Zaidee assented innocently to this seeming harmless declaration, and asked no questions. “She never asks me what my views are, poor dear,” said Mrs Burtonshaw within herself; and she received her sister’s condolences over Mary’s new engagement with great resignation. Zaidee’s want of curiosity was proof positive to Aunt Burtonshaw.

“Promise me one thing, Mary,” said Zaidee, wistfully, amid the many talks and confidences of the

following night. "Do not tell Mr Vivian I am not your sister—I would rather he thought me your sister ; do not tell him, Mary, for my sake."

"Why?" Mary looked up with immediate curiosity. Mary had one or two strange things in her mind to wonder at when she had leisure ; her glance was so sudden that Zaidee's face was almost surprised into the beseeching look with which she had barred further mention of the Grange on the previous day ; but she was wise enough to subdue her anxiety, and look unconcerned.

"I suppose if he comes to know all our family matters by-and-by," said Mary with a blush, and a little hesitation, "he will have to know that you were not born my sister, Lizzy—he will never know anything else, I am sure ; the only difference is, that if you had been born my sister, I might not have liked you so well—one of us surely must have taken after our father or our mother. But I will not tell him, Elizabeth ; I will not say a word about it, I assure you. I wonder if you will ever be on good terms—I think he is a little afraid of you : it is always my beautiful sister, or Miss Elizabeth Cumberland ; he does not half understand you, I am sure ; I wonder if you will ever be friends?"

Zaidee could not answer ; she durst not say no—no, it was impossible—she must not be friends with

Percy : but Zaidee became aware that a cloud and weight of doubtfulness began to be visible on Mary's face ; she could not understand either Percy's curiosity about Zaidee, or Zaidee's evident wish to avoid his presence and his friendship ; she could not be jealous any longer—far from that, she had given up all her thoughts to the safe keeping of her beautiful sister, and made a confidant deeply interested and most sympathetic of Zaidee. But she was disturbed ; there was some mystery in it : could Zaidee have known Percy before?—and immediately there returned to Mary's memory that description of the Grange which corresponded so strangely with a description Zaidee had once given to her. Had Percy by any chance made Mary acquainted to-day with the story of his lost cousin, Mary must have leaped to the conclusion, and Zaidee's secret been discovered on the spot. As it was, Mary went out with a good deal of doubt and wonder in her mind, but after half an hour's wandering through those hilly paths where the sunshine lay warm upon the grass, and the air came fresh and sweet across the plain, Mary forgot in a great measure her doubt and her wonder. She forgot her beautiful sister altogether, and all that was mysterious in her—she thought of nothing but the present sunny hour, and the charmed prospect of the future. Mary, though she was generous by nature, was not a strik-

ing example of unselfishness ; and perhaps, under her circumstances, it would have been an equivocal kindness to suffer her anxiety for any one else to interfere with the regard she owed to Percy, who was devoting all *his* thoughts and all his cares to her.

So they came and went together unreprieved upon these hilly ways, and grew into acquaintance with each other on the grassy slopes of Malvern. To Percy Vivian's versatile and many-sided nature there was repose and support in the much more limited mind of Mary, which was strong in what it did grasp—though its grasp comprehended but a small part of his wide range of thought and fancy. She never brought him down out of his aerial flights by lack of understanding, but sometimes she listened with a smile. His sister Elizabeth, who also was limited in her mental range, was perfect, in Percy's apprehension, within her boundaries ; but Mary was not perfect. She was young ; she had a world before her, on which she, too, glanced undismayed. She was ready to follow his caprices of exuberant imagination—she was ready to share the impetuous delight with which he threw himself on one new field after another, and rejoiced in his waste of power and universal reputation—his capacity for everything. Percy's prudent friends warned him to build his edifice of fame on more lasting foundations, and consolidate

his glories ; but Percy, who threw himself from one branch of the profession he had chosen to another for pure delight in the change, and exultation in the exercise of his young powers, took no time to pause and think of fame ; and Mary, glorying, like himself, in the magic of that power of his, scorned, like himself, to bring this glorious vassal into harness, and make Pegasus do his day's work steadily, like an ignoble steed. He told her of all his countless schemes and projects ; and she, to whom the profession of literature had become the most noble profession under heaven, heard and gave her whole heart to them, without a single reserve of prudence or recommendation to concentrate ; they were quite unanimous in running this brilliant race, and Percy's breast expanded as he stood looking out upon that great plain, with Mary leaning on his arm, and the fresh wind tossing his wavy hair about his temples, at thought of all that he could do.

“ I'll make thee famous with my pen,” quoted Percy, half laughing and half in earnest—

“ I'll serve thee in such glorious ways,
As ne'er were known before ;
I'll deck and crown my head with bays,
And love thee evermore.”

“ Should it not be *my* head you crown with bays— is that not the strain of the song ? ” said Mary, looking up to him as his eyes brightened under the influence

of the verse. "You are only the crowner—you are not the crowned."

"Ah, Montrose knew better," said Percy. "If I crown my head with bays, I am a more creditable vassal. You will rather conquer the conqueror than hold a slave in your fetters; the bays are not emblems of great enough royalty for a poet's bride; it is only her knight, her vassal, her sworn servant, who must be laureated. Stars, or the living sunshine, are the only fitting crown for the brow of her beauty, which is above fame; the man has honour to win, but the lady of his thoughts is above his honour; the rewarder and inspirer of it, throned in an atmosphere higher than his bays and his fightings. Yes, yes, Montrose knew the homage he could offer—not the bays, but the love."

And Mary Cumberland cast down her eyes, and bent her pretty head in humility almost painful. This ethereal type of womanhood was not "*me.*" She was ashamed of herself, to have all these undeserved glories laid upon her. Her atmosphere was not so high, nor her world so pure as the poet represented it, and Mary was humbled with too much praise. Yes, he had crowned his head with laurels, fresh and noble; he had taken the universal heart by storm, and raised a fairy temple of fame for himself; and all the store he set by it was to make his homage more worthy of *her*—of that Mary Cumberland who

boasted of being one of the common people, neither intellectual nor superior. Mary went by his side very humbly after this conversation; the burden of his song rang in her ears, "and love thee evermore." Mary's fancy was singing this as she listened to his voice rather vaguely, more for the music of it than to understand its words; she could be even with him in that one particular,—it was a comfort to Mary.

And Zaidee sat at home thinking over this strange chance which had befallen the family—wondering how she could have been so glad of it last night—how she could have shut her eyes to its important bearing on her own fate! Percy would by-and-by become a member of the family, and know all its secrets; Percy would soon have perfect acquaintance with all that his bride knew of her—Mary's suspicions perhaps—her own request to Mary,—a hundred circumstances which only Mary could remember. She sat in desolate idleness, twining her fingers together, and looking blankly towards the future. When this engagement ended in the marriage to which they all began to look forward, this place was no longer a shelter for Zaidee. Were it but for her own self, she could not endure close intercourse with the family so infinitely dear to her. She could not meet Aunt Vivian—Philip—all of them, as strangers. She must go away.

CHAPTER XXII.

PERCY'S SHORTCOMINGS.

“MY dear love, you are losing all your beautiful colour—you are pining to a shadow,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “We must go home, Elizabeth. I shall go home with you myself if Maria Anna will not hear reason, and the sweet air of Sylvo’s place will set you up again, my dear child.”

Mrs Burtonshaw could not be sufficiently grateful for this constant affection, which rewarded Sylvo so abundantly for Mary’s loss. She exhausted herself in solicitude for the unconscious Zaidee, who never dreamed of any special reason for this excessive kindness. Except in the lengthened confidences which brought Mary every evening into Zaidee’s room, and delayed their rest till far into the night, Zaidee had lost her companion. Mr Cumberland had given his consent by this time in an odd letter—a curious contrast to the eloquent one which Percy sent to him, and to the elegant epistle full of notes of admiration

in which Mrs Cumberland had intimated the event, and her own wonder ; so that the way was quite without an obstacle, and the course of this true love threatened to run provokingly smooth, and to have no obstructions. There began to be considerable talk even in Zaidee's chamber, where sentiment was a little more prevalent than formerly, of the *trousseau*, and the important preparations of the wedding. There was a great flutter among the attendant maids, who had come here with the family, and a general excitement and expectation of the great event which began to draw near.

On one of these evenings, when Mary followed Zaidee up-stairs, no longer finding any occasion to extinguish the light, the old spark of mirth was dancing once more in Mary's eye. "I have given up being humble, Elizabeth," said Mary ; "I have no such extraordinary occasion as I fancied myself to have ; he is not so immaculate after all, Lizzy. I am very glad ; a perfect man would be a sad weariness. He has human frailty in him. The lofty Percy Vivian, who has only to say the word and his hero or his heroine is forthwith endowed with fairy fortune, is much troubled with the vulgar question of ways and means, Elizabeth. He has been making a great many confessions to me. He is quite afraid to bring Mr Cumberland's daughter into poverty, and talks of

taking advantage of 'our goodness.' He should have thought of that in time "

"But you did not think he was rich," said Zaidee hastily. Zaidee's face flushed with a little family pride. She was not content to hear a Vivian spoken of so.

"Of course, I did not think him rich," said Mary, "and I am sure I did not care whether he was rich or poor. I don't believe he ever thought of it himself, till Aunt Burtonshaw had been saying something of my fortune ; and when I came in, I saw something was wrong ; he was restless and disturbed, Elizabeth, and his eyes were flashing about everywhere. Now, when I think of it, his eyes are not unlike your eyes—and he was a little haughty, and a great deal troubled. After a long time, I prevailed on him to tell me, and it appears that Mr Percy Vivian has been an extravagant young gentleman, Lizzy ; that he is not quite prepared, after all, for entering upon what mamma calls 'new responsibilities,' as he was so anxious to do ; and that something more is necessary than papa's consent. We are not running quite so smooth after all, you see," said Mary, with a little sigh ; "I believe he has followed Sylvo's example, and taken a cigar into his counsel. There is a little red spark down below there, pacing up and down through the darkness. He has confided his trouble

to me very frankly, Lizzy ; but when I tried to hint at that poor little fortune of mine, you should have seen what a glance he gave me. I may sympathise, or I may advise, but I cannot try to assist ; I see he must do it all by himself."

"He must do it all by himself," echoed Zaidee eagerly. Zaidee forgot for the moment everything but that she was a Vivian, and looked almost as haughty at the idea of Mary Cumberland's fortune as Percy himself could do. "But Mr Vivian was of a good family, you told me ; will not they set him right?"

"Like those bad princes that Aunt Burtonshaw talks about," said Mary, laughing, "who had all their debts paid when they suffered themselves to be 'settled.' I do not think I ought to talk like this. Percy only told me, because I plagued him to know what was the matter, and he said he must tell papa ; but I do not think he thought it anything to laugh at. I do not suppose they can be people of fortune, Lizzy, for his elder brother is in India. Why should he be there, if there was a good estate at home?"

"Does Mr Vivian speak of him?" said Zaidee. Zaidee could by no means explain to herself why Philip was in India, nor what reason he could have had for leaving the Grange.

"Yes, he speaks of him. One would think he was

a *preux chevalier*, and he is only a merchant—an Indian prince's agent—a something in business," said Mary, who was a little jealous of this much-commended brother. "Percy says Philip—that is his brother's name—used to send him an allowance to help him to prosecute his studies, till he gave up the law for literature, and had a great deal of money of his own, and did not want it any more. Do you know Percy really is a barrister, Elizabeth? He could go and plead to-morrow, if any one gave him a brief. I do not know if he is a good lawyer, but I am sure he is an orator by nature. I am certain he would win his plea. I do not believe he ever failed in anything. You need not smile; it is a simple truth. It would kill Percy to fail."

"And his brother—he whom you call Philip?" asked Zaidee, with hesitation. "Mary, he will help him now."

"I do not know," said Mary slowly; "perhaps Percy will not ask him. I think he will resume his profession, and work very hard, and get over his difficulty by himself. He will not give up literature, of course; but I am sure, if he devoted himself to his profession, he might be lord-chancellor, Elizabeth!"

For Mary Cumberland's well-regulated and sensible mind had been dazzled into an overweening admiration for the genius of her betrothed. Somewhat

cynical of every other excellence, Mary had yielded all the more completely to this one, in which she believed. She was not much given to exercising faith where reason was practicable, but in the present case the neglected capabilities of belief and enthusiasm avenged themselves on Mary. She delivered herself over to this overpowering fascination. She who was so wary and cautious in her ordinary judgments, believed in Percy with the blindest faith. There was nothing too glorious for his attainment, nothing too great for him to reach. Her sober fancy borrowed and exaggerated the glowing colours of his poetic imagination. Everywhere else the earth was common soil to Mary Cumberland; the days were working days, the men and the women very ordinary people; but all the vague indefinite charms which a youthful imagination throws upon the general surface of the world were gathered into one for Mary. There was but one magician sufficiently potent to throw this spell upon her; but now, when she was fairly enthralled by the magical influence, she gave up her whole heart to it, and reasoned no more.

But here was a temporary pause in the smooth current of their love. Percy's wooing must not blossom into Percy's marriage quite so rapidly as that ardent young gentleman had intended. All these wanderings over the hill of Malvern, those charmed

walks and fairy twilights, must be interrupted by a laborious necessity, and their renewal indefinitely postponed. Percy would have started for town that same night could he have had his will, but being persuaded to wait till the morning, he waited longer; a day or two did not so much signify—and a world of plans were formed and discussed, and little time lost, as these two well-occupied people thought. Zaidee did not even have that evening's report of the day's proceedings which at first had indemnified her for the loss of Mary's society. Mary's thoughts and time were alike swallowed up by Percy Vivian; and Zaidee, whose interest in Percy no one suspected, wondered by herself over the family circumstances unknown to her, and could not understand why Philip went to India, or how Percy's allowance during his time of study should come from him. Could some new and unthought-of misfortune have plucked the little possessions of Briarford out of Philip's hands once more? But Percy still spoke of the Grange. Zaidee wasted many an hour in wonder, but without comprehension. She had relinquished all that *she* had, seven years ago, when she left her home. Whatever difficulties they might be in, even if by chance they should come to poverty, as Zaidee's old vision was, she could no longer help them now. It was bootless for her to ponder Percy's difficulties—to wonder why Philip

should not help him—but Zaidee could think of nothing else, as she bore Mrs Cumberland and Mrs Burtonshaw company in that little drawing-room, or sat in her own chamber alone. When Percy did go away at last, it was at night. He could not set out upon his journey, he protested, while the morning light lay so sweetly upon these heights of Malvern, and when there was a whole day to be enjoyed. He preferred setting out when he had said good-night—when there was no more to be seen of Mary for all these hours of darkness; and when another moment's lingering would have made him too late, Percy dashed off in great haste, and went whirling past their gate in the night coach, which he caught, with his usual good fortune, after it had left its starting-place. When the sound of its wheels had died into the distance, Mary turned from the window with a sigh. She was very anxious for the breaking-up of the little party this evening—very anxious to take Zaidee's arm, and hurry her up-stairs. Mary had no patience for mamma and Aunt Burtonshaw in the sudden relapse into languor and quietness which followed Percy's farewell, and she had more than usual occasion for her confidant, and more than common news to carry to Zaidee to-night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HISTORY OF THE VIVIANS.

“I HAVE never heard a stranger story,” said Mary Cumberland; “it is like romance. I am very sure it is not like actual life. He only told me last night, and I have had no time to speak to you to-day. Do not stand there, Elizabeth, as if you were marble; you are as pale as marble, indeed. Are you really pining for Sylvo’s place, as Aunt Burtonshaw persuades herself? And what are you going to do with work—work at this hour of the night? I really do wish you would sit down, Lizzy, and let me tell you my tale.”

Zaidee sat down with passive obedience. She did not take the work she had lifted, but she turned her face away from Mary, and sat with a breathless interest in her look, which made her great paleness more apparent. Mary did not observe this; she was full of her own thoughts, and went on.

“His family had a little cousin living with them, and they had been very kind to her; but suddenly a will was found made by Percy’s grandfather—who

must have been a dreadful person, if all is true that is said of him—leaving the estate to this child. She was quite young, and her name was Zaidee. Mrs Morton's little girl is called after her. Well, of course the family were very much disturbed about this, and they all made up their minds unanimously not to dispute the will—as I should fancy could have been done—but to give up the estate at once to this girl. The eldest son—who is Philip—was especially anxious, and determined to go to India; and when little Zaidee found that she could not persuade them to burn the will, or to take the property from her, what do you think she did, Elizabeth? Percy says she was only a child—not pretty, nor very clever, nor anything particular—she ran away!”

Mary waited an instant for some comment, but, hearing none, resumed her story.

“I think it was very grand of her! whatever you may think, Elizabeth; and though it was a very foolish thing, you know, and gave them great distress and trouble, I think it was very grand of that child. They never could find her, though they were once very near; so where she is, or if she is living at all, they have no knowledge—they cannot tell anything at all of her. She may be in Malvern here, or she may be at the end of the world. They advertised, and did all sorts of things, but Zaidee was never heard of again.”

Zaidee listened to all this, and was silent ; she had clasped her hands together so tightly that they were some support to her, and her heart was leaping against her breast with such loud throbs that she feared lest Mary should hear. Another vehement aching pulse beat in Zaidee's temples. Her slight figure now and then was swept by a sudden shuddering ; but she felt that on her self-denial now depended all her hope of eluding discovery ; and with an effort of which she could not have believed herself capable, she kept herself from trembling, and cleared her choking voice to speak. "What then?" said Zaidee. Her whole force was strained to make the tone of these two little syllables clear and calm ; no trace of the burning anxiety with which she listened, nor of her passion of fear and excitement, was betrayed in her voice,—“What then?” but no effort could have strengthened her to say more.

“I suppose she had thought they would remain quietly in possession of the estate after she was gone,” said Mary, in her lightness of speech—and every word that Mary spoke was a revelation to Zaidee ; “of course that was what she meant, the poor foolish child ; but her running away did not make any difference, except to embarrass them all the more : for you could never expect that Philip—Philip must be very proud, I am afraid, Elizabeth—would be content

to have the estate after the heiress had run away ; so, when he could not find her, Philip went to India, and Percy came to London, and Mrs Morton was married, —all these changes happened at the same time ; and their mother and their two younger sisters were left in the Grange.”

Another dreadful pause, and Zaidee must compel herself to speak again. “ But at least *they* are there now,” said Zaidee. Her great strain of excitement was slackened a little ; she was no longer in doubt ; she saw the whole ; and, with bitter disappointment and mortification, marvelled at her own blindness, which could not foresee this certain failure of her childish sacrifice.

“ They are there now,” said Mary—and Mary’s light and sprightly tones fell so strangely upon this heart which was troubled to its very depths ; “ at least the old lady is there now, for I am not sure whether one or both of the sisters are married. Mrs Vivian must be a very active old lady, Elizabeth. Percy says she manages all the estate, and looks after everything ; and if this little cousin should ever be found, she will be a very great heiress—one of the richest in the country—for the rents have been accumulating ever since she ran away. Percy does not think she will ever be found now, it is so long since they lost her ; and I do not know who all this money will go

to, I am sure ; but that is why his own family cannot help him in his difficulties—none of them would touch this that is left for Zaidee, however great the necessity might be. Now is it not a very strange tale ?”

The conclusion of the story restored Zaidee to herself ; she had heard all Mary knew of these dearest friends, whom she yearned at all times to hear of, and she recalled her mind to the present moment, and left all this startling intelligence to be considered hereafter. Slowly, and with pain, she unclosed the white hands which had held to each other with such a fixed and deadly grasp, and constrained the sobbing sigh which struggled in her breast. She knew that her face did not betray her when she turned it to the light ; she saw that Mary’s eyes were quite unsuspecting, and her composure unbroken ; and she felt her heart expand with a strange satisfaction in her own power—she had been able to listen to all this, yet make no sign.

“In other circumstances, Percy could have had little difficulty ; but he must do all for himself now, and we must delay. It does not trouble *me*,” said Mary, with a blush ; “but it troubles Percy, and I am afraid he must be more than a little embarrassed. It was natural that he should live as he had been used to live ; and then he got a great deal of money for writing, you know, and was so much applauded, and

invited everywhere. I do not wonder at it in the least, Elizabeth ; it was the most natural thing in the world. I am afraid it will be some time before he is able to encounter 'new responsibilities,' Lizzy. I am afraid it will be a long time—perhaps two or three years. If he should happen to make an extraordinary impression in the first case he conducts—as I have no doubt he will—it may be different ; but otherwise, we will have to be patient, and he must work, and I must cheer him all I can.”

Mary ended with a little sigh ; then she took up one of the lights, and gave her good-night kiss to Zaidee, listlessly, and went out of the room with a languid step. Percy was gone ; there was a long working-day of labour and anxiety before the brilliant, versatile genius. Mary, in her undoubting confidence in him, did not inquire how he would bear this ordeal ; but she felt that it must be a very wearisome, tedious time, and she yielded to a little natural depression as she went slowly to her rest.

But there was no rest for Zaidee that night. When she had closed her door, she returned to think over all this story—the story of her family and of herself. She could not sit still to contemplate this glimpse of her home ; she wandered through the little chamber, by turns calling upon one and another, with tears and an unspeakable yearning. She fancied she saw Aunt

Vivian alone in the Grange, every one of them gone away from her ; no Philip to support her declining years, not even pretty Sophy, perhaps, to gladden her mother's heart. Alone—all by herself—Zaidee's fairy godmother, employed in anxious cares for the lost child ; while Philip, under the burning Eastern skies, toiled to achieve for himself the fortune of which Zaidee had deprived him at home. With an eager and hasty anxiety, her thoughts laboured to find some other means of making effectual her futile and useless sacrifice. All these years she had been consoling herself, in her simplicity, with the thought that she had done justice ; but she had not done justice ; her labour and exile, and martyrdom of love, were all in vain. Zaidee could not tell what side to turn to in her momentary despair ; she had lost her name, her home, her identity ; but she had not fulfilled that last command of Grandfather Vivian : with all her anxiety, and all her exertion, she had still supplanted Philip ; the house was desolate, and the heir in a far country, and on Zaidee's heart lay the weight of it all.

She could have hated her own forlorn existence—she could have prayed again her child's prayer to die ; but Zaidee was a woman now, and had not any longer the boldness and the ignorance of the child to justify these cries of her grieving heart. When she lay down upon her bed for form's sake, and when she rose again

in the early dawning, her mind followed, without intermission, a serious question—a matter of life or death. She had failed—and now, how to succeed—how to put her urgent duty beyond reach of failure? She had attained to an elder age, and a more mature understanding; but she was still simple, youthful, inexperienced, and knew of no certain means to attain her object. A thousand impracticable plans crowded upon her as she stood at the window, watching the sun climb up the eastern sky. Mary was dreaming the morning dreams of youth and happiness; Percy was resting from his night journey, and even in his sleep impetuously pressing forward to overvault his difficulties. Where was Philip, in his far-away exile, near yonder sunrising? But had they seen this beautiful face, gazing with wistful eyes upon the golden light of the morning, neither Percy nor Philip could have dreamed that this was Zaidee, labouring in her secret heart, with prayers and plans a hundredfold, to restore to his inheritance the exiled heir of the Grange.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER EFFORT.

WHEN Mary came in rather late that morning to seek Zaidee—for Mary was very listless and a little exacting to-day, not feeling that she had any great object in getting up from her sweet sleep and dreams, and rather disposed to think that she ought to be amused and sympathised with—she found Zaidee writing. This was rather a singular occurrence, for Zaidee had no correspondents, and not many literary attainments; and Mary, who was inclined to be curious about anything by way of diverting her languor, was still more attracted by perceiving that her friend gathered up her materials hastily, and put them away. “What are you writing?” asked Mary; and Zaidee said, “Nothing.”

“Nothing! I will tell Aunt Burtonshaw it was a letter to Sylvo,” said Mary. Zaidee only laughed at this; she had no idea of the close chain of circumstantial evidence by which she was convicted of being

“in love” with this redoubtable squire ; nor did she suspect either how this writing of hers found a place in Mary’s memory, and was laid aside among the sundry other things which were mysteries to be inquired into some day. Mary made a great many claims upon her this morning ; she wanted to talk to her of a hundred things, which neither Aunt Burtonshaw nor Mrs Cumberland would care for hearing, but which Zaidee at another time would have entered into with all the generous sympathy of youthful friendship. Mary had not the faintest idea of Zaidee’s full heart and preoccupied attention ; she poured her own happy schemes and projects into her companion’s ears, all unaware that her companion was absorbed heart and soul in attempting once more to carry out the one sole project of her life. When Mary went out for a solitary morning walk, carrying Mr Vivian’s poems secretly in her hand, to be read in some nook of the hill which Percy’s presence had made pleasant to his betrothed, Zaidee returned hastily to her own apartment. This time she fastened her door with a precaution strangely new to her ; and taking out her papers, and that book of Grandfather Vivian’s which still bore the tarnished livery of the library at the Grange, sat down again to her writing. She wrote slowly, for she was not much used to the exercise of composition ; but Zaidee had no occasion

to labour after a feigned handwriting; she had attained the lady's hand, which is the most undistinguishable of all styles of caligraphy. Mary wrote exactly the same, and so did the young ladies'-maid, and Mrs Cumberland's accomplished waiting-woman. Zaidee had long ago given up her characteristic childish pot-hooks; this letter of hers had not a trace of individuality in its penmanship—and Zaidee perceived this, and wrote without fear. The matter was somewhat different from the manner, however; this was how the epistle ran. She began boldly, by making herself known.

“ Aunt Vivian, I am Zaidee whom you have lost; but I do not write to tell you where to find me, for my mind has never changed, though I am a woman grown. If I could be a child again, and Grandfather Vivian had made no will to defraud Philip, and take my natural life from me, I would give all the world to be at home; but I fear I must never be at home now. For all these years I have hoped that my coming away had removed all the difficulty; that you no longer thought of Zaidee, who did you an unwilling injury, but that Philip was the master of his own lands, as nature and justice made him. Dear Aunt Vivian, I have almost broken my heart to hear that it is not so. Philip, in his pride and his honour, has been cruel to poor Zaidee; he has not given me

the satisfaction of doing him justice. What can I do now? I will never come back to take the Grange from Philip. I will be an exile and a stranger all my life while Philip refuses to return to his own land. Will you tell him that he takes her only comfort from poor Zaidee, and that I can never know rest nor pleasure till I hear he has taken all that is his into his own possession, and no longer compels me, or even the name of me, to be the instrument of wrong?

“And he is not carrying out Grandfather Vivian’s will—and neither are you, dear Aunt Vivian. I send you a book, which I found many years ago. I found it very strangely among strangers; and then I thought it was Grandfather Vivian himself whom God had permitted to guide me to this, his last will of all. See what he says. I think it must have been when death was on him, and when no one but God could see his repentance. Let Philip know of it, Aunt Vivian. Ask him if he will still make Zaidee’s name a dishonour to her father’s memory. My father would have done justice had he lived—and this was all the inheritance he left to me.—Will not Philip have pity upon me? Will he not take back his own?”

“And Percy wants these useless riches that you are hoarding for Zaidee. Will you give them to Percy, Aunt Vivian? If nothing else can be done for me—if Philip will not hear the prayer I make,

though I pray God every day to soften his heart—will you do this one thing for me? I will never see you again—I do not think I will ever see you again—but I love you all as dearly as the day I left the Grange. I think of you constantly in my secret heart. Pray Philip that he will have pity upon me, Aunt Vivian—that he will come back to claim his own.”

And then Zaidee paused, and, with a swelling heart and tears in her eyes, wrote her own name—her own name—the name of her father, her kindred, her home. A long time had passed since she wrote “Zaidee Vivian” before; and strangely dear was this forbidden and discarded signature, so different from the “Elizabeth Cumberland,” her disguise and the token of her banishment. Then she read her letter once more, and then put it up carefully in a parcel with that precious book. With infinite precaution, and with trembling hands, she fastened it, as much afraid of the safety of this packet as if these worm-eaten leaves had been priceless jewels, and deposited the whole carefully at last in the heart of her own particular possessions, safe from all scrutiny. Her plan was to send it to the Grange from some town adjacent to Malvern—some unknown place from which she could not be traced; for she did not doubt Aunt Vivian’s instant endeavour to search for her once

more. When this duty was done—and it had occupied a long space of Zaidee's day—she had nothing more refreshing before *her* than to go over it all again, questioning and wondering if this appeal would be effectual—if they would accept Grandfather Vivian's latest wish as annulling that miserable will which had wrought so much evil—if Philip would come at her entreaty, and take back his natural inheritance. Bitter as Zaidee's disappointment was to find her own self-sacrifice useless, her heart swelled with generous pride for this very cause. She felt in her heart that Philip was right, in his youthful honour making his own independence bravely and painfully. She acknowledged that the head of the house would have preserved his dignity less pure had he remained in the quiet opulence of the Grange; and yet, strangely inconsistent, she prayed again, with tears in her eyes, that Philip might come home. She could not cease thinking of this—it filled her mind and heart to overflowing, and engrossed her still the more in her solitude, because it was a pent-up stream, and must never have issue. Zaidee, in her painful loneliness, thought of a traveller upon the highway, which Mary had pointed out to her from Malvern Hill, and of some one on the hidden footpath below, under the hedgerow keeping step for step with him, with steps which were only an echo of the bolder wayfarer's,

always present but never seen. It was thus with herself in her secret post of observation, and she anticipated, with a strange tremor, hearing of this communication of hers, and of the wonder and excitement of the family. Her cheek was flushing once more with a dangerous hectic; her secret life began once more to devour her obvious one; and Zaidee sat alone, with her busy imagination consuming her heart.

And then there returned Mary, with the fresh air fragrant round her, her lassitude worn off, and her volume of poems in her hand. Mary was ready to plunge with renewed spirit into all their former occupations. She had rested and refreshed herself, and her natural mood returned upon Mary. She laughed a little at her new-born sentimentalism—put away carefully the book of poems, which was precious because it was Percy's—coloured a little with proud pleasure at the remembrance that Percy's affection and their betrothal were things not to be laughed away—and then returned to her old use and went with returning animation. It was very well for Zaidee, though Zaidee scarcely thought so, as her light-hearted companion led her hither and thither, and made claims upon her opinions, her thoughts, and her experience, in her old girlish way. It was often a sick heart which went with Mary over the slopes of

Malvern, and eyes that pierced beyond the low line of yonder horizon which looked forth by Mary's side upon this sunny plain ; and Mary, who could not comprehend " what *you* can have to think of, Elizabeth ! " roused her with the gay sallies of her own happy spirit, and kept Zaidee perpetually in the centre of her own absorbing projects. Meanwhile Aunt Burtonshaw mourned more and more for that fresh air of Sylvo's place, which would " set up " her dear child again ; and Mrs Cumberland became tired of looking constantly upon the vale of Severn and the slopes of this spectator hill.

One day when, by a rare chance, they left Zaidee at home while they went to pay a visit to some ancient acquaintance established in the neighbourhood, Zaidee set out with her precious packet. Quite a long journey, back and forward, she achieved in secret that day. The servants only thought that Miss Elizabeth was reading on the hill, as Miss Cumberland was in the habit of doing ; and with a flutter of guilt and a flush on her cheek, Zaidee awaited the home-coming of the little party. She had done her errand boldly and speedily, though with many a pang of terror ; and those silent hours of night, through which she lay awake thinking of it were carrying her first letter home to the Grange.

CHAPTER XXV.

RETURN.

“WE cannot stay always at Malvern,” said Mrs Cumberland. “Since we have lost the charm of Mr Vivian’s society, I confess this place has less attraction for me. I should prefer being at home.”

“You had a great deal better come to Essex, Maria Anna,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. “The children, I am sure, would like a few weeks at Sylvo’s place. My dear Mary, you must not be selfish. Think of Elizabeth, poor darling! We ought to consult her wishes now.”

“Indeed I should be very glad to be at home, Aunt Burtonshaw—and I like Sylvo’s place very well. I have no wish on the subject,” said the unsuspecting Zaidee.

Mrs Burtonshaw only said, “Poor dear!”

It was the day following Zaidee’s secret expedition; and with great satisfaction Zaidee noted Mrs Cumberland’s frequent pilgrimages from the sofa to the

window, and the restlessness which disturbed her "languor." These were all intimations that this fanciful lady was already fluttering her wings for a rapid flight in one direction or another. Zaidee was very indifferent as to the place they went to,—whether to Twickenham or to Essex she did not greatly care ; but she was very glad to be suddenly removed from this quarter, from whence she had sent her first missive to the Grange.

Mary, equally anxious, was more precise in her choice to go home. Mr Cumberland was too busy for correspondence. They did not know very well how his work prospered. They were not, indeed, much of a letter-writing family, though Mrs Cumberland was rather thought to excel in the composition of beautiful letters ; but it did not surprise any one when she proposed that evening to set off next day for town.

"If Mr Cumberland is not ready for us, we can go back to Mrs Harley's, where we were before," said Mrs Cumberland ; "but the work must be so far advanced at home that our presence and suggestions might be useful. My dear Elizabeth, Sylvo must come to us at Twickenham. I have always begged him to consider our house his home—but I think you must not ask us to go back to Essex this year."

Mrs Burtonshaw's remonstrances being ineffectual, Mrs Burtonshaw, as usual, yielded. She was not with-

out curiosity to see what had happened to the unfortunate square box which Mr Cumberland was ornamenting, and to ascertain if any new object had taken the place of the benevolent and moral science of architecture. Mary did not conceal her satisfaction, and Zaidee was not less pleased ; so they set out in very good spirits next morning for London and for home.

A day's rest in town, where Percy met and greeted them, brought a permission from Mr Cumberland to come "if they liked." They did like, and set out accordingly. When their carriage drew up before the well-known gate, Mrs Burtonshaw looked out with horror, and Mrs Cumberland with admiration. The square gable had become a pointed one, and glittered with little pinnacles surmounted by gilded balls, which shone in the sun. The famous porch stretched along the side of the building, with a similar little point of glittering light above its central door. Over this, again, was thrown out an oriel window, and on a shield above the door a gorgeous monogram was just now attracting the wonder and admiration of half-a-dozen little beggar-boys, whose respectable mammas reclined on the benches under shelter. A great "I," in purple, and blue, and scarlet, "picked out" with gilding, which rose into a cross above, and ran out below into the gay extravagance of a dragon's tail, closely embraced by a "C," a

less demonstrative letter, which contented itself with innocent bits of floriation in the curves of its half moon, attracted Mrs Burtonshaw no less than it did the juvenile vagabonds who clapped their hands at it below. "What does it mean?" asked Mrs Burtonshaw with horror, while her uninstructed eyes followed the curves of the dragon's tail, and opened wide at the papistical cross; but it did not mean anything very mysterious—it only meant John Cumberland, his mark, shining above the lintel of his hospitable door.

A hospitable door it was in literal truth. The porch ran along the gable, a sort of arcade, elevated three or four steps from the ground, and lined with benches. Stone benches might have given the poor creatures cold, Mr Cumberland thought, and his benevolent forethought made them oak. Ornamented hooks attached to the pillars of this porch of charity, and low stands, not unlike reading-desks, supported on grotesque corbels, attached to the wall of the house, just over the benches—for Mr Cumberland was not above amusing his chance visitors—were exhibited in their proper use at this moment, supporting one the basket of a feminine pedlar, full of pins and stay-laces, and such small merchandise; and another, a beggar's wallet full of pickings. But the novelties were not exhausted when the wondering ladies had glanced at these, and at the proprietors of the same. One end of

the porch was closed by an ornamental window, that there might be no draught through it, and the other led down by a flight of steps to the garden. At the upper end was a fountain, where a little stream of water popped pleasantly from the mouth of a benevolent dolphin, who did double service by holding in his claw a handsome goblet. Mr Cumberland, unwillingly yielding to the vulgar prejudice that silver was not a safe commodity to trust to the natural honesty of his wayfaring guests, had compromised the matter by lining with delicate white enamel the iron cup which his charitable dolphin extended to all the world. And close by this provision of water was a hatch, communicating with a well-stocked pantry inside—an orthodox buttery-hatch, after the fashion of a very creditable old “example,” by which the staff of life might be dispensed to add its substantial refreshment to the other necessity. While the new arrivals were examining, with speechless curiosity, these extraordinary improvements, and when the basket-woman had risen to follow Mrs Burtonshaw up and down in her investigations, recommending in the richest of Irish brogues the merchandise she carried, Mr Cumberland made his appearance upon the flight of steps which led to the garden. “You find us in very good trim,” said Mr Cumberland, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. “Come here; never mind

the porch : here is something better worth looking at. What do you think of my monogram, sister Burtonshaw? There is what I call a true feeling for art! Look at the curves of that first letter, what a graceful sweep they have! and the leafage of the C, how full of nature! Not one scrap of foliage repeated, sister Elizabeth. A true artist scorns to repeat himself. It is only your mechanical slave who wears his life out making both sides alike! And the colour—look at that conjunction; purple and blue and scarlet—colour is the sign of life and sanctity, sister Burtonshaw. Your dead whites and greys and dull monotonous are all marks of degraded souls and a degenerate time. We must throw colour boldly on our lifeless fronts, sister Burtonshaw. We must make a revolution in all that; wait but a year, and you shall see.”

“I only see this woman following me with her pins and her laces—am I like a person to buy stay-laces from a vagrant?” cried Mrs Burtonshaw resentfully; “and as for your letters, I see only these little ragged vagabonds looking at them, and dancing the poor innocent turf away. I see nothing to admire, I assure you, Mr Cumberland, when that is all I see!”

“Yes, these urchins have an advantage which neither your child nor mine had, sister Burtonshaw,”

said Mr Cumberland ; “ we had miserable primers in our nurseries, with black and white lies about A being an archer, and so on. How could A be an archer, I should like to know ? But when the general public in England follows my example, sister Burtonshaw, as I have sanguine expectations they will, these little rascals will learn their letters from the very hand of art. What is an archer to a child now ?—only a hieroglyphic a little more intelligible than an A. But suppose you illuminate your letter, sister Burtonshaw, and show us the archer shooting his arrow out of the very heart of his initial—that is the style of teaching ! Talk of your popular schools—your courses of education. Give me the education which shall make every street a grand primer. Yes, sister Elizabeth, my solemn conviction is, that *this* is the true education of the poor ! ”

Mrs Burtonshaw opened her eyes and lips in mute astonishment, and immediately broke forth upon the poor Irish basket-woman, expending her indignation, “ Woman, am I like a person to want your stay-laces ? ”—while Mrs Cumberland looked up at these famous letters critically, with her head held a little to one side, and with a gentle sigh of approval said, “ A beautiful idea—sermons in stones—a sweet thought ! I am delighted to think that *we* are first in such a delicate effort of benevolence. ”

“ He that runs may read ! ” cried Mr Cumberland triumphantly. “ Very different from a dog’s-eared spelling-book, sister Burtonshaw. The letters, the great fundamental principles of all literature, I hope to live long enough to see them emblazoned over every threshold. We acknowledge their importance unconsciously ; we call a famous author a man of letters ; we have professors of *belles lettres*. These are the true *belles lettres*, sister Elizabeth ! You see the beginning here to-day ; who can tell what influence upon the future life of these urchins the sight of this monogram may have ? They are happier for it at this moment, and it is impossible to predict what an amount of good may follow. Let us throw the primers into the sea, and emblazon all our houses, sister Burtonshaw, and I undertake for it we shall have a better educated population than we have now.”

Mrs Burtonshaw, struck dumb by extreme amazement and wrath, swept past the pertinacious basket-woman, and went into the house without a word. “ They’re illigant laces, sure, my lady,” said this indefatigable trader, dropping her curtsey to Mrs Cumberland. Mrs Cumberland thought it would be cruel not to encourage this honourable industry. Alms were not always good, but to patronise a lawful traffic was quite a different matter ; and while the sons of this successful merchant learned the I

and C of Mr Cumberland's monogram with devotion, their worthy mother adroitly flattered "my lady" into buying half the contents of her basket. "They are useless to me, of course, Mary, my love, but a great encouragement to this poor honest woman," said Mrs Cumberland, as she passed through the benevolent porch. More and more visitors were arriving; it promised to be a most well-frequented sheltering-place.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN PERIL.

THE unfortunate mansion of Mr Cumberland had not suffered so much within as without, since it was scarcely possible, with any amount of ingenuity, to make the modern English drawing-room into a Gothic hall. The bow-window alone, the broad sunshine of which was now broken by mullions and tracery, to the sad diminution of its brightness, had been put into masquerade. Zaidee could not but remember, as she sat down by it once more, that great window at the Grange, with its old real mullions, and its breadth of cloud and atmosphere. Something like an attempt to imitate it was in this window of Mr Cumberland's, which, Aunt Burtonshaw was horror-stricken to find, Mr Cumberland intended filling with painted glass one day. "And shut out the river!" cried Mrs Burtonshaw. Mr Cumberland, worsted for the moment, confessed that he had not thought of that, and graciously gave it up to the dissentient ladies; it

would be quite easy to break out another window for this special purpose at the other side. "One would think the house was having the measles," said Mrs Burtonshaw ungratefully; "it is breaking out into windows everywhere, Mr Cumberland—there are not two alike, I declare; and now we shall have the workmen back for this!"

"You make a slave of your workman, when you compel him to form two things alike," said Mr Cumberland. "When you have your gowns made exact to a pattern, you are no better than a slave-driver, sister Burtonshaw." Mrs Burtonshaw withdrew in silent indignation, too much affronted to answer, and Mr Cumberland set about designing his window. The lady of the house had resumed her sofa, and Zaidee and Mary their former places, and the day went on until the evening very much as of old.

In the evening, just before sunset, Percy Vivian made his appearance very hurriedly. Percy had discarded his high-stepping horse by this time, and came on foot to Mr Cumberland's gate. He said he had only half-an-hour to stay—that this was merely a flying visit—that his mother had come to town quite unexpectedly, and he must hurry back to spend the night with her.

"Your mother? Mrs Vivian will surely do us the great pleasure of coming to Twickenham, or at least

we must call upon her, my dear Mr Vivian," said Mrs Cumberland ; " you cannot suppose we would let your mother be in town, and not go to see her—she we all owe so much admiration to—the mother of such a son ! "

" My mother must leave London to-morrow," said Percy, with the slight quiver of laughter in his voice which always hailed Mrs Cumberland's compliments. " She has only come up for a few hours, very unexpectedly, on family business. No one could be more astonished than I was when I saw her. I had heard from her only the day before without the slightest intimation of her coming here, and now she must go as suddenly as she has come."

Scarcely hearing Mrs Cumberland's polite hopes that Mrs Vivian might not suffer from the fatigue of the journey, Percy turned to Mary. At the first mention of Aunt Vivian, Zaidee had taken a book from the table, and held it before her face ; it was not very easy to hold it steadily, but she put force upon herself, and listened with attention so strained that the slightest whisper must have caught her eager ear.

" Did you ever go to Worcester while you were at Malvern?" asked Percy in an under-tone of his betrothed.

" No ; never except yesterday on our way here," said Mary, looking at him in surprise.

“Nor knew any one there—*any* one, Mary?” Percy was very earnest.

“No indeed; not any one,” answered Mary Cumberland. “Why do you ask me? what has happened? You look very serious. Do *you* know any one there?”

“My mother has just received a most singular communication,” said Percy, tossing the damp hair from his forehead—“a very strange communication from Zaidee, whom I told you of so lately—Zaidee, who, I had made up my mind, was lost for ever. A letter from her own hand, and a book of Grandfather Vivian’s, which she says she found; and this extraordinary packet came from Worcester. My mother left home at once, and travelled at express speed to me. I must go down with her there to-morrow to make inquiries. It is most extraordinary. Zaidee, whom we have not heard of for seven years—and she mentions me. She mentions those very difficulties of mine, Mary! I am quite at a loss to understand it—it looks like witchcraft. What do you think? Can you tell me any one to inquire of? Give me your counsel, Mary.”

But Mary could not give him her counsel. She was watching silently, and with the breathless scrutiny of suspicion, the book in Zaidee’s hand. The book was not held lightly, carelessly, as one would hold it who

was reading it; it was held with fingers which grasped at it desperately, and were white to the very points with the strain. From Worcester! and Percy and Percy's difficulties mentioned in the letter. Flashing into life, as by an electric spark, Mary's suspicion came to sudden form. Elizabeth Cumberland, who was like Elizabeth Vivian—seven years—that Grange which was so strangely like her beautiful sister's first home. Mary started and was troubled; she could scarcely answer Percy for the sudden necessity she felt to follow out this clue.

“And what was the letter?” she asked at last eagerly.

“Poor Zaidee, poor child! her whole heart,” said Percy, with tears in his eyes. “A passionate appeal to my mother and Philip to take back the land—to make her name no longer an instrument of wrong. A reference to the book, which is of itself a strange and affecting revelation to us. Where Zaidee can have found it I cannot tell, but it contains a sort of prayer in that handwriting of Grandfather Vivian's which we all know so well, entreating Frank Vivian, her father, to do justice to Percy. She says this is her inheritance, and pleads that Philip will not be so cruel as to compel her to defraud him. It is a very moving letter, Mary, to us who remember Zaidee so

well. Poor little innocent heart! and she seems quite unchanged.”

“Will your mother and your brother hear her prayer?” said Mary; and Mary saw that the book swayed aside for a moment in the hands that held it. “If they did, she might still come home.”

“But they will not do it,” said Percy; “Philip is the head of the house; he cannot accept this gift of Zaidee’s—it is quite impossible. My mother might perhaps be induced to it by Zaidee’s importunity; but even she would not, could not—no, it is impossible. If we could but find her! And I must set out with my mother for this search to-night.”

Mary made no answer, but she saw a flutter in the folds of Zaidee’s dress—a faint, slight motion which Percy never perceived at all, so momentary it was. Mary marked it instantly with her quickened and suspicious eye.

“I sometimes think it would be kindness to assume at last that we had accepted her often-repeated relinquishment—to *pretend* it, if pretending were ever a worthy thing,” said Percy, “that we might have some hope of discovering her retreat. But Zaidee lives, and is in England. When I remember that, my first impulse is to rush away somewhere to find her. Another thing, too, has happened strangely. Philip

writes to us news of good fortune, and he is coming home. But my time is gone, and you have hardly spoken a word to me, Mary. Come to the door with me, and let me see this wonderful porch ; for I must go way."

He did go away, and he had no eyes for the blanched face of Zaidee nor her trembling hand. Mary noted every particular with one distinct and hasty glance. But Mary did not utter a word of her suspicion—did not say anything to deter her betrothed from this bootless quest. It was still only suspicion ; she did not venture to think that her beautiful sister was really the Zaidee lost seven years ago ; but she had a great many things to contrast and put together when she should be alone once more. To Mary's mind there was a peculiar pleasure in thus " putting things together ;" her understanding was of a logical and circumstantial kind ; she enjoyed those exercises of ingenious reasoning, though, to do her justice, her mind was so much excited with the possibilities of her suddenly aroused suspicion that everything else sank into the shade. With characteristic reserve, she gave no hint to Percy of these thoughts of hers ; she had never told him that her beautiful sister was an adopted child. She must conquer the mystery herself before she confided it to another.

And Zaidee remained with her book before her, and

the blood tingling and flowing back from its full ebb upon her heart. Already she was less pale, already steadier and more composed. By some intuitive perception Zaidee knew that there was suspicion in Mary's gaze, that Mary very likely would endeavour to startle her, and throw her off her guard to elicit a confession, and with her whole force she concentrated about herself all the safeguards she could reach. She put down her book, and went to sit by Aunt Burtonshaw. She compelled herself to listen to this troubled critic's running comments on Mr Cumberland's last fancy, and to join in them ; she turned her face away from that window with its new decorations, that nothing might remind her of home ; and when Mary came back, to find her beautiful sister engaged in the natural conversation of the household, with her brow as calm, and her smile as unconstrained as even Aunt Burtonshaw's, Mary, judicious observer as she was, was staggered in her suspicion. "Who could write from Worcester to Mrs Vivian—who do you think it could be?" she whispered, by way of experiment. "We knew no one at Worcester, Mary," said Zaidee ; and Zaidee was busy with Aunt Burtonshaw's embroidery, and did not look up to meet the scrutiny of her companion's eyes. Mary was not nearly so confident as she had been, when the evening ended ; but she found no encouragement in Zaidee's decisive good-night for

their usual conference. These two friends separated to go to their different rooms, and think over this one subject — Zaidee sinking down in utter exhaustion when she closed her door, and Mary with her eager logic tracing her chain of evidence whenever she was sheltered within her own. She sat bending her pretty brow over it, her blue eyes shining in the light over which they bent, as if to seek guidance there, for a full hour after the feverish sleep of exhaustion had fallen on Zaidee. Mary gathered the facts together with anxious industry, and recalled one after another the circumstances of confirmation which of late she had noted one by one. Bringing them together, they formed a strange body of presumptive evidence, but not so complete a chain as to justify her in the conclusion that her mother's adopted child was in reality the lost heiress of the Grange. She was not satisfied; her mind scanned Zaidee's sentiments and modes of acting with the keenest investigation, and drew confirming evidence from every point of character which her girlish friend had betrayed to her: but all this was not enough. Mary, who was waging no mental conflict, who was only curious and interested, but had no stake in the matter, found it rather a pleasant excitation to her intelligence. Poor Zaidee was now beset on all sides; for it was not in Mary's nature to give up this question till she had come to the very truth.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER HOPE.

WHEN the light of another morning awoke Zaidee out of the deep sleep of her weariness to this mortal coil and strife once more, the poor girl would fain have shut her eyes, and turned away for ever from that cheerful light. In the first pause of her waking, the new aggravation of her distress returned upon her with a pang of pain and terror. Mary's eyes were turned on her with suspicion. Mary, her own especial friend, was groping darkly after her secret ; had already a perception of it—and from henceforward was to be leaned upon no more. Zaidee thought this was the last drop in her cup. “ Oh, if I had never waked again ! ” said this forlorn heart, with a burst of passionate tears ; but when she had said it, her words returned upon her with sudden self-reproach, and Zaidee went away to the corner of her chamber to carry all her troubles, where she had always carried them, to the one sole compassionate Friend who never

failed the motherless child in her necessity. If she was simple still in her intercourse with the world, Zaidee here, upon her knees, was a child indeed, full of the sincerest humility and most implicit trustfulness ; and when she had put herself and all her affairs once again into the heavenly Father's hand, she rose to go about her morning toilette with a face from which all the bitterness of her distress and conflict was gone. There was still a little time to spare, and Zaidee opened her window to let in the sweet morning air, and looked out upon the river and the drooping acacia, which now had only here and there a blade of autumn foliage hanging yellow upon the end of a bough. She had a great longing in her heart to do something more—a great yearning of anxiety to know if anything more was practicable ; but there was no one to guide her, no one to instruct her, how authoritative law could come to the assistance of natural justice. When she had spent a little time in unprofitable thinking, of which no result came, she went down stairs to the breakfast-table, where Mr Cumberland was the only person before her. Mr Cumberland had some papers upon a little table before him, and was reading them over half aloud. After a while Zaidee's ear was caught by a title " deed of gift." It caught her attention strangely ; and as it came more than once in the course of Mr Cumberland's mumbling,

she was induced to draw near. He was always very kind to her, this whimsical philosopher, and at all times was extremely ready to answer questions. "What is a 'deed of gift?'" said Zaidee. She asked it very simply, and this good man would have believed any impossibility in the world sooner than that his beautiful adopted daughter had an estate to dispose of.

"A deed of gift is a legal instrument, by which I give something which belongs to me into another person's possession," said Mr Cumberland; "a sort of will, which does not necessitate the death of the testator, Elizabeth; but which can come into effect immediately though you should live a hundred years;" and Mr Cumberland returned to his mumbling. He had not the most distant idea that he had said anything of the slightest importance to his hearer, and he went on with his necessary business without so much as observing that she was there.

And she went forward to the window, and leaned her head upon those new mullions with a sudden flush of pride and delight. When Mrs Cumberland and Mrs Burtonshaw entered the room Zaidee did not know; they never attracted her observation; but she knew in an instant when Mary came, and recalled her wandering thoughts, and recovered her self-possession. Mr Cumberland was resolute to have his new window

“broken out” without delay. He thought they had better return once more for a few days to Mrs Harley’s. The season was advancing ; it might not be so practicable at another time, and Mr Cumberland was himself going to town to deliver a lecture on monograms and decorated letters in general, and their effect upon the education of the poor. Mrs Cumberland, who thought it “a sweet idea,” and who was very well disposed to have a window of painted glass, was quite inclined to return for a week to London ; and even Mrs Burtonshaw, whose life was made miserable by a report that certain occupants of the porch of charity had harboured there all night, and made a saturnalia, strewing the tiled and parti-coloured floor with bones and crumbs, and unsightly memorials of their feast, had no objections. They set off accordingly, this unsettled and wandering party, and again took possession of the faded London drawing-room. Next evening was the time of Mr Cumberland’s lecture, and he was to be in town with them all day.

The next morning Zaïdee set out by herself to make some purchases for Mrs Cumberland. She was very ignorant of everything practical out of her own limited womanly sphere. She could not tell where to go to seek for some lawyer, as she wished to do. She knew the names of the Inns of Court well enough, and of

the Temple, and had a vague idea that lawyers were plentiful in these quarters, but that was the sum of Zaidee's knowledge. As she walked along very uncertainly, at a rapid pace, but doubtful of where to go, somebody who was shooting past her, turned round with a quick and smiling greeting. His friendly face gave her comfort in an instant—it was the artist Steele.

“Does your father know Creswick—have you seen his picture?” said Mr Steele, not recollecting at the instant that pictures were not the great events of life in the house of Mr Cumberland—“famous isn't it? I wish I could paint like that fellow; I'd make my fortune.”

“Does he paint better than you?” said Zaidee, smiling.

“Better! of course he does; why, everybody paints better than me. I'm not in the Academy,” said Mr Steele. “When the Duke of Scattergood writes to me, he calls me Steele, R.A., and won't be persuaded I've no right to it. Have I seen you since I sent him home his picture? Well, he likes it—yes—he says it's the best of mine he's ever seen, and wants me to take another commission. And there's Furlong at me for *his* picture for the Academy next year. I'll tell you a thing I said the other day. I was going somewhere with some gentlemen from the country—

connoisseurs you know—people one must keep in with ; it was my night at the Graphic, and I took them to see some sketches. Big Fillmore, that big fat fellow, was standing in the doorway. ‘Here’s Steele, with his sparks,’ says Fillmore. ‘What has that scarecrow to do with it?’ said I ; ‘all the sparks he can find he has to steal !’”

Zaidee did not pause to think that she had heard a great deal better jokes than this from her witty companion. She almost interrupted him with the eager question which hung on her lips. “Could you tell me where to find a lawyer? Do you know a gentleman I could ask about something? It is a secret. I would rather they did not know at home,” said Zaidee anxiously.

The artist’s face grew serious. “You are very young to have anything to do with lawyers—a great deal too young. Now, I know you’re a good girl. You need not say anything. I don’t mean it for a compliment. It’s no credit to you. Of course, you’d have been as bad as another, but for grace and mercy. If you tell me on your word it’s nothing that they *ought* to know at home—nothing that will lie on your conscience—I’ll take you to a lawyer. I won’t trust you, because you’re a nice girl, and I like you ; but if you’ll give me your word as a Christian”—

“Indeed, I will,” said Zaidee, her cheek reddening

with a sweet colour. "It is no harm, indeed ; it is to save harm. I can ask God to bless my errand ; I give you my word."

Mr Steele looked in her face earnestly, and she returned his look with those open candid eyes of hers, as free of evil intent as the clear sky above. "Come on, then," said her new companion, drawing her hand through his arm with a fatherly kindness. "You're too young and too pretty to go to a lawyer's office ; I'll take you in, and wait for you. Don't thank me, now—we've all one Father—it would be hard if we could not help each other without looking for thanks,—come along."

As they went along, her guide went on talking with the kindest attempt to divert her thoughts, but Zaidee could make very little of it in her great anxiety and eagerness. Her heart beat very high when they stopped at last, and entered a great grim house, and were shown in with solemnity to the lawyer's private sanctuary. Mr Furnival was at home ; and Mr Steele, after introducing her simply as "a young lady," withdrew to wait for Zaidee outside. Mr Furnival was not an old man, as Zaidee hoped, but quite sufficiently youthful to be dazzled by the unusual beauty of his visitor. He placed a chair for her with the most deferential bow. She was very plainly dressed, and had nothing about her to indicate rank, or call for

this respect. She was a little disconcerted by it, having in her own simple mind the greatest awe for this legal authority, and seated herself with trepidation, looking up wistfully at the man who might do so much for her. For his part, this astonished representative of law looked round upon his dusty office with a momentary shame, and looked at the small hand which rustled his papers, as Zaidee leaned forward slightly towards his table, with a secret idea of some fairy gift of wealth and happiness being found on the magical spot when it was gone.

“I came to ask about a deed of gift. Can I give something that I have, absolutely away from me, and never have any power to reclaim it again?”—asked Zaidee anxiously. “I have something which has been left to me away from the natural heir, and he will not take it back, though I plead with him constantly. Can I make a deed giving it back to him whether he will or no?—can I put it away from myself absolutely and for ever?”

“You can execute a deed of gift,” said the lawyer, “certainly, if you have attained the legal age; but, perhaps, if you empowered me to treat with the other party—if you would kindly enter a little more into detail.”

Zaidee was becoming very much agitated—it seemed

like a voluntary self-betrayal for a very questionable good.

“But I cannot enter into detail, and no one can treat with him,” she said with simple earnestness, her voice trembling, and her eyes filling with tears. “Pray, if you will be so very good as to draw this out for me—say that I give everything that was left to me by my grandfather’s will, absolutely, to my cousin Philip—that I know my grandfather intended to destroy that will. No, stay, that will not do. It must not be a gift to Philip, who is the head of the house. I give it all to my aunt—will you please to say, sir?—everything absolutely to her, to be disposed of as she pleases. I give up all property in it, and protest that I never was entitled to have any. Pray will you be so good as to say all this for me?”

The lawyer attempted to take a note of these instructions, but shook his head. “I am afraid I must trouble you to be a little more particular,” he said, “to mention the nature of the property, the names—I think that would do. I think I understand your wishes, with these details.”

“It is my grandfather’s estate,” said Zaidee, growing more and more agitated; “and the names—could not I put in the names, if you will write all the rest?”

But Mr Furnival smiled, and, though with the most deferential politeness, demurred to the possibility of this. His beautiful client moved the lawyer into unusual curiosity and interest—her singular errand and her visible distress.

“Are you trusted with a great many secrets?” said Zaidee anxiously. “This is the secret of all my life; if they find me, or have any trace where to find me, they will not accept this. If I tell you my name—our name—will you keep my secret? You are a stranger; you do not know them: if I trust you, will you not betray me?”

“A lawyer is a secret-keeper by profession,” said Mr Furnival, somewhat shaken out of his composure by this appeal. “It will become my duty to keep your secret when you trust me with it. I think you need fear no betrayal from me.”

Then she told him her name, and the name of Mrs Vivian of the Grange. Mr Furnival was very anxious to be permitted to bring the paper to Miss Vivian when he had executed it, and did not understand the hasty terror with which she volunteered to come again. In two days she was to come again, Mr Furnival pledging himself to have the momentous deed ready for her signature; and Zaidee hastened out to join Mr Steele at the door, leaving the dazzled lawyer in the

private room, which had never looked so dingy, and to the labours which were perpetually interrupted by a pause of wonder and admiration. Mr Furnival would almost have sacrificed the Grange himself, if he had had it, for a better introduction and a less embarrassing acquaintance with that beautiful face.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALARMS.

MR CUMBERLAND'S lecture was a very successful lecture ; it had the merit—not a particularly distinguished feature of popular platform instruction—of sticking very closely to its text, and being perfectly in earnest. Mr Cumberland did not address himself to a hypothetical body of illuminators who *might* be present ; he addressed himself boldly to the wealthy class, of which he himself was a member—comfortable elderly gentlemen, whose balance at their bankers' was extremely satisfactory, and who rode violently each some particular hobby. On these respectable brethren Mr Cumberland vehemently urged the sacred duty of illuminating their houses ; he exhibited to them his own I. and C., and pathetically related the interest of the urchins who clapped their hands at the emblazoned letters. “ We talk of popular instruction, the education of the poor,” said Mr Cumberland ; “ you have my permission to make a grand bonfire of

spelling-books, if you will but adopt this decoration, of itself so beautiful, for the front of your houses. What contribution do you make, my good sir, to the moral culture of that little vagabond who dances before your door? what the better is it for him that you know your letters? But let him learn to know that, in these three mystic and sacred colours emblazoned over your door, you are communicating to him two or three of the radical characters of the alphabet, the foundation of all learning, and your relation is immediately changed. You no longer throw a penny to the breechless imp, as you throw a bone to his companion cur; you make a beautiful picture for his enjoyment, you cheer his life, you educate his taste, you improve his mind; all the national schools in the world will not work such a revolution as you have it in your power to work by this beautiful expedient—the encouragement of arts and morals—the improvement of the world!”

A burst of emphatic applause, led by Mr Steele, who clapped his hands with the glee of a schoolboy, cheered on the lecturer; the members of the association under whose auspices he delivered his address bit their lips and smiled; the elderly gentlemen, each of whom clung tightly to his own saddle, looked upon the prancing of this new steed with small admiration, and believed Cumberland was crazy at last. But, with

the valour of a champion, and the ardour due to so great a principle, Mr Cumberland went on.

The next two days were once more a pause in Zaidee's troubled existence. Percy was not here to quicken Mary's suspicions by talk of Zaidee; and though Mary watched with unwavering observation, nothing occurred to add to her chain of evidence. Mary made great demands upon Zaidee's time; when she could help it, she never left her alone, but pressed her into a continual round of engagements, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Zaidee was able to escape from her watchful companion, to keep her engagement with the lawyer. With great exertion, however, she was able to do it, and to send off the deed in another packet—a second startling communication to Aunt Vivian. Zaidee had done her utmost when she had done this: she returned home, trembling with suppressed excitement, exhausted and pale as with great labour; nor did she return to find any comfort or relaxation in the temporary dwelling-place of her adopted father. Mary received her with minute inquiries as to where she had been, and looks of unequivocal suspicion. Poor Zaidee durst not retreat to her own room to rest, and elude this ingenious torture. She was compelled to be still, and bear the brunt of all, to compose her beating heart as well as she was able, and to fall into the everyday quietness

of Mrs Burtonshaw's talk, and Mary Cumberland's occupation. She did it with the painful self-constraint which more and more felt like guilt to her. She perceived herself shrinking like a criminal from Mary's notice ; and Zaidee wondered, with a great pang, if this was not dissimulation, deceit, practical falsehood, and felt all her supports and all her strength yielding under her ; was she doing evil that good might come ?

And she began to have hours of that indefinite illness and sadness which people compassionately call headache, and to feel, indeed, her unshed tears a burning weight over her eyebrows. When Percy returned, she saw him talking apart with Mary, and with terror perceived that Mary no longer wished to confide to her what Percy said. Zaidee asked herself, night and day, should she fly away again?—but she had no longer the strength of resolution which would fit her for this, nor had she the happy immunity from evil which belonged to a child. She was a woman grown—a beautiful woman ; her heart sickened at the prospect of the desert world which lay before her, and she clung with a strange regard to her familiar shelter : Time enough for flight when her fears were verified—when the last evil, the distinct discovery, came. She stayed with her kind friends, day by day, like one over whom the extreme punishment of the

law was hanging : before to-morrow she might be flying from them a hopeless fugitive ; before to-morrow she might have said farewell to these affectionate faces, and be dead for ever to her second home.

And when Percy came, Zaidee could not be still in her favourite corner, or withdraw her attention from him. With her beating heart and her strained ear, she came as close beside these betrothed companions as it was possible to come, and listened with a sickening anxiety. She knew the glance of Percy's excitement when he entered, a few days after she had sent away her deed, as well as if he had proclaimed it aloud, and in a moment the most complete self-control calmed Zaidee's mind and person, and she waited with breathless eagerness to hear what he would say.

"Let me speak to you, Mary," said Percy ; "we have another event in this marvellous history. Come, let me tell you here."

But Mary, who had her own reasons for permitting Zaidee to listen, sat still, and heard his story where she was. "A deed of gift—a legal instrument—and from London this time," said Percy, with great excitement, though in an under-tone. "We cannot cope with this invisible agent ; while we are searching for her in one place, she makes her appearance suddenly

in another. It is like an actual dealing with some spiritual influence. My mother says, Search London. Heaven knows, I am as anxious as she is ; but how to search London, Mary ! I am at my wit's end ; advise me what I must do."

"I will advise you by-and-by," said Mary quietly, "but tell me now what is this new thing—another letter?—is that what you mean?"

"Not a letter—a deed executed by a lawyer, conferring the Grange upon my mother by a formal gift. My mother, of course, can refuse to accept it ; but, to tell the truth, these lands occupy a very small share of our thoughts. My mother can think of nothing but Zaidee. I have sent for Sophy to the Grange to keep her company : left to herself with nothing but these strange communications, the author of which it is impossible to trace, I almost fear for my mother. She is neither nervous nor fanciful, or she must have been ill before now."

"And Sophy is your youngest sister," said Mary Cumberland. Zaidee, driven to another expedient, was working now at her needle, and had made no sign, ever so secret, of interest. This perfect composure gave ground for Mary's suspicion as potent as agitation could have done. "The story is a strange story ; she is near enough to hear ; she could not have

listened so quietly had it been new to her," said Mary ; and not without an object was her present question, to draw a little more of the family history from Percy, and put Zaidee off her guard.

"Sophy is my youngest sister, and though I believe the most practical of us all, she has made what people call a very foolish marriage ; and neither Reginald nor she are likely to be injured by three months in the Grange. But do not think of Sophy—think of our mysterious correspondent—and help me if you can."

Mary shook her head, and could suggest nothing. But she had seen Zaidee's work pause in interest for Sophy—that was worth an exertion ; and she set herself anew to build up her chain of evidence. Mary had a certain pride of intellect about her, though her understanding was by no means of a brilliant character. She would not ask Percy's assistance, as he asked hers ; she was resolute to discover this mystery unaided. Then she recollected Zaidee's absence, which she had not accounted for—she became very eager in her investigations, and very full of hope.

But Zaidee heard no more of this conversation till Percy was on the point of departure. Then one thing rung upon her ear, "Philip is on his way ; he was to start with the next mail, and a week or two more will bring him home."

“A week or two more.” The room swam in Zaidee’s eyes—she did not see this time the sidelong look with which Mary watched the sudden paleness and blindness which came upon her. Restraint had gone as far as restraint could go; she rose up, and went away from the room swiftly and suddenly, stumbling over some unseen pieces of furniture in her way. Poor Zaidee, she had but thrown herself upon her bed, and pressed her burning temples with her hands, when Mary opened the door and asked, “May I come in?” With the quietness of despair, Zaidee raised herself up once more. “You look very pale; your eyes are red—what is the matter with you, Lizzy?” asked her visitor, struck with compassion, as she saw her face. “Only my head aches,” said Zaidee. Her head did ache, and throb, and burn with great pain—her mind was almost yielding to this persecution. She raised herself with a momentary sullenness of resistance, and turned round upon her pursuer with her dark eyes dilated, and an agony of determination in them. If Mary had any purpose in thus following her, she wanted resolution to carry it out. “Lie down and rest,” said Mary, laying back Zaidee’s head, against her will, upon the pillow, and wrapping a shawl round her; and Mary stooped to kiss her with a tear in her eye, and said, like Percy, “Poor child!”

When Mary was gone, a long, long burst of restrained tears gave ease to the throbbing brow which was laden with this unshed torrent—and then poor Zaidee in her great weariness composed herself like a child, and slept.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANOTHER TRIAL.

THE next morning restored to a calmer and less constrained composure the mind of Zaidee ; she had been thinking over her own position, and had come to the conclusion that she could not remain much longer here without Mary acquiring complete possession of her secret. But along with this conviction came all the strength of affection which Zaidee cherished for her adopted sister, and these most kind and loving friends. She was not so ready to throw away for a second time all the comforts of existence. "I will stay while I can," said Zaidee to herself mournfully ; "I will not hasten my fate ;" and she went down to the family breakfast-table with sad self-possession, and, making up her mind that she could be only a very little time with them, exhausted herself in grateful cares and attentions to Mrs Cumberland, who, not much used to real devotion, was touched for a mo-

ment out of her extravagance into reality; and to Mrs Burtonshaw, whose mind, always full of reference to Sylvo, became more and more convinced of his good fortune. By this time they had once more returned home, and the great mirror reflected in the midst of its gay panorama of moving figures and bright looks one beautiful face full of wistful thought and sorrowfulness, one perfect form seated quietly within its range, working at bits of rare embroidery,—an art in which Zaidee's powers of execution now were almost equal to her inventive fancy. These were all intended for little presents, gifts of remembrance to the friends from whom this loving exile must shortly go away. As she sat there at her thoughtful occupation, Zaidee was as fair a type of womanhood as ever painter made immortal; and with her woman's work, her face so full of thought, her unconscious and unremembered beauty, you would have thought her one of those domestic angels, whose peace and gladness every heart of her kindred would defend to the death. Lovingly, and with a touch of pathos, this softened reflection gave back the beautiful wave of dark brown hair—the brow like a young queen's, the graceful head bent over its quiet labour; and you could not have believed with what a precarious and uncertain grasp this beautiful girl held every kindness that blessed her, and how doubtful was her possession of

home and shelter, how uncertain and how clouded her approaching fate.

“He will not come to-day,” said Mary, in answer to her mother’s question. “When are we to expect Mr Vivian?” “Mrs Vivian is very ill, mamma; he is called to the Grange.”

Mary spoke in an under-tone, but Zaidee’s quick ear caught the words. She went on with her sewing without a pause. She gave no evidence of anxiety; but the blood rushed to her heart, and her face paled to a deadly colour. “Very ill—called home to the Grange;” she repeated the words in her mind vacantly, aware that they had stunned her, but knowing nothing more. Then gradually she began to think of Aunt Vivian!—aunt Vivian!—aunt Vivian! She repeated this name, too, again and again, while tears crept to her eyes. Why was Aunt Vivian very ill? had all this fatigue and excitement done it? had she done it?—she, this unfortunate Zaidee? When they all dispersed and went about their different occupations, Zaidee sat still like a statue, working mechanically, in a stupor of inquiry and anxiety, and blank woefulness. She had risen this morning with a heavy presentiment; was this how it was to be fulfilled? When Mary left the room, she called Zaidee to accompany her, but Zaidee did not hear the call. It was a very different thing, saying, “I will never see Aunt

Vivian again," and contemplating the possibility of God Himself stepping in to make this certain. Zaidee was lost in a realisation of the infinite greatness of this calamity; her thoughts leaped to the extremest limit of it with the terror of love. She would die; she was all the mother whom Zaidee's orphanhood had ever known, and she should never see her again.

After awhile she put down her work and went to her own room and tried to pray—but her prayers were broken with bursts of tears and sobbing, and restrained cries — "Aunt Vivian! aunt Vivian!" Zaidee stretched out her hand as if to stay her departing—cried aloud with a passionate supplication. This dreadful imperious Death had never yet crossed her way—her heart shrank before him, and made a wild appeal against his power. Religion itself, with all its mighty hopes and consolations, did not still the first outcry of startled nature. It was very hard for her now to put a veil upon her heart, and descend once more to the family circle, which was unshadowed by *her* dreadful anxiety. She remained in her own apartment almost all the day, shut up by herself, and was glad to say that her head ached when she was inquired for. Her head ached, indeed, but not so sorely as her heart.

And Mary was merciful and forbearing, and did not scrutinise Zaidee's distress, as the first suggestion of

her curiosity impelled her to do. There was a cruelty in this which not all Mary's natural pleasure in investigation, nor her eagerness to make a discovery, could lead her to do. She no longer doubted what was the cause. She saw the connection clearly between Mrs Vivian's illness and the anxiety of Zaidee, and with careful kindness Mary guarded the door of her beautiful sister from the solicitous visits of Aunt Burtonshaw. What step she herself would take to prove her imagined discovery, or to make it known to Percy, Mary had not yet resolved ; but from henceforward she took under her own efficient protection the lost child whom she had found. "I have a right to take care of her—she is not only my beautiful sister, she is Percy's cousin—the child of his house. I will let no one intrude on her now."

So said Mary as she guarded Zaidee's door. And Mary was at no loss to know why Zaidee always appeared at the breakfast-table in the morning, though her "head ached" all day. But a long week of weariness and suffering passed, and still Percy wrote hurried notes, only speaking of his mother's great illness, his mother's danger. Zaidee's eyes were becoming hollow, her beautiful cheek was white with watching, with pain and anxiety, and her heart failed her day by day. No one understood what was the strange and sudden ailment which had come upon

her ; only Mary, active and firm, kept the doctor away from Zaidee's door, warded off Aunt Burtonshaw's nursing, and left the poor girl to herself unmolested. Mary was content to wait for her proof. She had attained to a distinct moral certainty, and with a firm and steady hand she took possession of this sufferer, who could not defend herself from the efforts of mistaken kindness. She was brave in the cause of her own dear and intimate friend—Percy's cousin—the heiress of the Grange. Zaidee was no longer “a subject” to her acute and watchful faculties, but her own very sister—her charge, whose distress she alone could soften or relieve.

And then, like a revelation from heaven, came these blessed news,—first that there was hope ; then that danger was over ; finally that the patient was rapidly recovering, and Percy on his way back to London ; and then, standing behind her, Mary Cumberland saw Zaidee once more reflected in the mirror, working at her embroidery, and putting up her hand in silence to wipe off from her pale cheek those tears of joy. When this end was reached, the active mind of Mary betook itself to another question—distinct proof. It cost her a great deal of thinking—a great deal of care and elaborate precaution. She must not hastily betray her own plan of operations, nor give the subject of them time to make another forlorn flight forth into

the world. Even in case of that, Mary, a little complacent in her own sagacity, had no doubt she could find her ; but the matter now was how to avoid this ; and with infinite pains and caution Mary laid her snare.

“ Elizabeth was very much concerned—she was extremely anxious about Mrs Vivian,” said Mary, with a look of dubious meaning, which Percy did not comprehend.

And Percy, to whom this beautiful sister was a perpetual enigma, looked very curious and very much interested, and said, “ Was she anxious?—yet you never saw my mother. Your sister is one of those pure disengaged hearts, is she, Mary, who think of every other before themselves ? ”

“ Yes, I think you are right,” said Mary, “ but she is not my sister. I never told you—she is only an adopted child.”

Percy said “ Indeed ! ” and was startled. But his suspicions had no direction towards Zaidee ; he mused over it a little in his mind, but asked no further questions. Now this was all the clue this youthful diplomatist proposed to give to her lover. She was quite elated that he did not immediately follow it out—it left all the more to be done by herself.

And Mary began to propose to him a little plan for a journey to Cheshire, of which her mind was full.

She was anxious to see Mrs Vivian, to see the Grange and Castle Vivian, too, of which Percy had spoken to her more than once of late. Then there was Philip, who was coming home so shortly. Mary wished very much to meet with this unknown and much commended brother in his native county—to see him come home. Such a project was much too flattering to meet with any objections from Percy; he entered into it with the greatest delight. “Elizabeth requires a change,” said Mary pointedly; “I will speak to mamma to-night. Do you tell her what rejoicings there will be for your brother’s return, and something about romantic scenery, and attached tenants, and your ancient house. You know very well how to do it—and so I shall get my request granted. I know I will.”

Percy laughed, and promised to do his best, and they separated. As he went upon his homeward way, Percy could not detach his thoughts from this beautiful sister. His mind wandered about her with an unaccountable attraction, a strange painful interest. He would not have been much surprised at anything which was told him of her, but his suspicion took no definite form. Mary, full of glee in her skill and powers, had this secret to solve by her own wit and daring alone.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER JOURNEY.

THERE was no very long time necessary to bring to completion the scheme of Mary ; it was still fine weather although the end of October, and Mrs Cumberland became very soon enthusiastic about the visit to Cheshire, to Castle Vivian, and the Grange. “I expect to see quite a delightful sight in your brother’s return to your attached peasantry, Mr Vivian,” said Mrs Cumberland ; and Mr Cumberland himself was persuaded to go with the party, to initiate the country gentlemen there into his views, and perhaps to extend his own ideas. “There are many admirable customs hidden in the depths of the country,” said this candid philosopher ; “some ancient use and wont in the matter of welcome, I should not be surprised—and I am a candid man, sister Burtonshaw.” So the philosopher gave his consent ; and hers too, with a sigh of regret for Sylvo’s place, gave Mrs Burtonshaw.

During the one day which they spent in London

before starting for Cheshire, Zaidee, who felt this journey full of fate for her, a new and decisive crisis in her life, wandered out in her restless uneasiness. Mary did not watch her quite so jealously as she had done, and she was glad to be alone. Without thinking, Zaidee strayed along those unfeatured lines of street till she came to the well-remembered environment of squares which surrounded Bedford Place. Thinking wistfully of her old self, and her vain childish sacrifice, Zaidee passed timidly through it, looking up for Mrs Disbrowe's house. Some one before her went up to this house hurriedly as Zaidee advanced, but hesitated, as she did, when he perceived a great many carriages, with coachmen in white gloves and favours, a large bridal party before the door. The gentleman before her paused a little, and so did Zaidee; there was a momentary commotion in the little crowd which made an avenue between the door of the house and the carriage drawn up before it, and forth issued a bride in flowing white robes and orange blossoms, not too shy to throw a glance around her as she stepped into the vehicle. Zaidee shrank, fearing to be remembered, when she found how *she* recognised at once Minnie Disbrowe's saucy face. And Mr Disbrowe is with the bride; and there is mamma, of still ampler proportions, but not less comely, than of old; and a string of bridesmaids, in whose degrees of stature one

lesser than the other, Zaidee fancies she can see Rosie and Lettie and Sissy, the little rebels who tried her so sorely once. Looking on all this with interested eyes, Zaidee does not immediately perceive that this is Mr Percy Vivian who was bending his course to Mrs Disbrowe's. When she does perceive him, there is a pause of mutual embarrassment. He is wondering if she can know these people, and she is wondering why he should call at Bedford Place; but the carriages sweep on with their gay company, and after the interchange of a very few formal words, Percy and Zaidee take different directions. There is a painful hesitation between them when they address each other, which Zaidee understands very well, but which Percy cannot understand; and once more his thoughts, baffled and perplexed, centre upon Mary Cumberland's beautiful sister, who is so like his own. Unconsciously to himself, this rencontre increases Percy's difficulty. She is not Mary Cumberland's sister; she is only an adopted child. It suddenly occurs to Percy that Mary meant him to draw some inference from this fact, which she stated to him so abruptly; and, more than ever puzzled, his thoughts pursue the subject: but he can draw no inference; he is only extremely curious, interested, and wondering; he never thinks of Zaidee in connection with this beautiful and silent girl.

And the next day their journey began. Travelling

in a railway carriage, even when you can fill it comfortably with your own party, is not a mode of journeying favourable to conversation. Leaning back in her corner, covered up and half concealed under Aunt Burtonshaw's shawls, looking at the long stripes of green fields, the flat lines of country that quivered by the window with the speed of lightning, Zaidee found in this dreaded journey a soothing influence which calmed her heart. Convinced as she was that Mary's object was to try her fully, by bringing her into close contact with her own family, Zaidee had earnestly endeavoured to fortify herself for the ordeal. But through this long day, when her thoughts were uninterrupted, when no one spoke but Percy and Mary, whose conversation was not for the common ear—or Aunt Burtonshaw, whose addresses were more general, and chiefly directed to the subjects of taking cold or taking refreshments—a pleasant delusion of going home stole upon Zaidee's weary heart. Mr Cumberland, who had been greatly struck at the very outset of their journey by the large sphere of operation for his educational theory, his decorated and emblazoned letters, in those names of railway stations at present inscribed in prosaic black and white, was making notes and sketches for this important object, to lose no time; Mrs Cumberland was enjoying her languor; Mrs Burtonshaw presided over the draughts,

the windows, and the basket of sandwiches. There was no painful idea, no scrutiny, or search, or suspicion, in all these faces. Going home! The dream crept over Zaidee's mind, and it was so sweet, she suffered it to come. She closed her eyes to see the joyous drawing-room of the Grange, all bright and gay for the travellers—Elizabeth, Margaret, Sophy—Philip even—and Zaidee coming home. These impossible dreams were not common to Zaidee; she yielded herself up to the charm of this one with a thankful heart.

That night they spent at Chester, where Mr Cumberland made great progress in his scheme for the railway stations. There was still another day's respite for Zaidee, for to-morrow they had arranged to visit Castle Vivian, and the next day after that to continue their journey to the Grange.

In the morning Percy left the party early; he had some business, and was to rejoin them by-and-by, but they started without him for Castle Vivian. It was a beautiful October day, bright and calm like summer, but with a bracing breeze, and all the face of the country gleaming with a shower which had fallen over-night. The leaves were dropping from the trees upon their path, the clouds hurrying along the horizon before the wind, leaving great plains and valleys of clear sky, as bright as sunshine; unseen streams

trickled behind the hedgerows, the air was full of a twittering cadence of singing-birds and waters. Here and there a bit of rude uncultivated land threw up its group of ragged firs, and spread its purple flush of heather, beginning to fade, before the travellers; and the woods were rich in autumn robes, against which now and then the playful gale made a sudden rush, throwing a handful of yellow leaves into the air, which caught them gently, and sent them downward in silent circles to their parent soil. When they had come to the gate of Castle Vivian, Percy met them. He was very anxious that the young ladies should alight, and walk up the avenue with him, while the elders of the party drove on. "Come, Lizzy, come," Mary cried, as she sprang from the carriage. Zaidee obeyed with some astonishment. Within the gate the road ascended between high sloping banks of turf, here and there broken by an edge of projecting rock or a bush of furze. Percy led his companions up a narrow ascent, half stair, half path, to the top of the bank, from whence they looked down upon the well-kept carriage-road, with its sandy crystals sparkling in the sun. At some little distance before them, where the road, gradually sweeping upward, had reached to the level of the banks, a stately avenue of elms threw their lofty branches against the sky; and at a long distance within these you looked down upon the noble

front of a great house, a building of the age of Elizabeth, planting itself firmly with a massive and solid splendour in a bright enclosure of antique gardens. The great deep porch of the central entrance was occupied by servants, one after another looking out as if in expectation ; and the balcony of a large window close by the door was filled with a company of ladies : down below, too, in the carriage-road, and dotted along the banks, were other spectators looking out anxiously as if for some expected arrival. Percy led his companions on till they had almost reached the entrance of that lofty cluster of elm trees, and were but a little above the level of the road. " Let us wait here," said Percy, in whose voice there was a quiver of emotion. " The heir is coming home to-day—we will see him pass if we wait here."

Mary did not speak, but Zaidee's surprise was too great for caution. " The heir?" and she turned towards him with an eager glance of inquiry.

" Sir Francis Vivian is dead," said Percy ; " his successor is to take possession to-day."

" Had he a son?" asked Zaidee.

" He had no son ; this is the heir of the family, scarcely the heir of Sir Francis Vivian. We make strange wills in our family," said Percy, who, though restless and expectant, could still smile. " Sir Francis left his property under peculiar conditions," he con-

cluded abruptly, looking with astonishment at Mary, whose touch upon his arm had brought his explanation to a close. But Mary was looking at Zaidee, and he, too, turned to look at her. Percy was the unwitting instrument of Mary's plot; he was rather excited, full of a vague and startled expectation; but she had not told him the reason of her contrivance, and his mind was busy with speculations. Still more uneasy grew Percy as his eyes followed Mary's glance. Zaidee's beautiful figure, standing on this elevated ground, was distinctly relieved against the far-off line of sky. She was standing shading her eyes with her hand, as she, too, gazed down the road in expectation of the new master of Castle Vivian, and her eyes were looking far into the air, half wistful, half indifferent; her cheek was paler than its wont—her hair was loosened a little by the wind. Percy could not recollect where he had seen this simple attitude, so full of unconscious grace and preoccupied attention, but it was strangely familiar and well known to him. While he stood in doubt, a very handsome greyhound slowly approached the group, and with the instinct which directs these animals to lovers of their kind, seated himself, after a few disdainful sniffs at the others of the party, by Zaidee's feet. Percy started with a suppressed exclamation. Long years ago Sermo was dead—long years ago Zaidee was lost. This was a

beautiful woman ; this was not the brown girl of the Grange ; but the group before him was Zaidee and Sermo ; the attitude and the conjunction burst upon him with a sudden flash of recognition. His voice did not disturb Zaidee ; her mind was absorbed with this gaze of hers looking for the heir of the house of Vivian ; but he felt upon his arm the warning touch of Mary's hand. Mary's eyes were meeting his with a glance of warning ; and there, ringing along the road, were the cheers of the spectators and the sound of carriage-wheels.

There was not a sound or motion more between these watchers ; Zaidee, unconscious of their scrutiny, looked down upon the arriving stranger. The carriage approached rapidly ; the spectators on the roadside raised their hats and waved their hands, and cheered his approach with unusual animation. Who was the heir of Sir Francis Vivian ? She looked down upon him with her dark wistful eyes, anxious and yet weary, touched with the listlessness of her long endurance. She was not prepared for any trial—she had given herself this day to rest. The carriage was an open carriage, and one man alone sat within it : he was bronzed and darkened, a man beyond his early youth. Zaidee looked at him with eyes which flashed out of their passive observation into the keenest scrutiny. In the greatness of her

amazed and troubled joy, she could no longer restrain herself. As the carriage-wheels crashed by, over the sandy soil, Zaidee cried aloud—"It is Philip—Philip. Philip is the heir!"

Her voice rose and broke in this great momentary outcry, and she stood still for a moment, with her hands raised and her face flushing like the sky under the sun; then her beautiful arms fell by her side; suddenly she "came to herself." She turned round upon them, drawing back a step, and looking out from her sudden flush of joy with a chill creeping to her heart. She did not look at Mary, she looked past her, full upon Percy Vivian, and with eyes full of supplicating terror. Percy, almost unmanned, did not say a word in that moment. He only put out his arms, held up his hands before her; shut out everything from her eyes with an eager gesture. "Home, Zaidee, home," said Percy; "there is no other place in the world—you can only flee to our own home."

For he did not even think of *her* in this extremity. Flight was the first idea in the minds of both. "I bar you—I bar you; you are ours now and for ever," cried Percy, grasping her hands together, and forgetting even his brother. Zaidee—Zaidee—Zaidee—there is nowhere to flee to but home!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOME.

BUT they were lingering still upon this same spot. Zaidee, who made no single effort to deny her identity, with tears in her beautiful eyes, and her face full of supplicating earnestness, stood withdrawn from them a little, pleading that they would let her go. Her whole heart was in this dreary prayer of hers. Withdrawing from Mary her friend, and Percy her cousin, she turned her face away from stately Castle Vivian, and looked out upon the desolate and blank horizon over which the clouds were stealing, and from whence the chill of approaching winter came in the wind. Zaidee had forgotten for the moment that she had just seen Philip pass to a better inheritance than the Grange. She forgot everything except that she was discovered, and that they were about to take her, the supplanter, the wrongful heir, to the home whose natural possessor she had defrauded. She would not

permit either of them to hold that trembling and chilled hand of hers, she only besought them—"Let me go away."

The new master of Castle Vivian had reached the house by this time and entered, and from the door came a hasty message to call these loiterers in. This pretty figure ran towards them, across that flickering breadth of light and shadow, the path under the elm trees. In her haste her fair hair came down upon her neck in a long half-curling lock ; but Sophy Vivian, though she was now the Rev. Mrs Burlington, a married lady, did not think her dignity at all compromised, but ran on breathless and laughing, as she caught the rebellious tress in her pretty head. Before she had reached the end of the avenue she began calling to them. "Percy, Percy, why are you lingering? Philip has come—every one is there but you ; mamma is anxious to see Miss Cumberland. I am sure this is Miss Cumberland. Come, come ; how can you linger so ? Philip is at home."

And by the time she had reached this climax, Sophy came up to the little group which had delayed so long. Sophy's lilies and roses were as sweet as ever, her blue eyes were bright with tears and laughter, her pretty face was dimpling and sparkling all over with the family joy. But when she reached as far as Zaidee, whose face she had not seen at first,

Sophy came to a sudden pause. Zaidee could give but one glance at her first and dearest companion, whose wistful and amazed look was turned upon her. Trembling, overpowered and helpless, she covered her eyes with her hand, and turned away to hide the burst of weeping which she could no longer control. "Percy," said Sophy, in a low and hurried voice, "who is this that is so like our Elizabeth—who is it that weeps at seeing *me*?" Percy made no answer. The hound still sat at Zaidee's feet, raising his large eyes wistfully to the discussion, sympathetic, and making earnest endeavours to discover what the subject of all this distress and wonder was. Sophy no longer noted Percy and his betrothed; she saw only these two figures—the dog with his head raised, the beautiful stranger turning away from all of them, and struggling with her sobs and tears. She was too hurried, too much excited, to wait for an answer to her question. She fell upon Zaidee, suddenly clasping her soft arms round her, taking possession of the hands which no longer made an effort to withdraw themselves. "It is Zaidee! Zaidee! Nobody can deceive me! it is our own Zay," cried Sophy, with a great outburst. "Did you think I would not know her? I!—you know me, Zaidee? say you know me—and you were coming of your own will to welcome Philip. I knew you would come home when Philip

had Castle Vivian. Zay!—only speak to me—say you know me as I know you.”

The two spectators of this scene bent forward anxiously to listen. “Yes, Sophy,” said Zaidee, among her tears. Zaidee offered no resistance to the close embrace, and made no longer any effort to withdraw herself. Sophy, with her arm round her new-found cousin, looked back to them, waving them on, and hurried forward, breathless with her haste, her crying, her laughing, her joy of tears. The hound stalked solemnly forward by Zaidee’s side, mending his stately pace, as Sophy at every step quickened hers. Percy Vivian and Mary Cumberland, left far behind, looked into each other’s faces. “When did you discover this?” said the one; and “How slow you were to find it out!” said the other. Percy had by no means subsided out of his first bewildered and joyful amazement. But Mary’s satisfaction and delight were altogether unmingled, and had the most agreeable shade of self-gratulation in them. “They would never have found her but for me,” said Mary Cumberland to herself, and it was not in nature that the planner of this successful plot should not be a little proud of her wisdom and her skill.

The windows were open in the great drawing-room in Castle Vivian, and some of the family had come to the balcony, once more to wonder at Percy’s delay,

and look out for him. "Can this be Miss Cumberland whom Sophy is bringing forward so?" asked one. "Who does the dog belong to?" said another. "Elizabeth, Elizabeth—who is this?" cried Margaret. They began to wonder, and to grow excited, especially as Percy was visible in the distance, approaching quietly with the real Miss Cumberland. At this moment the distant ringing of Sophy's voice came to their ears—there was a great start, and rush to the window. "Zaidee, Zaidee!" cried Sophy at the highest pitch of her sweet youthful voice. "I have found Zay—here is Zay, mamma—Philip, here is Zay; she has come home!"

And when Zaidee reached the porch, it was to be plunged into such a vehement embrace, such a conflict of exclamations, of inquiries, of wonders—such an eager crowd of faces and outstretched arms, such a tumult of sound, that what little strength remained to her was overpowered. She saw them all through a mist, face behind face. Even Aunt Vivian herself, though she was still an invalid, was first at the door, wrapped in her shawl, to see if Sophy's wonderful discovery was true, and Zaidee grasped the arm of Elizabeth to save herself from falling. She was half led, half carried into the great warm hospitable room they had left, in which Mr Cumberland, Mrs Cumberland, and Aunt Burtonshaw stood together at one of

the windows in a group, looking out upon the approach of Percy and Mary, and marvelling what was the cause of all this excitement. These good people were mightily amazed when they saw this triumphal entry of their own Elizabeth, whom Mrs Vivian held very firmly by one hand, whom Mrs Morton supported on the other side, whom Sophy danced joyously before, her fair hair streaming down upon her neck, and her pretty figure instinct in every line of it, with the simplest and fullest joy. Margaret, behind, looked over Zaidee's shoulder, guarding her on that side; and behind all walked the newly-arrived Lord of Castle Vivian, a little withdrawn from the group, a little disconcerted, his eyes fixed upon the universal centre, and a flush upon his face. The procession marched on, never intermitting in its cries of joy and welcome till it reached Mrs Vivian's chair, and then the ranks opened, the family dispersed themselves around this domestic throne, and Mrs Vivian took her place in it, still holding firmly by her captive, whom Elizabeth still supported by her mother's side. "Now, we are all here. Philip has come home," said Mrs Vivian, with her voice trembling. "Zaidee, child, look in my face, and tell me it is you."

But Zaidee could not look in Aunt Vivian's face; she sank upon her knees, half with intention, half from faintness. This attitude was quite involuntary,

but it filled Mrs Vivian's eyes with tears, and she extended her arms, and drew the beautiful sinking head to her breast. "Do you remember?" said Mrs Vivian, looking round upon them; and so well they all remembered little orphan Zaidee kneeling by the hearth of the Grange—that dear warm family hearth—by the house-mother's knee.

"You need not be sad now, Zaidee," said Sophy in her ear; "no need to be sad now. Philip has Castle Vivian; Philip is the head of the house. He ought to have given you the Grange now, if it had not been yours before. He cannot have everything, Zaidee. Philip has Castle Vivian, and it is nothing but joy now that you have the Grange."

Sophy was the wisest in her practical comfortings. Zaidee lifted up her drooping head. "Is Philip the heir of all?" said Zaidee. She was answered by a cry of assent from the whole of them, and Philip came near. This Philip was scarcely more like the Philip of seven years ago than Zaidee was like the Zaidee of that time. It was not only that he was now in the flush and prime of youthful manhood, with powers developed by trial, and a character proved and established, but the wonder was that Philip, who came forward eagerly, drew back again with an extraordinary deference and respect, which Zaidee could not comprehend; and instead of the

eager and overwhelming joy of the others, Philip could only stammer and hesitate, and finally express in a little effusion of warmth, which brought a renewed flush to his cheek, his delight in seeing his cousin. He said "My cousin;" he did not say "Zay."

"Zaidee? Zaidee?" said Mrs Burtonshaw, coming forward at last when there was an opening for her; "what do they mean, Elizabeth? Tell them your proper name, my love. Mrs Vivian and her family are mistaken strangely. What is the meaning of it all? Your name was Elizabeth Francis before you were adopted by Maria Anna, and I do not know what this means—indeed I do not know."

"Yes, indeed, she is my adopted daughter, Elizabeth Cumberland," said Mrs Cumberland, adding her word. "My dear Mr Vivian, I am convinced there is some delightful tale to be told here. Elizabeth, explain it to us. Who are you, child?"

Zaidee rose from her knees, but stood before them in a stooping humble attitude, looking at no one. "I am Zaidee Vivian," she said hurriedly. "I left the Grange because Philip would not take his natural right, but left it to me. I have deceived you, Aunt Burtonshaw—I have deceived every one—though every one has been so kind to me. But it was all that I might not defraud Philip—that I might fulfil Grandfather Vivian's latest will."

Some spell is upon Philip, that he cannot say a single word of acknowledgment. His mother answers for him. "Philip has Castle Vivian now, Zaidee—take your own place, dear child. Sit down by me once more. It is my business now to satisfy your kind friends that you have not deceived them. Tell Mrs Cumberland, Percy, Zaidee's story, and thank her for us all that she has kept our child so tenderly. Bring Miss Cumberland to me—bring me my new daughter, Percy—and thank her mother for her goodness to our other child."

"And Zaidee is a great beauty!" cried Sophy. "Zaidee is *more* beautiful than Elizabeth. Mother, look at her! Why, Philip is afraid of Zaidee; and instead of little Zay, the greatest beauty of all the house has come home to Castle Vivian to-day!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

EVERYBODY'S STORY.

“Now that we are all here together,” says Sophy, “I think, instead of every one telling her own story, I had better tell Zaidee all about it—what has happened to us all.”

This day had worn on from morning to evening in spite of its great excitement, and they were now assembled round the fireplace—a wide circle. Mrs Vivian, seated on one side of the hearth, occupied just such a seat of honour and supremacy as she had in the Grange; and half hidden within her shadow was Zaidee, with Aunt Vivian's hand resting upon her low chair. Aunt Vivian was supported on the other side by Philip, who had been greatly thrown into the shade by Zaidee's return. He was no longer the hero of the day; the family fête celebrated the recovery of the lost child much more than the return of the head of the house; and Philip was still singularly silent and discomposed, and gave abundant reason for Sophy's say-

ing that he was afraid of the beauty. He looked at her very often, this chief of the house of Vivian ; he referred to her after a stately sort as "my cousin." But Philip did not seem able to join in the family overflow of rejoicing over "our Zay." He was a great deal more respectful of the stranger than any other individual present. He showed the most courtly and observant regard of her ; and Zaidee never looked up but she found Philip's eyes retiring from her own beautiful face. But in spite of this, she was wonderfully disappointed in Philip. He was so cold, he must surely be angry. Her heart was sore within her by reason of this one remaining pain.

And Mrs Cumberland, Zaidee's kind and fanciful patroness, sat at Philip's right hand, the object of his most particular attention. Mrs Cumberland indeed had given up her son-in-law elect, who was only the genius of the family, in preference for the head of the house, and the head of the house lavished upon her his greatest cares. Then came Elizabeth, in her matronly and noble beauty, with Zaidee's little gold chain round her beautiful throat ; and there was Mary Cumberland, rather shy and discomposed, between Mrs Morton and her sister Margaret. Margaret was indisputably the most splendid person present. In dress and manner alike, this once pensive Margaret was much more of the great lady than either her mother or sister ;

and a pretty boy rather fantastically, but very richly dressed, was seated on her footstool, and leaning his head upon her knee. Then came Captain Bernard Morton, then a fair high-featured man, bland and lofty, in whom the grand manner was still more apparent. And then came Aunt Burtonshaw, extremely bewildered, and Percy, and the young clergyman who had once been Mr Wyburgh's curate, and whose intimacy at the Grange had filled good Mr Green with terror for the young ladies. Last of all, pretty Sophy Vivian, leaning forward from her corner, volunteered the family history, and was accepted as spokeswoman by universal consent.

The great room was lighted in every part, but entirely deserted for this closer circle round the fire. While just outside the circle, with a small reading-table before him, piled with old volumes from the library, Mr Cumberland sat ready to hear anything that struck his wandering fancy, but pursuing his favourite whim of the moment, through various psalters and antique bibles, with great devotion. The conversation within the circle was occasionally broken by an exclamation of rapture from Mr Cumberland over some emblazoned initial, but these did not come sufficiently often to break upon any more important speech.

“Well, Zaidee,” said Sophy, “when we could hear nothing of you, Philip had to go away. And here is

Captain Bernard Morton ! But you remember Captain Bernard, Zay, who married Elizabeth ?—and this gentleman is Sir David Powis, who married Margaret. Margaret is Lady Powis. Did no one ever tell you ? And they live at Powisland, just over the Dee ; and this is Reginald Burlington. He is Rector of Woodchurch now, Zaidee, since Mr Powis went away. And—and—*we* live there, you know, when we are not at the Grange ; and we are all very happy ; and Elizabeth has four children ; and Margaret has two ; and Percy is a great author, and writes books ; and Philip has come home to be a great man, and the head of the family ; and mamma has got well again ; and we wanted nothing to make this the happiest day in this world,” said Sophy, her eyes running over with tears and gladness, “but to have Zaidee back again ; and Zaidee has come back again—the same as ever, but a great beauty as well ; and Philip is at home ; and if any fairy should ask me to wish now, I am sure I could not tell what to think of, everything has come so full of joy !”

This brief epitome of the family history was received with great applause by the sons and sons-in-law, to whom it alluded. Zaidee sat quite silent, listening very eagerly, yet in reality making very little of it. She sat close by Aunt Vivian, with a strange perception of her changed position—a strange dreamy reali-

sation of the time which was past. Nothing of all these seven years was so strangely bewildering to her as the events of to-day. She could recall everything except these crowded and hurrying hours which had swept away, before their flood of surprise and sudden enlightenment, all the barriers which she had built about her life. She was seated by Aunt Vivian's side—she was surrounded by all the endearing bonds of the family—she was grasped on every side by new relationships ; and, most wonderful change of all, she was now no longer Philip's supplanter, but only the heir of the secondary estate—the jointure-house, the younger son's portion ; and Philip was of Castle Vivian, the head of the house. She heard the voices rising in general conversation ; she heard Mary Cumberland detailing, with a happy readiness, the gradual light thrown to herself upon Zaidee, and how at last she was convinced of her identity when news of Mrs Vivian's illness came ; she heard the wondering exclamations of Aunt Burtonshaw, and the joyous voice of Sophy ringing a universal chorus to every other felicitation ; she heard it all, but only as some one far off might hear. She was in a maze of strange bewilderment—was it possible that she was at home ?—that her name was Zaidee Vivian, and not Elizabeth Cumberland ?—that she was restored to her identity, to herself, and to her friends ? Zaidee sat bending her beautiful head

upon her hands—uncertain, wondering; then falling back at last on one thing certain, pausing to ask herself why Philip had not a word to say when Zaidee was found again.

When the barrier of a night was placed between her and this wonderful day, it became less unreal to the returned exile. While every one else was still asleep, Zaidee, waking in the early dawn, went out to wander about this lordly dwelling of her race, and with family pride and interest admire its massive front and noble proportions. She stood within the wide deep alcove of the porch, looking down upon that line of noble trees fluttering their yellow foliage in the morning sun, and throwing down a shower of leaves with every breath of wind. Their shadows lay across the path, dividing it into long lines; and beyond lay the rich foreground of turf, the grassy banks between which the road disappeared, passing out from this retired and lofty privacy into the busy world. The broad stone balcony, from which Elizabeth and Margaret had caught their first glimpse of her yesterday, descended by a flight of stairs into the old rich flower-garden, still gay with patches of old-fashioned flowers; and the great house, so large, so lofty, with its air of wealth, and place, and old magnificence, filled Zaidee with a great thrill of pleasure and of pride. As she made her way by the garden path to the other side of

the house, looking up at it with simple delight and admiration, and pausing to see far off the hills of Wales, and a beautiful glimpse of green fields and woodlands without this domain, Zaidee could not repress her exultation. "And this is Philip's—and Philip is the true head of the house—and Castle Vivian has come back to him," said Zaidee. She spoke under her breath, but still she started to see Philip himself approaching her. A glow of pleasure was on Philip's face, but still he drew back, and bowed, and was ceremonious. He offered her his arm with the respect of a courtier. He called her cousin; and Zaidee looked up at him timidly, afraid to say, as she had intended to say, "Philip, are you angry?" The two continued their walk together in silence. She suffered him to lead her quietly, and did not ask where he was going; but where he was going was simply out of the flower-garden into a noble park, dotted with grand trees, and undulating into knolls and hollows, covered with the richest greensward. He led her to one of these little eminences, and they looked back together upon the beautiful pile of building before them, on which the morning sun shone with a tender brightness. "You are glad that I have Castle Vivian," said Philip; "do you know *how* I have it, Zaidee?" He had never called her Zaidee before, and she looked up gratefully, thinking the cloud had passed away.

But it did not seem that Philip could bear this upward look, for he turned his head from her a little, and led her down again rather abruptly, as he began to speak in the plainest and most matter-of-fact style. "Sir Francis Vivian had no son," said Philip; "his only heir was a favourite adopted child, and he would not confer the lands of the Vivians upon one who bore another name. So he bequeathed to me the house itself, on condition that I was able to purchase the lands attached to it for a sum he named—a sufficient sum to endow richly his adopted son. I was able to do this by good fortune—and now the chief branch of our family is once more seated in its original place."

He ended abruptly as he had began; and but that he kept her hand very closely upon his arm, Zaidee would have thought she was a great encumbrance to him, and that he wished her away.

"When I left the Grange first, I was continually dreaming of happy chances to bring me home again," said Zaidee, "but I wonder that I never thought of this, the best way of all. I imagined you a very great man often, and gave you every kind of rank and honour; but I never thought of Castle Vivian; I never thought of the other family house, which we must always have even a greater pride in than even in our own Grange."

“You gave me rank and honour, did you?” said Philip, melting a little. “Well, I thought of you often enough, Zaidee ; many a day.”

When he said this, they were at the door, and Philip escaped hastily with the look of a culprit. “There was surely nothing wrong in thinking of me,” Zaidee said to herself as she threaded those lofty passages to her own room. When she arrived there, and by chance saw herself in the mirror with the faint colour of her cheek freshened by the morning, and her eyes full of light and pleasure, Zaidee was struck with a momentary consciousness. She went away from the glass in great haste with a blush of shame ; at that moment, of all moments, Sophy’s burst of triumph “a great beauty !” flashed into Zaidee’s mind. If she *was* a great beauty, poor Zaidee could not help it ; but she arranged her morning-dress very rapidly, and kept far away from the mirror. Zaidee was sadly ashamed of herself when this annoying consciousness came to her mind.

“May I come in?” said Mary Cumberland, as she opened the door. “I wonder what I am to call you now : it must be Lizzy still. And how could you keep such a secret from me ? You might have told me ; indeed you might, you secret heiress—you lady of mystery. I remember such quantities of things now, about how you used to talk at Ulm, and words I

thought so strange. Of course, if mamma had known, or Aunt Burtonshaw, your secret would have been no secret ; but you might have trusted me."

"I dared not trust any one, Mary," said Zaidee.

"And to think how slow Percy 'was,'" continued Mary, who had by no means exhausted her own self-congratulations, "and how ready to believe that I myself, and only me, was anxious to see Philip on his way home. He said I had a right to my whim—simple Percy!—and after all, the dog was a greater assistance to him than I was in finding you out ; for he *had* found you out before you discovered yourself. Poor Sylvo, Lizzy, what will become of him? He will go away to the delights of savagery ; he will shoot elephants, or be an Abyssinian dandy, and Sylvo's place will go to waste, and all the while your cousin Philip and you will look at each other. What do I mean? I do not mean anything, my princess—but there is Mrs Burlington coming to rejoice over you, and I will go away."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SOPHY.

“MRS BURLINGTON!”

“Yes, indeed, it is so, Zay,” said Sophy, shaking her pretty head with mock melancholy as she came in; “everybody must be Mrs something, you know, and we are all very happy. But Zay, Zay! I want you to tell me from the very beginning. And are you glad to be home? And you were nearly breaking your heart when mamma was ill, Miss Cumberland says? Do you think Philip is changed? did you not wonder to hear that Margaret was married to a Powis, after all? and do you know Elizabeth’s little girl, the dearest of all the children, is called Zaidee? Dear Zay, you are our own now, you are no one else’s. Begin at the beginning, where you went as a governess—Mrs Disbrowe’s. What in the world did you teach the children, Zaidee?—did you tell them stories? for you know you never would learn anything else yourself.”

“I could not teach them at all,” said Zaidee, “and they would not have me. I thought they were very right at the time ; but they were cruel—children are very cruel sometimes—and I wished for nothing but to die.”

“And then ?” cried Sophy. Sophy was very curious to hear the whole.

“And then I went to Mrs Lancaster’s and met Aunt Burtonshaw ; good Aunt Burtonshaw ! I should have died, and never seen this day, if it had not been for her,” said Zaidee ; “and I went to Ulm with her, to be a companion to Mary.”

“To Ulm !—where is that ?” said Sophy. “Mamma heard you had gone abroad, and they went everywhere seeking you, and every one of them saw you somewhere, Zaidee. It had never been you at all ! for I am sure they did not go to Ulm.”

“It is on the Danube. We were there a great many years,” said Zaidee, “and then when I grew up, Mrs Cumberland said I should be called by their name, and be her adopted daughter. They have been very kind to me, Sophy—as kind as they were to Mary. But first I found that book—an old woman had it—an old Welsh servant, who was a servant at Powisland, and her father was with Grandfather Vivian. Did they put it back in the Grange library, Sophy ? it had the same binding as all the other books. Did you see

it, that strange legacy? I thought Grandfather Vivian was leading me then; and when I found the book, I was very ill, and had a fever. I thought at first I would have come home, but it was not enough for Philip, and I never knew he had gone to India: I thought he was at the Grange, and you were all happy at home."

"Happy at home, when we had lost *you*, Zay!" cried Sophy; "the Grange was never like its own self again. We will keep Philip's birthday at home this year—we will keep it at Briarford—you shall ask every one of us to come to the Grange. But after your fever, Zaidee, what happened then?"

"We travelled a great deal, and then we came back to England. I was afraid to come to England," said Zaidee; "and so indeed we had not been very long settled here when Mary met Percy. I went one evening in the carriage to bring her home, and then I saw him. I could not tell who he was, Sophy, and yet I knew him; and then I heard it was Mr Vivian, the great author! and then he came to Twickenham, and I read his books, and I was very proud, you may be sure. But to hear of you all as if I was a stranger, and to hear Elizabeth's little girl called Zaidee, and to hear that Aunt Vivian was ill, and Philip coming home—oh, Sophy, I had nearly broken my heart!"

"But it is all over now, dear Zay,—dear Zay!"

cried Sophy, with her arms round her recovered companion. "And you were grieved to hear that Philip had gone to India; and you ventured to write and send the deed. Do you know, we began to be so eager every post-time after your first letter came. Mamma said you would be sure to write again, and at first she was quite confident of finding you. But never mind all that—you are found now, Zaidee, and you will never be lost again. Come down stairs, where they are all waiting for us. Where did you get the greyhound, Zay?—was it only one of Sir David's hounds? for poor Sermo is not living now, to stalk after you. I think I should not have known you so soon but for the dog. Poor Sermo pined and died when you were gone. I have so much to tell you, and so much to ask you. Do you think Philip is changed? But come, they are waiting for us down stairs."

"Here is Sophy, with Miss Vivian; and here is the whole breakfast-table in alarm, lest our heroine should have disappeared again," said the stately Sir David Powis, as Zaidee followed her cousin into the well-filled breakfast-room.

"Miss Vivian!" said Sophy; "only think, mamma, what a devastation when Zaidee comes to be Miss Vivian! Elizabeth was Miss Vivian when Zaidee went away. Then it was Margaret's turn and mine,

and now there is only the youngest. There is no Miss Vivian in the world but Zay !”

“Zaidee, come to me,” said Margaret with a little authority ; “mamma had you all last night, and Sophy has had you this morning, and Elizabeth will have you at all times. What beautiful hair she has got, and how she has grown, and how much she is like Elizabeth ! Don’t you think so, mamma ? There is a picture in the gallery that might have been done for Zaidee. It is quite the family face. My little Herbert has a little of it. Did you see my boy, Zaidee ? And you saw all Elizabeth’s children ? Why have you stayed so long away from home, you foolish child ? You don’t know how we have wished for you, and searched for you. Sophy sobbed herself to sleep, I cannot tell how many nights after you were lost, and we did nothing but dream of you night and day. I never hear the winter wind even at Powisland but I listen for footsteps ; and you have been Miss Cumberland all the while. How very strange that your adopted sister should be Percy’s betrothed !—how very strange ! When we heard of Miss Cumberland, and of Miss Cumberland’s sister, who was like our Elizabeth, how little we dreamt that she was our own Zaidee ! You must bring Zay to Powisland, mamma. And Zay, Sir David wants to know about the old woman who was a servant to his family. Everything

is so wonderful about this child—Grandfather Vivian's book, and the person who served the Powises—she must have been quite surrounded with things belonging to the family. You must have remembered us as well, Zaidee, as we remembered you."

When Lady Powis paused to take breath, Mrs Burtonshaw eagerly took the opportunity. "My dear child," said Mrs Burtonshaw, "I am sure I shall never be able to call you anything but Elizabeth, or to think you belong to another family. Indeed, I am sure I never shall; and to think we should have had her so long, and never found this out. Maria Anna!—and Mary to discover it all! But my dear Mary always was so sensible a child. We will all find it very dull going back to Twickenham, and leaving you behind, my dear love; and Sylvo will never believe it, I am sure. It will be very dreary for me, Elizabeth, and Maria Anna will feel it a great deal, and so will Mr Cumberland. I think we will never be able to stay in that house when we lose both Mary and you."

"The house is necessarily imperfect, sister Burtonshaw," said Mr Cumberland. "Improvements are never so satisfactory as a place well planned from the beginning. I have a great mind to begin anew—the Elizabethan style has its advantages; and I hear a great deal of the adaptability of glass. What do you think of glass and iron as materials for your cottages,

Sir David?—a beautiful material, brilliant and inexpensive, and capable of very rapid erection. By the way, I know of nothing better adapted to promote the artistic education of the people. Those slight iron shafts take the most beautiful forms; and as for colour, nothing can excel glass. Suppose a row of cottages now, instead of the ordinary affairs, with low walls and thatched roof, springing up to the light with these glittering arches. Depend upon it, sir, a very great moral influence is in the nature of our houses. You could not do anything so sure to correct the faults of your peasantry as to build them palaces of glass.”

“It certainly would be an effectual lesson against throwing stones,” said Sir David Powis, with well-bred gravity.

“But, Mr Cumberland, only think how cold!” cried Sophy, whose apprehension was as practical and matter-of-fact as ever; “they could never stand a gale at Briarford; and then — why, it would quite be living in public; everybody would see everything they did.”

“So much the better for their transparency and purity of character,” said Mr Cumberland; “so much the better, my dear madam—and an immediate cure to the dangerous propensity of the poorer classes for throwing stones, as Sir David very justly says—but

perfectly capable of a high rate of temperature, as our conservatories show. I should not be at all surprised if the old proverb of "those who live in glass houses" had a prophetic reference to this beautiful suggestion. We do our ancestors very poor justice, Sir David. I am convinced they perceived the capacity of a great many things that we, with all our boasts, are only beginning to put into use. I consider this an admirable opportunity for a great moral reformation—to a man who considers the welfare of his country, a perfectly sufficient reason for acquiring land."

And Mr Cumberland turned immediately to the *Times* Supplement of yesterday, and began to turn over its advertisements with an interested eye. Mr Cumberland already felt a disinterested necessity for becoming a landed proprietor, and in imagination saw his glittering line of novel cottages, the inhabitants of which should be effectually convinced of the damage of throwing stones, shining under the sun, with a sheen of reflection against which the homely thatched roof had no chance. Sir David Powis, who was a satirist, and loved "a character" with his whole heart, drew near Mr Cumberland with the most benevolent eagerness to ascertain the particulars of his scheme; and Philip was being questioned at one end of the table, and Zaidee at the other. The family

party abounded in conversation, every one had so much to ask, and so much to tell ; and though Zaidee was the greater wonder of the two, and somewhat eclipsed Philip, Philip had been absent equally long, and had a larger stock of adventures. The very servants moved about in quickened time in that buzz of happy commotion—the wide family circle was so full of life.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.

To the much amazement of all the family, it appeared that Philip was anxious to go to London before proceeding to the Grange, which was still "home" to all these Vivians. Grandfather Vivian's will had to be proved and established, and Zaidee formally invested with her property, and Philip had business of his own in town. Philip proposed a family migration thither; he was very sympathetic of the loss which Zaidee's kind friends must feel in losing her so suddenly. "I do not care to part with you, mother, even for a day," said Philip; "and it is hard to separate my cousin from her old life so hurriedly."

"But, Philip, it is no worse, at the very worst, than if she had been married," said Sophy; "when she married, of course, she must have left Mrs Cumberland. Miss Cumberland herself must leave home when she is married. It may be very hard, you know, but we all have to do it, and this is no worse

than Zaidee's marriage would be." But to the surprise of Sophy, Philip regarded with considerable haughtiness the prospect of Zaidee's marriage. It did not seem at all an agreeable object of contemplation to the head of the house. He withdrew from the question with great gravity and stateliness, and, with considerable embarrassment mingling in his usual deference, turned to Zaidee herself. "If it is only a whim, will you humour it?" said Philip, bending over Zaidee's hand. "I would rather have a little time elapse before we all go back to the Grange; our old home is very dear to us all, but I ask for a few weeks', a very few weeks', delay."

Zaidee became embarrassed, too, in sight of Philip's embarrassment; she withdrew from him a little, and her eyes fell under his glance with an uncomfortable consciousness. Wondering, as she did, what Philip could mean, Zaidee did not inquire into it; she consented to his wish readily, but with considerable confusion. "If Zaidee will invite us, let us all keep Philip's birthday at home in the Grange," cried Sophy; and to this there was a universal assent. But when Mary and Zaidee, with Percy for their squire, and Mrs Burlington for their chaperone, set out on a day's visit to the old family dwelling-place, Philip evaded all invitations to accompany them. He preferred not to see the Grange till his business was done,

and all his plans concluded. Nobody could understand Philip, and mysterious whispers of wonder stole through the family, and Sophy and Margaret held synods upon him. Could Philip be "in love," that mysterious condition which these old married ladies were amused at, yet interested in? Elizabeth, for her part, only smiled when she was introduced to these discussions. Nobody was jealous of Elizabeth—yet Lady Powis did grudge a little that the newly-returned and well-beloved brother should not give his confidence equally to all.

But as it happened, Philip had not given his confidence to any one, if he had a confidence to give. The family assembly dispersed from Castle Vivian to gather again at the Grange; and Philip and Percy and Aunt Vivian accompanied the Cumberland family to London. Zaidee was still Elizabeth, their adopted daughter, to these kind people; she was still Aunt Burtonshaw's dear child, though Aunt Burtonshaw's hopes for Sylvo grew fainter and fainter; and the house at Twickenham was honoured to receive Mrs Vivian, who would not again lose sight of the long-lost child. To the kind but somewhat imperious mistress of the Grange, Mr Cumberland's porch was an intolerable nuisance; she had much ado restraining herself from sweeping forth its inappropriate inmates, who, indeed, made themselves somewhat

embarrassing neighbours even to Mrs Cumberland. Silver spoons were continually sliding out by the buttery-hatch, which was intended for nothing less innocent than broken meats or bread ; and the benevolent dolphin of the fountain was long since robbed of his enamelled cup. But, last and worst, the unkindest cut of all, those urchins, for whose benefit Mr Cumberland besought his wealthy brethren to decorate with monograms the front of their houses, took into their independent British minds to pelt Mr Cumberland's own monogram with clay, and, finding it an admirable butt, persevered till the philanthropist found only bits of the dragon's tail and morsels of the gilding peering out, unfortunate memorials of the cannonade. "If these little vagabonds had been bred in houses of crystal, it would have fared better with this ornamentation, for which they do not yet show themselves sufficiently educated," said Mr Cumberland, undismayed. "Sir David Powis is a very sensible man, sister Burtonshaw. The next generation will be better taught. You shall see no missiles either of stone or clay in the hands of the boys of my cottages. We will refine these uncultivated natures, sister Burtonshaw—never fear !" and Mr Cumberland retired to perfect his plan for the construction of cottages of iron and glass.

"Sylvo is coming here for a week or two, Eliza-

beth," said Mrs Burtonshaw. "Poor Sylvo, I am sure you will be kind to him, my darling, and not send the poor boy away. He is a very different man from Mr Vivian, my love. I do not deny that Mr Vivian is handsome, Elizabeth, and a very fine young man ; but I am afraid he always takes his own way. Now Sylvo, though he is so manly, is so easy, and so good ; any one that he loves can make him do anything, my dear child."

"Sylvo is very good and very kind. I know he is, Aunt Burtonshaw," said Zaidee.

"Yes, indeed, my love, though I am his mother, Sylvo is very good, Elizabeth. Now, I am sure there is something very grand about Mr Vivian ; but for my part, I always feel I would rather do his way than make him do mine, and that makes a great difference in married life, my dear child. All the ladies wanted to go to the Grange, that place of yours, my dear ; but Mr Vivian wanted to come to London, and therefore we came ; and all your trouble and your running away was because Mr Vivian would not hear reason. I like him very well ; he is a very handsome young man, and I do not wonder his family are proud of him ; but I do not think I should like to *marry* Mr Vivian, Elizabeth ; he is a great deal different from my Sylvo. I am afraid he always takes his own way."

Zaidee did not dispute the fact, for in her secret

heart she was greatly disturbed about Philip. What Philip was doing was not at present very well known to any of them. He lived in London with Percy, but came faithfully with Percy every night to visit the family at Twickenham. Percy had made the boldest dash into the business of his legitimate profession. Some one who knew the family, and admired the genius of it, had retained him to advocate his cause in a plea very shortly to be tried ; and Percy laughed his gay, scornful laugh when remonstrances were made against his daily visits to his betrothed, and when his time of preparation was spoken of. "I am quite prepared," said Percy, and there was no farther room to say a word. But one evening, while they sat in expectation of the brothers, Mr Steele came to pay one of his visits. "Have you heard what happened to young Vivian?" said Mr Steele. "The case came on before it was expected, and he got up immediately, and made the most brilliant speech that has been heard for years ; but when the young gentleman sat down, what do you think he had done, Mrs Burtonshaw? Instead of pleading his client's cause, he had been pleading the opposition—and gained his plea!"

It was but too true. Percy came out very rueful, very comical—varying between great discomfiture and despondency, and fits of overpowering laughter. "It was not my side, to be sure, but it was the right

of the question," said Percy. "They could never have gained it with their blundering fellow of a leading counsel, who could make nothing of it, right or wrong. I can't help it; and now I suppose I am done; they may call me Single-speech Vivian. Alas for the evanescent glory of fees! I will never get one again."

It happened, fortunately, that Mr Cumberland was greatly tickled with this misadventure of his son-in-law elect. It struck the philosopher's peculiar sense of humour; and nobody had a word of blame to say to the gay Percy, who was already casting about in his fertile brains for some other expedient, which might be more successful, to disembarass him. Philip was standing by the window with his mother. The mirror gave a pretty reflection of these two figures—the little lady in her widow's dress, with a rich India shawl which Philip had brought, replacing the Shetland wool one which has been worn out before now; but her rich, dim, black silk gown, and her widow's cap the same as of old, her waist as slender, her foot in its high-heeled shoe, as rapid and as peremptory—her whole person as completely realising the fairy god-mother of Zaidee's fancy as it had ever done; while Philip stood beside her in the easy, unelaborate dress of an English gentleman, with his close curls clustering about his manly head, his cheek bronzed, his hand

laid playfully upon his mother's shoulder : he has been making a report to her, laughing at some objection she urges, and explaining rapidly and clearly something which his mother only receives with difficulty, shaking her head. While they stand thus, Mrs Vivian suddenly calls Zaidee to her ; on the instant Philip Vivian relapses into a stately and deferential paladin—the most chivalrous knight who ever worshipped his lady from afar—and withdraws a step back as his beautiful cousin comes forward to answer his mother's summons. Mrs Vivian has put away Zaidee's simple muslin gowns, and has dressed her richly as it suits her fair form to be dressed ; and the maker of these rustling silks has made them after an antique fashion, which, in Philip's fancy, adds the last aggravation of which it is capable to Zaidee's singular beauty. This lovely lady of romance is that same Zaidee who, with a child's love and unthinking generosity, sacrificed all her world of comfort and security for the sake of Philip. This is the Zaidee who once made a certain proposal to Philip, which roused his boyish manhood only to annoyance and embarrassment ; but the Philip of the present time has learned an infinite deal of humility from those eyes which once appealed to him as the highest judge. As he steps back, he makes a beseeching sign to his mother,

of which Mrs Vivian, who is not in the habit of hiding her son's candle under a measure, takes no notice as she proceeds.

“What do you think Philip has been doing, Zaidee? Your cousins' portions were suddenly brought to nothing by that unfortunate will. The children were all penniless: Margaret had nothing when she married, and neither had Sophy, poor child, who had more need for it; and Percy has got embarrassed, you know. Well, here is Philip, who, after all, did not get Castle Vivian as an inheritance so much as a purchase—what do you think he says he has been doing? He has been settling the portions of the younger children upon them—more than they could have had, had we kept the Grange—very considerable fortunes, indeed, Zaidee. He has made himself quite a poor man. Philip ought not to have done it; what do you say, child?”

“I only remember what Philip said to me, Aunt Vivian, when I found the will,” said Zaidee.

“And what was that?” said Mrs Vivian eagerly. Philip made a pretence of drawing still farther back, but, like a hypocrite, while he pretended to turn away, only came the nearer.

“He said it was the office of the head of the house to see that the children of the house had all their rights,” said Zaidee; and she raised to Philip those

glistening beautiful eyes which struck Philip with such profound humility. He turned away on the instant, afraid to trust himself, but he could not help hearing the end of Zaidee's sentence. "This is Philip's inheritance, Aunt Vivian. I understand it—he is the head of the house!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

“MY dear love, Sylvo is coming to-morrow,” said Mrs Burtonshaw. Mrs Burtonshaw was nervous about Sylvo’s coming, and told every individual in the house, though every one already knew. Sylvo came from London, and brought with him, instead of the peaceful portmanteau which might have been expected, the most marvellous stock of baggage—“traps,” as Sylvo was pleased to entitle them. Among these were two fowling-pieces, a magnificently mounted dirk, and some murderous revolvers, with one or two extraordinary plaids or blankets, the use of all which to a quiet country gentleman in Essex, Mrs Burtonshaw could not divine. Sylvo was much disposed to silence for the first day of his visit; and though the leaves were thin, and the grass no longer desirable as a couch, Sylvo still frequented the group of trees among which he had been wont to enjoy his cigar. On the second

day, Sylvo's mouth was opened ; he had been discovered seated among the trees, polishing with his own hand the silver mounting of his favourite revolver. "Mansfield is just about setting out ; he's a famous fellow," said Sylvo. This oracular speech was enough to fill his mother with alarm and trembling. "Mr Mansfield is quite a savage," said Mrs Burtonshaw, with dignity ; "I do not wonder he should be glad to go back again. He may be quite a fine gentleman among those poor creatures, Sylvo, but he is not very much at home."

Sylvo's "ha, ha" came with considerable embarrassment from behind his mustache. "Fact is, I thought of taking a turn myself to see the world," said Sylvo. "A man can't be shut up in a house like a girl. Mansfield's the best company going—better than a score of your grand men ; never have such another chance."

"To see the world?" said Mrs Burtonshaw. "What do you call seeing the world, you poor simple boy? And there is my dear darling child, Elizabeth, you will leave her pining, you unfeeling great fellow, and never say a word?"

"Much she cares!" said Sylvo, getting up very hastily. "If she is a beauty, what have I got to do with it, when she won't have me? I'll be off, mother ; you can keep the place, and see things all right. Mansfield's a long way better than Elizabeth for me."

“My dear boy, she *would* have you. Do not go and leave us, Sylvo; she will break her heart,” said simple Mrs Burtonshaw.

But Sylvo only whistled a long shrill “whew!” of undutiful scepticism. “I know better,” said Sylvo; and he went off to his cigar.

And thus was the exit of Sylvester Burtonshaw. Sylvo may write a book when he comes home, for anything that can be predicted to the contrary. Sylvo, at the present moment, lives a life which the vagrants in Mrs Cumberland’s porch would sink under in a week. Sylvo tramps barefoot over burning deserts, hews his way through unimaginable jungle, fights wild beasts, and has a very hard struggle for his savage existence; all for no reason in the world, but because he happened to be born to wealth and leisure, and found it a very slow thing to be an English country gentleman. No wonder the savages whom Sylvo emulates open their heathen eyes in the utmost wonder; he does it for pleasure, this extraordinary Englishman, and roars his “ha, ha,” out of his forest of beard, over all his voluntary hardship. Savage life has no such phenomenon; and, for the good of society, when he comes home, Sylvo will write a book.

“Sylvo will be quite happy—it will do him good, Aunt Burtonshaw,” said Mary Cumberland; “and you have still two children—you have Elizabeth and me.”

Whereupon Aunt Burtonshaw wipes her kind eyes, and is comforted.

Mary will be a bride so soon, there is little time to think of anything else—for Percy, with his younger brother's fortune, can be content with that other profession of literature, in which he cannot have the same brilliant misadventures as in the learned mysteries of law—and there is to be a marriage here at Twickenham. But all this while the great mirror over the wall, when it holds up its picture of Zaidée's beautiful face, chronicles a constant shade of perplexity—an anxious cloud upon this fair brow of hers, which is like the brow of a queen. There is no understanding Philip—he is a perpetual mystery with his reserve and courtly politeness; and now his birthday is approaching very closely, and they all prepare to go home to the Grange.

It is wild October weather on the hill of Briarford. Over that great waste of sky the clouds are hurrying in the wildest flight, and this bold gale has pleasure in tossing them close upon each other in black tumultuous masses, and scattering them abroad anon with a shout of triumph. There is no change upon the wet green carpet of these Cheshire fields, and there are still the old gables and haystacks of Briarford, the square tower of the church among these little plumes of blue smoke, and the dwarf oaks in the hedgerows shaking

their knotted branches and remainder leaves in the face of the strong blast. Above here, on the lawn of the Grange, the winds are rushing together, as the strangers think, from every quarter under heaven ; but even the strangers feel the wild exhilaration of the sweeping gale, which raises their voices into gay shouts of half-heard words and laughter, and keeps up a perpetual riot round this exposed and far-seeing dwelling-place. The sea is roaring with an angry curl upon yonder line of sandbanks far away—a lingering line of red among yonder storm-clouds tells of the sunset, as it yields unwillingly to night—and all these solitary lines of road trace out the silent country travelling towards the sky ; but there is no Mariana now at the window of the Grange, looking for the wayfarer who never comes. The red and genial firelight gleams between the heavy mullions of the great window ; there is light in the library, light in the young ladies' room—the bright cross light of old. The modern windows at the other end of the drawing-room are draped once more to their feet with crimson curtains, but no veil shuts out that glimpse of wild sky with its tumult of cloud and wind, across which these great mullions of stone print themselves like bars. There is Mrs Vivian's easy-chair and her high footstool ; there is Percy's writing-table, where Percy has been writing ; there is

the hereditary newspaper, at which Philip no longer "pshaws," but sometimes laughs outright. But in all this familiar room there is no living object familiar; there is only a group of beautiful children playing in the light of the fire.

Lady Powis is making a grand toilette. Sophy is wasting her dressing-hour talking to Mary Cumberland, but there are still two beautiful faces reflected dimly in the little mirror over the bright fireplace of the young ladies' room. One of them, in its matronly fulness and sweet tranquillity, is Elizabeth Vivian; the other has a shadow on its beauty. Zaidee is in her own house, but Zaidee is not at rest.

"Philip says perhaps—perhaps he may still return to India," says Zaidee. "Even Castle Vivian does not undo the harm I did, Elizabeth. I think Philip is changed."

"And I will tell you what I think," said Elizabeth, drawing close to her the beautiful cheek which was so like her own. "I have always thought it through all our trouble, and I have always been right, Zaidee; we will wait quietly, and see what God is pleased to make of this, dear child. I fear no change."

"You said that long ago, before I left the Grange," said Zaidee.

"Did I say it of Bernard? I forget now that Bernard is not myself," said Elizabeth, with a smile,

and in those sweet tones which came to every one like the voice of peace. "I am a good prophet, then, for this came true."

And Elizabeth left the young heiress alone with her thoughts. These were not desirable companions for Zaidee. She came into the drawing-room, paused a moment before the great window to look at the sky and the clouds, paused again to speak to the children, and then, struck by a sudden fancy, went to the library to look for Grandfather Vivian's book, which had been restored to its place there. The library was half-lighted, the curtains were not drawn, the open sky looked in once more, and Zaidee started to see Philip sitting in the partial light by the table, leaning his head upon his hands.

She would have turned back again, but he rose and brought her to the table; she stood by him for a moment there, with the strangest unspeakable embarrassment. In the darkness, Zaidee's beautiful cheek burned with a blush of recollection: she remembered the last time she stood by Philip's side in this apartment—she remembered her own child's heart troubled to its depths, and the young man's momentary harshness and boyish shame. It was the same scene, the same half light, the same uncurtained window; and there stood the elbow-chair, in which she fancied Grandfather Vivian might sit exulting in the

success of his evil purpose. Zaidee stood quite still, neither moving nor speaking. Was Grandfather Vivian looking on now?

Then Philip said, "Zaidee." He never called her so—yet Zaidee did not look up with pleasure—she rather looked down all the more, and felt her blush burn warmer upon her cheek. Philip took the only mode which remained to him of ascertaining what her eyes were dreaming of. He stooped so low that his proud head touched those hands of Zaidee's which unwillingly submitted to be held in Philip's hand—and then the head of the house spoke to the heiress of the Grange.

"Zaidee, what did you say to me when we were last here together? Do you remember? that pure child's heart of yours that feared no evil—Zaidee, where is it now?"

Zaidee made no answer—but she stood quite still, with her blush burning on her cheek, and the tears in her eyes.

"I am not so disinterested as you were. You kill me if you send me away," said Philip. "I have no thought of generosity for my part, Zaidee. I confess it is myself and my own happiness I am thinking of. I cannot be content to share you with my mother, with Sophy and Margaret and Elizabeth. You drive me now to the humblest attitude, the meanest argu-

ment. You little Zaidee, who once would have married Philip, will you do it now?—or will you send me to India again to throw my life away?”

How Philip pleaded further, there is no record,—but Philip neither threw his life away nor went to India. Philip Vivian of Castle Vivian and of Briarford, the head of the house, has the most beautiful wife in all Cheshire, not even excepting Mrs Bernard Morton; and after all the grief and sacrifice and suffering it has occasioned, this will of Grandfather Vivian has become the most harmless piece of paper in the world, and it is not of the slightest importance to any creature which of these two claimants is the true heir of the Grange.

THE END.