

Movit Amphion lapides canendo

THE NEW AMPHION

Being the Book of
the *Edinburgh University*
Union Fancy Fair, in which
are contained sundry artistick, in-
structive, and diverting matters, all
now made publick for the first time.



EDINBURGH

Imprinted at the *University Press*
by *T. & A. Constable*, Printers to
Her Majesty the Queen. 1886.



AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

IN the afternoon of a day in the early winter or late autumn—that is, in the beginning of November—Mrs. Drummond went into her own house in one of those lofty piles of handsome houses which are the pride of Edinburgh. I do not venture to say what name it bore, for these streets of palaces

*Mrs.
Drummond goes
home.*

Concerning the houses of Edinburgh.

palaces are so much alike, that the unaccustomed eye, however awed by the solemn masses of their hewn stones, has difficulty in identifying them. Mr. Ruskin, talking a great deal of that nonsense of his, which is by times divine, has somewhere designated Moray Place and its neighbours by the title of 'prisons of souls.' I think, though that may be absurd, that their severity and regularity is extremely alarming in the dimness of a winter afternoon, when the day has begun to wane, but the lights have not appeared either within or without. It is not quite apparent even to myself, why I should take this opportunity of saying so; for certainly Mrs. Drummond did not think her tall, dark,

dark, grey house, in all its elaboration of cold uniformity, a prison of the soul. She was aware of the bright rooms within, the windows that looked over that wonderful landscape, which Fitz-Eustace saw (much better) from the hills of Braid, the Firth lying low in the great valley underneath, and the soft background, against a grey horizon, of the rounded hills of Fife. And she was aware of all those fascinations of individual life—the books, the pictures, the memories which make a house, whether it be a palace or a cottage, into a home. She went in, a cheerful woman, not without cares, yet with the brightest side of life sufficiently uppermost to keep her heart light. Her daughters had

*Den-
mark's no
prison to
those who
think not
so.*

An Anxious Moment.

had not returned from their holiday visits here and there, but it was currently reported in the house that the mother liked, from time to time, to find herself alone with papa and Edward, and have the whole charge of these elder children of the family in her hands. Her husband, she knew, would come in about five, and drink a cup of tea, in the cheerful light of the blazing fire which he loved, and tell her all that had gone on during the day—what he had been doing more or less, and what was being said in the Parliament-house, or at the club; all those pieces of news which the men pick up, and which a woman likes to have told her in the cheerful twilight, by the light of the
pleasant

pleasant fire. Edward, perhaps, might come in even earlier, with his contribution of news—news about himself and what he was doing; which, after all, was more interesting than political movements or revolutions. So there she was, a cheerful woman, going in to her delightful fireside.

Something in the look of Simmons, the butler, was the first thing that disturbed her: and yet it can scarcely be said that it disturbed her. She saw he was big with some important event; but, knowing Simmons as well as she did, she did not feel that this was necessarily a momentous matter. Perhaps it only meant another baby in the Simmons nursery, which she was aware was expected;

*The
strange
look of
Simmons
the
butler.*

expected ; or perhaps, that he had found out a mistake in the weekly bills ; or that Cook, with whom Mr. Simmons was not on terms of amity, had gone too far in respect to the dripping. She perceived the fact accordingly with as much amusement as curiosity, expecting the usual request, ' If I might have two-three words with you, mem,' with which Simmons began all such complaints. But her expectations were not carried out. Simmons, though he was evidently big with speech, said nothing, surprising and almost alarming his mistress by his reticence. She lingered a little, looking at the cards of some visitors who had called in her absence, in reality to give him time to explain himself, but

His surprising reticence.

but Simmons still said nothing. Then another circumstance struck Mrs. Drummond's attention. The door of the library was slightly, very slightly, ajar, and within the opening there was a flutter, as if some one was waiting inside—a little slightly suppressed flutter—something which, without any real demonstration, conveyed to a woman's quick eye the idea of some other woman lurking or watching within.

'Is anything wrong?' she said, turning suddenly upon the butler, and taking him by surprise.

Simmons fell back a step, as if he had been attacked, and answered, 'Wrong, mem?—no, I'm not sure that anything's wrong.'

She

*The
library
door.*

She pointed to the door of the library, and asked, 'Who is there?' in a more imperative tone.

Simmons explains.

'Weel, mem—I would not take upon me to say who they are. It's—it's two—leddies.'

'Why didn't you tell me at once?' said Mrs. Drummond, relieved. 'Do I know them?—And why did you take them there, and not up-stairs? I suppose there is nothing to make a mystery about.'

'Weel, mem,' said Simmons, rubbing his hands in a deprecating manner, 'I would not take upon me to say. They've no name, or at least they gave me none. I'm dubious if they are the kind of leddies—you would be likely to know.'

Mysterious visitors.

'What do you mean?' said
Mrs.

Mrs. Drummond sharply: and then she proceeded, with a little laugh, 'I had better see for myself at least. You can bring in the lamp, it is getting so dark. They will be after some subscription or other,' she said, and turned to go to the library, where the objects of her inquiry were.

Simmons put out his hand to stop his mistress. He cleared his throat. For once it was evident he was reluctant to speak. 'Mem——,' he said, 'if you will bide a moment. They're—not for you, if I must say it. They never asked for you.'

'For whom did they ask, then?' said Mrs. Drummond—
'for your master? But that makes no difference; bring the lamp—'
'Mem,

‘Mem, if you would bide a moment.’ Simmons had put his hand upon her cloak to restrain her. ‘They’re waiting for Mr. Edward—and awfu’ anxious to see him. It was for Mr. Edward they asked.’

Mrs. Drummond stopped short, with her face towards the library door. She said only ‘Oh!’ with a curious gasp, as if her breath had stopped short too—and then she turned at once, and went upstairs as quickly as if she had been pursued, not drawing breath till she found herself looking at her own face in the great mirror over the drawing-room mantelpiece. It is a strange impulse, but not so unreasonable as it appears: when

*Touching
a strange
impulse.*

when you have no other eyes to look into, to ask what is the meaning of a new event, sometimes there is a little information to be got by looking into your own. She saw her own face rising opposite to her, pale and contracted with sudden alarm. Ah, yes! though it was only her own face, it told her something ; it told her of secret anxiety, which wanted only a touch like this to burst into flame, and of a haunting dread that had been in her mind through all the peacefulness of her life. She was a woman who had known many rough places in the path of existence in earlier days ; and timorous human nature, never quite cured of that old heathen dread that the gods are envious of the happiness

happiness of man, had by times awoke within her, with a cry of fright, attending when trouble should reappear. And was this the reappearance she had dreaded? Had it come again?

Some reflections on imaginations spoiled in youth.

It is a sad thing for a human creature to have his or her (and rather her than his) imagination spoiled in their youth. Some people can never be persuaded to anticipate evil. They believe by nature that the sick will always get well, and the wrong always be righted. Things have gone well with them hitherto, and it is natural to expect they will do so to the end. But there are others who have seen ghosts in their earlier days, and who keep on expecting

expecting the fight all through life again even at their happiest—to whom it seems natural that things should turn out badly—and happiness appears a mere exemption never to be calculated upon from surrounding and inevitable evil. Great love is sadly prone to this latter form. The Italian poet, Leopardi, says that Love and Death are born together, since Love makes the thought of parting unendurable, and can only be safe in the perfection of a common end. Mrs. Drummond stood and looked at herself with a feeling that the inevitable had come; her heart sank within her to the very depths. She saw the curves come about her eyes, and the lines to her mouth, which had seemed to be

*Mrs.
Drum-
mond's
dread.*

be all smoothed out by years of happiness, and yet were there all the time ; and into her heart there came a great anguish, the greatest of all the pangs of motherhood. Were all the dreadful experiences of the past to be renewed in her boy? Were they to be repeated in her boy?—he whose young life had been her pride and her joy—her first-born, her son, the prop of the house, the delight of her heart. Edward! everything that was tender, dear, delightful, hopeful, excellent, was in his name; and was that to drop into the invisible depths too?

You will say that so simple a fact as that two ladies were waiting to see her son

son was no reason for this pain ; and that was what, after a while, she began to say to herself. She said to herself that if there had been anything wrong in it they would never have come to inquire for him at his home ; that, after all, perhaps they were ladies seeking subscriptions, feminine knights-errant, who never mind whom they ask for, or what they do, so long as they get their lists filled. Two !— that of itself showed there could be no harm ; and she began to upbraid herself for a bad-minded woman, thinking evil where no evil was. All this, and a great deal more, went through her mind and calmed her, subduing her excitement, but without taking away

*She
reasoneth
with her-
self.*

*Some
safety in
numbers.*

away the deeper anxiety that lay below—for, on the other hand, what could ladies want with Edward, to come and visit him?—ladies with whom his mother was unacquainted. And what did Simmons mean by being dubious whether they were the kind of ladies she was likely to know? The kind of ladies! There was but one kind of ladies, so far as Mrs. Drummond knew—ladies whom any other lady, if she were the Queen, might know. Thus she was driven about from one set of thoughts to another, the one calming, the other exciting her fears; and sank down on the sofa at last without thinking of taking off her bonnet, bewildered, forgetting everything except this combat
which

which went on within her. The afternoon was gradually darkening; the firelight, becoming every moment of more importance, dancing on the walls, reflected in every bright surface, making the room more and more into a centre of everything that was comfortable and bright—except where sat that dark figure, her mantle falling in heavy folds that gave forth no reflection, her veil dropping over her face. She started, however, when Simmons came up to look to the fire, perceiving with uneasiness that it was not the fire Simmons was thinking of, but that his curiosity was much excited, and his mind set on finding this mystery out.

*Simmons
looks to
the fire.*

‘Oh,

‘Oh,’ she said, with a little start as he appeared, ‘I am lazy ; I have not taken off my bonnet—Is it time for tea?’

‘It’s not four o’clock,’ said Simmons, with an implied reproach ; ‘I just came to look after my fire.’

Simmons was very willing to allow that the house belonged to his master ; but he said ‘my fire,’ and ‘my plate,’ and ‘my table,’ with a certain professional appropriation. And he poked the said fire deliberately, and added coals to the blaze, though there was no need for them. Mrs. Drummond was not in a state of mind to pay any attention to this waste.

‘Has Mr. Edward come in yet?’ she said.

‘No, mem, he’s not come in.’

‘And

His professional appropriations.

‘And are the—ladies still waiting?’

‘Yes, mem, they’re still waiting,’ Simmons said.

Mrs. Drummond got up and walked to the other end of the room, putting something down and taking something up, as if quite at her ease; but she did not deceive Simmons. She said, after a moment, quite jauntily, ‘What kind of people are they, Simmons, these friends of Mr. Edward’s?—are they old or young?’

‘Well, mem,’ said Simmons, ‘they’re both—one’s old, and one’s young.’

‘Oh!’ said Mrs. Drummond again, feeling another arrow go into her heart. ‘And what did you mean,’ she said, after a moment, ‘by telling me that they

they were not the kind of ladies I was likely to know?’

‘Well, mem,’ said Simmons again, ‘they are scarcely what you would call leddies at a’. It’s just an honest woman and her daughter.’

‘An honest woman and her daughter!’

‘Just that, mem; but what the young gentleman may have to do with the like of them is what I cannot tell.’

‘I think I will see them myself, Simmons. It may be somebody who—it may be—I think, as Mr. Edward has not come in, I will go down and see them myself.’

‘I would not advise it, mem,’ said Simmons, ‘and neither would I go against you, if that’s what you think. Young men
are

*Oracular
advice.*

are a thought camftairy—they sometimes don't like their friends to interfere—but, on the other hand——'

'I was not asking your advice, Simmons,' the lady said; then her heart smote her a little, for the man, she was sure, meant very kindly. 'Let me know,' she said, 'please, as soon as Mr. Edward comes in.'

She fat down again to wait. 'An honeft woman and her daughter!' Mrs. Drummond knew very well what Simmons meant. He meant a person who had no pretensions to be a lady—a woman of a humbler clafs—a decent, poor woman, with her girl. What could fuch a person have to fay to Edward? There was only one thing that she could have to

*The one
thing pof-
fible.*

say. He must have fallen in love (oh, heaven!) with the daughter's pretty face, and, perhaps—who can tell?—have asked her to marry him. Women believe devoutly that there is no folly a young man will not do when there is a pretty face in question. Sometimes they err in that, as in other ways; but, among all the scepticisms of the time, on this point there are no sceptics. They were engaged, perhaps—Edward—*my boy*—and this girl! ‘This creature!’ the angry mother had almost said; but she was of a fair and just mind, and she stopped herself. What did she know about the girl? The girl might be a good girl, and the mother a woman wise and prudent, who did not mean to throw

throw her daughter away. She had no right to take up an evil opinion either of the mother or the daughter. Many a wiser man than Edward had been beguiled in this same way—oh, many a wiser man!—and the mother, no doubt, had come to see after him, to keep him up to the mark, to find out if he was well enough off, perhaps to fix the day! ‘Oh!’ the mother said in her heart, clenching her hands and starting to her feet; and then, with her bonnet still on, and her veil shadowing her face, she ran down-stairs hastily, determined at least to see for herself what manner of people they were who were thus about to take possession of her boy.

The library door was
open

*' Lawful
espials.'*

open—at least it was not quite closed; a small chink was left, through which she divined some one was eagerly watching, startled by every sound. She went quickly up to it, and pushed the door open, and went in. In the imperfect light she saw the two figures starting a little back, and disturbed at the sight of her—one, a very decent woman, in a large Paisley shawl, a large bonnet of a by-gone fashion, and an umbrella in her hand; the other, a great deal younger, a mere girl, but solid in her figure, like her mother, built for all life's strong uses, not like a delicate young lady. They seemed very much surprised at the sight of her, retiring a little into
the

the shadows of the room. Scotch women of their class do not curtsy to their social superiors: they are not trained to such reverences; but they made her a rustic bow, and the mother said, 'I hope I see ye weel, ma'am,' in a soft and friendly tone.

'You are waiting for—some one?' said Mrs. Drummond, herself more diffident than they.

'Yes, mem. I was waiting, if possible, for a word with Mr. Edward,' the mother said.

'And what did you want with Edward?—Oh, not if you are unwilling to tell me! But I am his mother, and I could tell him anything—whatever you wish to say.'

The two strangers looked at each other, and then at her.

The

The girl shook her head slightly, and the mother replied, after a pause, in an embarrassed tone, 'You know nothing about us, mem—maybe you have never heard of us—and you wouldna understand.'

'Oh, I can understand most things—after a while—when I try,' Mrs. Drummond said with a little hard laugh, feeling that the situation was too much for her, and that in another moment she would break down and cry. They consulted each other again by a look.

'Mem,' said the decent woman, 'I hope you'll no' take it amiss: but you dinna ken us, and we dinna ken you, and I would rather bide a moment and see the young gentleman,

gentleman, if we're no' in onybody's way.'

Mrs. Drummond was very angry. She felt herself quiver with rage and misery, but what could she say? She withdrew as quietly as possible out of the room, and left it to them. She would have liked to call Simmons, and direct him to turn them out, but the bondage of nature and circumstances was upon her. She could not act contrary to her own character, and to all the habits of her being. She withdrew as quickly as she could, feeling that everything was against her — even her prejudices against discourtesy, and the necessity she lay under of considering other people and their feelings. Sometimes it would

*Exit Mrs.
Drummond, and*

enter
Edward.

would be a great relief to be able to throw off that crust of civilisation and good manners, and return to the frankness of the savage. Now and then indeed very well-bred people are able to do this : but Mrs. Drummond was not of that kind. She went up-stairs again full of misery and indignation ; and, before she reached the top, heard the sound of the hall door opening, and the light, alert step of Edward coming in. Then came the voice of Simmons, giving her son the information of who awaited him. She could hear in the air the sound of Edward's exclamation of surprise, and then she heard the door of the library open and close.

What a moment that was !

She

She stood at the door of her drawing-room listening to any far-off sound, that might indicate what was going on. Presently, before she could have imagined it to be possible, there was a noise again of quick opening and shutting of doors—the hall door closing loudly. Had they gone already?—had he gone with them?—what had happened? Mrs. Drummond hurried to the window, to look out. But next moment the sound of a flying footstep caught her ear, and Edward himself, pale as a ghost, and in breathless haste, burst into the room.

‘Mother, where are you?’ he cried.

Anxious as she was, and with cause, as she feared, to be
not

*Behind
the arras.*

not only anxious but indignant, it was with a certain sense of shame that Mrs. Drummond appeared from out the lace curtains that veiled the window. To seem even to have been prying upon him, watching who it was who had just left him, brought a blush over her—a quick heat of discomfiture and embarrassment.

‘What is it, Edward?’ she said, faltering, half avoiding his eye.

*A demand
for sup-
plies.*

‘Mother, have you any money?’ he said; ‘give me what you can, for heaven’s sake at once. I have nothing of my own to speak of, and must have it. I can’t wait. Mother, I’ve no time to answer any questions—give me what you can, and let me go.’

Th

This sudden request filled her with consternation. She looked at him for a moment, pale with terror and distress. But even here she could not disobey her instincts. She took her purse slowly out of her pocket, always looking at him with eyes full of trouble.

‘Money?’ she said, with a trembling voice.

‘Oh, mother, don’t stop me to ask questions. I’ve no time to lose. If you care for my comfort and peace—if you don’t want me to die of remorse and misery—mother, for God’s sake!—I don’t know what I’m saying—I’m in great distress,’ cried the lad, tears forcing themselves to his eyes.

‘Money is the least of it : give me what you can, and don’t ask

*Money is
the least
of it.*

ask me—oh, don't ask me. I'll tell you another time.'

Mrs. Drummond could not speak; her heart seemed to be broken in two. What did he want money for?—where was he going?—who were the women who had brought him into this excitement and trouble?—all these questions tore her with sharp fangs like harpies; but on the other hand was her son's young face, full of anguish, breathless with haste, and that anxiety which she could not understand. Slowly she put out her hand to his, and gave him, without looking at it, the purse, which was such a small matter—the trust, which was such a great one—trust which was not confidence, which was full of pain and
doubt,

doubt, and a sick terror that what she was doing might be for Edward's harm and not good. But otherwise she could not act, whatever the penalty might be.

He never stopped to thank her—even to look at her—but turned and dashed down-stairs, and out of the house without a word said.

II.

Twenty-four hours had passed of the most extreme and miserable anxiety. Edward dined out that night, and did not return till late. Mrs. Drummond did not venture to change any of the habits of her life, or to show her anxiety in any visible way. She

Twenty-four hours later.

She said nothing to his father, who vaguely perceived his wife's pre-occupation, but was not sufficiently roused to put any questions on the subject. Something made him say at dinner that Edward was going out too much—that it could not be good for his studies: which was rather a reflection thrown immediately into his mind from his wife's than any original observation of his own. But he asked no questions about his son, and the mother said nothing, exerting herself to talk as usual, to go calmly to rest as usual, without showing the trouble she was in. For, perhaps, it was nothing after all—perhaps it could all be explained; and why should his father be disturbed

turbed and made unhappy by something which was nothing? So she bore it as best she could, which is the woman's special burden in this world, and covered up the storm of conflicting thoughts, that whirl of quickening anxieties in her own mind, with an outward aspect of quietness and calm ordinary life and speech—which by moments became so intolerable to her that if she could for any reason have broken out in shrieks and passion, or in weeping and sobbing, or even in domestic storm, it would have been an unspeakable relief. But none of the servants would do anything to give her that opening. They were all exceptionally on their good behaviour. Simmons indeed

A safety valve required;

but provokingly absent.

*Lead-
footed
Time.*

indeed kept his eye on her as if he knew all about it, and was her accomplice in deceiving the master of the house ; but Simmons was the last person upon whom she could burst forth. After the weary evening was over, she lay awake in the dark and silence till she heard the welcome click of the door at midnight, and heard her son's light foot skim up the long staircase. At all events, he was safe in the nest for that night, whatever to-morrow might bring.

*Untoward
punctual-
ity.*

But the morning brought no further enlightenment: Edward, who was generally late, was punctilious to a moment that day, breakfasted along with his father, left the

the house with his father, in such good time for his lecture! which was a thing that pleased her much on ordinary occasions, but not to-day. For not a word could pass in the father's presence, who knew nothing. Mrs. Drummond went out about her usual occupations in a kind of desperation in the short sunshine of the wintry morning. The sun was red, shining through a frosty mist, which was not disheartening, like the heavy air of London, but cheerful and full of poetic effects: and the cold was just enough to make the passengers move quickly about the streets and give a keener aspect to the business and movement with which the air was full. Mrs. Drummond

*The sad
mechanic
exercise.*

*Like dull
narcotics,
numbing
pain.*

Drummond did all her domestic business that day with activity far greater than her usual—walking about, keeping in constant movement, deadening a little the gnawing of the anxiety in her heart. But as she came out of one of the shops, where she had gone to seek some special delicacy which Edward was fond of (she felt easier when she was catering specially for him, as if he had been ill and required double consideration in that way), a strange thing happened to her. She saw Edward himself pass, walking rather slowly with his head bent, looking neither to the right nor to the left, absorbed in something, in his own thoughts. The sight of him was strange to his mother,

mother, as if some one had struck her. She stifled the little cry that came to her lips, with a Scotswoman's strong dislike to demonstration of any kind, but paused on the pavement, looking after him with an impulse which she could not restrain nor obey. To follow him — her son! — to watch him, herself unseen — to betray the awful doubt, the soul-mastering fear, that was in her, and yet not to betray them — to go stealthily after him like a thief, like a spy! — all the dishonour of it, the stealthiness, the suspiciousness, the meanness of spying, flashed into her mind. She blushed from head to foot, a hot wave of shame and self-contempt passing over her, and then — she
went

*Seeing,
unseen.*

*Mrs.
Drum-
mond
follows.*

went after him. Let those blame her who do not know the heart. She ran over to herself all the evil that was in it, and then she did it, as so many of us do, but few with so good an excuse. Her heart began to beat louder and louder as she followed her boy, ashamed of it, pulling down her veil over her face, as if that light film of lace could hide her, either from him or from herself. Edward walked more slowly than usual, or she could not have kept up with him: and yet she felt as if she could have kept up with even a winged passenger, so hasty and breathless with the speed of going was her loud-beating heart.

Edward walked away to-
wards

wards the west, over the Dean Bridge, into the open country—a long, long way, passing so many rows of comfortable houses, and the towers of the great hospital, and the alien cypresses, which have no right to watch in their classical and heathen gloom over cheerful Christian graves. Thoughts of this kind, wild and far apart from her all-absorbing object, flew across her mind as she walked along—Edward always in sight, going slowly, never looking round. He must have seen her had he looked round. Sometimes she thought he was going to turn, and trembled; but he never did so—he walked straight on, reflectively, as if he were thinking of something—he who usually skimmed the ground with

*Beyond
the Dean
Bridge.*

*Still
onward
winds the
dreary
way.*

with a foot so light. The slow plodding of his pace struck her anew like an additional blow. It increased all her fears of harm, and yet it touched her so, going to her heart. Gay Edward, the boy who was like the Squire in Chaucer—‘Singing he was or floyting alle the day,’ as she had said of him a hundred times, but now so thoughtful, hanging his head, going along pondering, pondering all the way. What was he thinking of with such a heavy heart? What was it that took the spring from his footstep? And where was he going?—to the woman of last night she knew instinctively: but why—and what were they to him? The woman was an honest woman—it was written all
over

over her ; a decent woman, as Simmons said. And that slow reflective step was not the step of a lover. Why was he going there?—what had they to do with him? These questions floated about her, rang in her ears, sounded over and over again, into the very recesses of her heart, but no answer came.

At last they came all to a stop with a sudden clang and shock. He had come to the house. It was a little house ; no more than a cottage. Mrs. Drummond saw at a glance that it could belong to no one but the visitor of last night. It was like her, as a house (especially in the country) gets like its possessor—the windows bright and clean, with little muslin curtains tight across

*The
decent
woman's
cottage.*

*The door
is opened
—and
shut.*

across the lower part, the door-step white, no flowerpots choking up the air inside, but a monthly rose trained by the door, and with a pale flower or two upon it smiling at the world even in November. Mrs. Drummond saw all this with one look, and then her whole being seemed to be arrested as the door opened and shut, and Edward disappeared. She stood still, and, what was more, her heart stood still, and all her beating pulses seemed to stop for the moment. She felt a moment's brief strange suspension of life as she stood there, scarcely breathing. Thus all things had come to an end. Her spying, her stealthy following, her outrage upon the honour and candour of life

life stopped here. She could go no further—what was she to do?

There was nobody but herself upon the road; a little further on was the lodge gate of a house in which people whom she knew lived—any one of whom might come out and discover her; a little further was a cluster of cottages, a sort of little hamlet—but here nothing. She stood, and leaned upon a garden wall, that skirted the road, and felt without shrinking the cold dew drop upon her from the branches that overhung it. What was she to do? She could not go back again in secret, and leave the mystery unsolved, after she had shamed herself

An awkward predicament.

herself to her own knowledge in this attempt to find it out.

Time travels in divers paces.

Time goes flow in moments like this, and it goes fast. Each individual instant is like a year, but the whole together, nothing, a moment's space. Mrs. Drummond thought she had not been more than a minute leaning against that wall, looking across a bit of open space, on the other side, at the cottage, which stood withdrawn a little from the road at a right angle, when the door opened again audibly, with a sound that disturbed the soft, humid silence, and startled her out of all command of herself. She saw as through a mist her son appear, accompanied by the visitor of last night, whose apron was at her eyes, and who had

The door is opened.

had evidently been crying; behind her appeared the shadow of the girl looking over her shoulder. They were bidding Edward good-bye. The air was so still that the spectator could hear what they were saying. 'God bless you, fir,' the honest woman said. 'Oh, don't say that!' said Edward, 'say you forgive me all the anxiety I have caused you—but you will when you have him home to-night.'

'God bless you,' was repeated again, this time by two voices, and then the door was closed, and Mrs. Drummond, shutting her eyes, heard her son coming towards her. What could she do? If she had turned and fled, he would have seen and recognised her all the same. She

A parting blessing;

and a dreaded approach.

She leant all her weight against the wall, feeling her limbs quiver under her, and the light go from her eyes. She did not seem to breathe, counting the steps as they came towards her. Nearer they came, and nearer — then stopped ; and Mrs. Drummond, hurriedly opening her eyes, heard him call ‘Mother!’ in a voice of consternation, and saw him dimly with a mist about him, through which he appeared to her young, severe, terrible, like St. George with his spear.

‘Mother! how have you come here?’

She got back her breath, and answered him in a gasp, ‘After you, Edward.’

‘Mother—you followed—’

She

She bowed her head, and closed her eyes again, feeling as if the young warrior had transfixed her with that spear—the spear of truth and earnest purpose. Oh, yes!—not to be mistaken!—going through and through her; but oh, with what a smart of joy!

‘Edward! I am struck to the earth with shame. I came after you like a spy—’

He had a right, if he chose, to turn the spear in the wound—and she was willing. Everything was sweet now she had seen that light in his eyes.

Instead of that, she felt his arm around her in a moment. ‘Oh, mother! how anxious you have been. I see it all now. I have left you in distress, only thinking of the other—without

a word of explanation. I see it now. You were a bit of myself—it did not seem to matter; but forgive me—I see it now—forgive me, mother dear!’

‘Forgive you!’ she said; ‘is there anything your mother needs to be asked to forgive you, Edward? And you were quite right; I am yourself—I ought to have divined.’ The moment she had said this, throwing her head high in proud confidence, she suddenly clasped his arm with both her hands, and said, in a low beseeching tone, ‘What is it, what is it, Edward? Oh, tell me, my own boy!’

‘I am to blame all the same, mother,’ Edward said; and as they walked, she clinging to his arm, he told her the story.

Now

Now Edward had not been one of those young men who have never given his parents any anxiety since the day they were born, of whom one hears sometimes. Happy are the parents who have such sons! Appearances may be against them, but character is stronger than appearances. But Edward was not one of these. He had done nothing very wrong, but he had been careless, blown about by different winds. And this was why his mother had plunged at once into such mortal terror concerning him—fearing she knew not what. Edward began to tell her his story, with her arm drawn through his, and his hand clasping it: for these careless boys have their compensating

*Character
versus ap-
pearances.*

*Edward
tells his
story.*

penfating qualities, and are more humble-minded than thofe who know themfelves above fufpicion. He told her that he had been dining at the Caftle on the night before that day of trouble, as fhe knew.

‘But you didn’t know how late I was—I was fo late that I couldn’t get out without bringing Seton into trouble. You know how ftrict they are, mother. What was I to do?—if I had ftayed there all night, as they wanted me, I don’t know what you and my father would have faid. I made up my mind directly to come down the rock.’

‘Edward! you might have killed yourfelf!’

‘No fear! I’ve fcrambled about the Craigs too often for that

that ; but when I got down almost to the bottom, there was the fergeant with his party relieving the guard. I lay low, but they had seen me. What was I to do ?—I've been in a lot of scrapes before, you know, mother—'

'Oh, yes,' she said, shaking her head, 'I know.'

Careless Edward—careless still, with all his trouble—gave a broken laugh at the thought. 'Somebody was passing down below—I caught sight of him by the lamplight. I gave a whistle, and said, "Charlie, lend us a hand." He looked up, and gave one spring, and stood by at the dykeside to help me down. And I don't know how we got mixed up, mother—I could not tell you—I've
tried

*The sequel
to a dinner
at the
Castle.*

tried to make it out, but I can't do it. The only thing I know was, that I got safe home, and Charlie fell into their hands.'

'Who is Charlie?' she asked.

'Charlie Muir—and that was his mother that came to tell me—I never heard what had happened till then. She did not hear herself till the afternoon, and the state she had been in!—worse than you—for you would have thought it some of my careless ways; but she thought, knowing what a straight, steady fellow he was—she thought he was killed, all that night and half the day: mother, think!'

'Oh, my boy!' cried Mrs. Drummond, pressing his arm; and

and oh, the thoughts she had been thinking of that decent woman!—who had been in trouble far greater than her own.

‘I rushed up to the place at once, and they let me see him. He had not said a word about me—trust him for that; but he had said he was only passing, and had never been on the rock at all: and the men all knew somebody had been on the rock. I could do very little with your money, after all. I brought it back, or the most of it,’ said Edward. ‘I tipped a man or two to be good to him; and then I went to Seton, who was ready, of course, to take his share of the blame. But the man I wanted was Colonel Wedderburn, and him

*The
anxious
moment
had
passed.*

him we could not find. Charlie is to be brought up at two o'clock, and Seton was to try and nail the Colonel at one, to get him to interfere. And I thought I would go in the meantime, to tell Mrs. Muir that it would all be right. Did you hear her God-blessing me?—when she ought to have done the other thing! And I'm not half so sure, as I said I was,' Edward cried, shaking his head. 'But yes, I am! They'll have to lock me up instead of him. He shall not be punished for me.'

*The
anxious
moment
all but re-
turneth.*

'How did they know to come to you, Edward?' his mother asked, with some lingering suspicion still in her tone.

'He told them I was his kind friend, and that I would help

help them. Fancy! when it was all for me he was there—but not a word of that did Charlie say. I'd like you to know him. They're poor, and he's not what you call a gentleman, mother. Gentleman! he might be a prince,' Edward cried.

'If he was a king he could be no better than a gentleman. But I think he must be that—in his heart,' said Mrs. Drummond. 'Edward, I am dreadfully tired—though I've no such reason as that good woman. Get a cab as soon as you can see one, and I'll go with you to Colonel Wedderburn. If he does not listen to you wild lads, he will listen to me.'

They had still to walk a long way, however, before the
welcome

*A lucky
cabman.*

welcome cab came in sight. The same cab made a little fortune out of the case that afternoon. It drove up and down from the Castle, and waited about while everybody was interviewed, and the story told over and over. Everything ended finally in the most innocent way. Young Seton had his leave stopped, and Edward spent his mother's money in paying the fine inflicted as the penalty of the escapade; and Muir, who had so nearly been the scapegoat, and who in his depressed condition, after being locked up for two nights, looked deplorable enough, was conveyed home triumphant by Edward as much delighted and happy in his friend's virtue as if he himself

himself had never been to blame at all. Neither of them was much the worse for the incident, which made the most capital story in all their College Societies, and circulated through the class-rooms, for weeks afterwards—nay, if there had been a UNION at that moment, it would no doubt have run through all its brotherhoods—how Charlie Muir, the steadiest of good fellows, was locked up instead of Ned Drummond—the greatest joke!

The two mothers smiled too, after a time, at the thought of how their hearts were racked, and all the dreadful images that had peopled the silence on that terrible night; but such moments are too
serious

*Hæc olim,
etc.*

*And all
is well
ended.*

serious for laughter to the women, even when all is well that ends well, as this did. But that is one of the mysteries, more profound than Greek philosophy, which it is so hard and difficult to make the young men know.

M. O. W. OLIPHANT.

