THE

MELVILLES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'JOHN DRAYTON."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CHAPTER I.

In a little bed-room in a little house in Everton, a woman in the middle years of life sits, leaning her elbows on the dressing-table, and supporting her wan face upon her hands, looks at herself steadily in the glass. It is early winter, and the day is waning, but something peculiarly sombre in the twilight of this apartment, tells of

other and deeper darkness than that of the common night. The bed is draped with white, the blind covers the whole of the window, and not a breath of sound from below, disturbs the heavy atmosphere of this solemn room, from which only a few hours ago was carried forth the dead.

The funeral is over—the excitement all past; and now the dreadful calm which follows, has fallen upon the desolated house; the calm of absolute separation—the feeling that there is no more to do for him, no more to labour, to pray, to watch for this one, whom all have watched and prayed and laboured for. Only a few hours ago, this little room was a solemn temple, wherein the dead lay enshrined—*their* dead—still theirs; but now he is carried away, and the last offices are ren-

dered, and there is no more to be done for him, though he is the dearest, the best beloved still; a terrible hour.

Her black dress throws a heavy shadow, darkening still more sadly the little room, and with her hands pressing upon the borders of her widow's cap, she is steadily contemplating in the glass her own melancholy face. Very pale, full of cares and anxieties, which even the deep waters of grief cannot quench, and worn with long vigils, with fatigue and pain, and the absorbing sorrow, which has made these early days of bereavement, days of fasting and sleeplessness. But with all this, to subdue and bear it down, and with the heart within, of which it is an index, quivering in its inmost depths with its new affliction, and yearning with unspeak-

able yearnings, if it were only once more to see the face of the dead—there is in this countenance a singular vitality still. Across it, now and then a wandering light of energy gleams for a moment, and the face has a sanguine, brave, rash expression, of which its afflictions have not been quite able to divest it. Cares are already contracting the well-developed forehead, cares for the living; and now again the firm lip quivers, and the soul loses itself in agony, calling on the dead; yet nevertheless the strong, buoyant life still sits in its prime and strength upon the brow of the widow. There lies a path before her, dark, overclouded, painful, but she will not shrink, as you see.

It is a strange attitude this for the bereaved, and only herself knows the sad

memory of past happiness, which carries her to that glass. When Isabella Greenlees was a bride — it is five-and-twenty years ago—a girlish caprice made her array herself, in her bridal dress on the eve of the marriage day and sit as she does now, looking into her own face, questioning her own heart. Five-and-twenty years ago, she was on the eve of a fugitive runaway marriage, and in her white robes and her youth, she remembers how she sat looking into her own eyes with gravity and trembling, thinking of her future fate; a poor, wild, motherless and fatherless girl, with no one to charm her to her home, but a brother, who had no regard to spare for his dependent. It comes so vividly before her, that hour, that night—like a picture. There is the latticed window in her little

room, there the bright lawn of Greenlees without, and the dim Perthshire hills, and here within, the pretty table with its white covering, and her few ornaments scattered over it, the glass with its decorated frame, the white-robed figure, the young, rash, brilliant face looking with awe into itself. Five-and-twenty years!—and now the widow again looks into her own sunken eyes, and sees the tears flow out one by one, a perpetual stream, and beholds in her quivering lips and sorrow-stricken face, the affliction which she has already felt gnawing at her heart. A sad inevitable change—from the bride to the widow.

Five-and-twenty years ago she left Greenlees to be Hugh Melville's wife. To-day she has buried him while his prime was scarcely gone, nor his manly strength

abated; buried him in strange soil, far away from all kindred dust—in a place which has no sacred associations, to make it fit for the long resting of the dead—and herself remains with her orphans, in poverty, friendless and alone.

And into the great current of her grief, continual anxieties intrude. Already, though it is but his funeral day, she has given too much time to the dead; and the living now—the young Hugh Melville, the young Isabella, who sit together in silence in the little room below, weeping and striving not to weep — demand all their mother's thoughts. What can be done with them, for them—this youth whom his proud father had toiled to train as a gentleman—this girl whom her mother had proudly spared from menial offices, doing drudgery herself

in secret, that the young hands might not do it; what was now to become of them?

The door is opened gently, and with a soft gliding step, Isabella Melville enters the room;—in the twilight you cannot see her, cannot perceive that here again is another bright sanguine face, another eye at present veiled and downcast, but with a depth in it out of which light can gleam and sparkle. You can only distinguish the slight figure in its dark dress, and the look of suppressed grief, with which her eye involuntarily turns to the bed, the white solemn bed on which *it* lay in unconscious state, the awful presence which this day was carried to its grave.

"Mother!"

You can scarcely speak for weeping,

Isabella; neither can she hear you, for those dear dead voices, which whisper in her ear—voices of little ones departed, whom their father already has met in Heaven;—in Heaven a household half complete—while here, you remain, strangers and sojourners, in this pitiless cold earth.

Isabella Melville put her arms softly round her mother's neck, and leaned her head upon her shoulder, with the wise instinct of nature. The mother's absorbed abstracted eyes awakened; here was her child hanging on her, depending on her—looking to her now for all protection, help, succour. It gave nerve and firmness to the arm, which immediately encircled the weeping girl—but Isabella could not speak now. Again she glanced at the bed, and a renewed agony of tears, choked her voice.

"My dear bairn," said Mrs. Melville, as they grasped each other convulsively; and "Mother, Mother," murmured Isabella —but nothing more could they say.

"Come down, mother; will you come down now," said Isabella, as the passion passed, "for poor Hugh is breaking his heart alone."

Mrs. Melville rose slowly, as infirm people rise, and held by her daughter's slight arm to steady her. They needed each the support of the other, so worn out were they both; and so not trusting themselves to look again around them, they left the room together, and went down to the desolate fireside where poor Hugh mourned alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE family of Greenlees of Greenlees, belonged to a class not uncommon in Scotland—especially in the Scotland, which lies beyond the Tay—a class which furnishes, a larger proportion of "Captains, and Colonels and Knights-at-arms," to the public service than any other, we presume in the three kingdoms, and the younger sons of which, append to their names

more H.E.I.C.S's, and other similar hieroglyphical letters, than the younger sons of any other class whatever. Landed gentry of long pedigree, with continual crowds of children, and not a superabounding quantity of acres, or any very great balance at their banker's; but with an assured position, and all the advantages which territorial lordship always gives, however limited may be its dominions.

But George Greenlees of Greenlees, Mrs. Melville's elder brother, was not a favourable specimen of the Scottish Laird. Nearly twenty years older that his sister, he had married only a short time before she fled from his house, and had been thrown into a singular state of apprehension, by the speedy birth of an heir. Mr. Greenlees had a mercantile mind; his affairs of all

sorts he entered on a kind of mental ledger, and was miserable if he could not make his balance agree. Thus he found his estate a little encumbered—and he found an heir present himself, without the slightest delay as soon as it was practicable. The hasty heir prophesied, to the alarmed fancy of Greenlees of Greenlees, a host of miniature generals, and captains about to hurry into the world, on the heels of the first-born. The perplexed father said "a troop cometh," and resigned himself to dismay; for no kind of calculation, could make the encumbered estate, form a harmonious equipoise to the squadron of children; and here too was a portionless sister, still farther to perplex the head of the house.

The second brother, Quentin, was in the

civil service of the East India Company, and had been absent for four or five years before Isabella's marriage. Other brothers there were who died young—but only these two remained, to maintain the honour of the family of Greenlees.

Hugh Melville was the minister's son; a happy, rash, sanguine lad, only too like the neglected Isabella, and the match they made was a very foolish one. But Isabella felt her dependance on her careful brother, and his ordinary wife, a very painful one —and sanguine Hugh was affectionately willing to put his neck under a rather distasteful yoke, and accept a situation, which was within his reach in Dundee, for Isabella's sake. Rich, young hearts had they if nothing else—rich in affection, in hope, in strong enjoyable vigorous life;

so Isabella Greenlees ran away, lightening her brother's cumbered hands, and plunged joyously into the crowding cares of poverty; for poverty they had to meet, rising upon them in cold bitter, unpitying waves, waves which after all could not take the hope out of their hearts to make them repent.

For they did not repent—never repented, though Greenlees of Greenlees disowned, his sister at first, and only had the coldest and most distant intercourse with her after, when his first anger had subsided into satisfaction; never repented, though these five-and-twenty years ran on, and still at the end of them they were poor.

And not only poor but imprudent, rash—indulging in delicacies of affection, to which only richer people have any claim. For instance, Hugh Melville finding himself a

strong man of only forty years when his son Hugh was fifteen, determined proudly that this boy should not be trained to enter an office, and linger in a clerkship all his days. The boy was "very clever," his schoolmaster said; his father thought he was something more; and after long consultation the two heads of the family, rash as they ever were, resolved on sparing enough off their little income, to send Hugh to Edinburgh to College, with however a definite aim. His father chose for him the medical profession, some of the initiatory studies of which, he himself had entered on before his marriage; and Hugh, his eyes sparkling with satisfaction for the college part of it, heartily assented.

Mr. Melville had only a hundred and fifty pounds a-year—it was thought a great

salary, among the inferior clerks in "the office"—but he was a trusted, confidential person, who had gradually progressed from an under clerkship in the Glasgow office of his house, to the principal post in their Liverpool counting-house. It was no great climax to arrive at, as the highest point of one's life; content for himself, happy in his household treasures, the father was yet proud for his son, and grudged the fine intellectual boy to such a fate, so off their hundred and fifty pounds a-year, they dispatched Hugh to Edinburgh.

No very easy task, as people with a hundred and fifty yearly pounds will comprehend; but the boy Hugh was austere and self-denying as a young hermit—how many such proud young heroes! honour and grace that College of Edinburgh—and a very little sum

sufficed him. So they went on happily, not knowing, alas! how soon the one stout labouring hand which supported them all, was to lie powerless in the grave.

And here again was Isabella—how the good mother calculated and laboured, that this one lily of her's should grow up delicately, under the kindliest influence of sun and dew. Other sons and daughters had widened the little family circle, but there was one little grave in Dundee, and some in Glasgow, where alone, with none to weep over them, these children lay, and double care had the remaining two inherited, the last of the flock.

So Mrs. Melville did menial offices in secret, that Isabella might be spared—in secret denied herself, that Isabella from her earliest years, might have her taste and

mind accustomed to nothing coarse or sordid. Not that the mother's constant companion, was bred in a mode unbecoming her station—with few accomplishments, with no vain ideas of superiority—able to do anything which was needed in her sphere, and thinking nothing below her which was necessary, Isabella Melville, thanks to her mother's constant care, was already a gentlewoman, refined and delicate, doing no discredit to the gentle blood of Greenlees. For Mrs. Melville did not forget this—could not forget, that her husband's descent was from a succession of honoured ministers, the exclusive clerical caste of Scotland, nor that she herself was a Greenlees of Greenlees. So they laboured together, the father and the mother—she buying fine fabrics for Isabella's dresses, and labouring herself to make them

elegant in form—like a lady—and he spending all his spare time cultivating Hugh; proudly, jealously affectionate—determined that these children should have the ideal lot, the purity and honour, and delicate grace, which never is in its full beauty, except in dreams.

But he died—while their life went on, thus he died; and the mourners stood together in the desolated house—in the midst of strangers—helpless and friendless, unwitting where to turn for their daily bread.

CHAPTER III.

It is a very plain room this little parlour, furnished in that dull respectable way, which people of small resources must adopt, if they would not be tawdrily and cheaply "elegant." A little hair-cloth sofa, and solemn mahogany chairs, a square table in the centre, and a few shelves put up in a recess, between the fireplace and the window, for books; these, with a little stand and a

writing-desk, are all the furniture of the room.

By the fireside stood a vacant arm-chair, the other seats in common use were left in various positions, as those who had occupied them left them; but this was placed by the fire as if some one occupied it still, a little inclining forwards towards the hearth. No wonder that Hugh Melville had a struggle with himself, as he sat alone looking at it, to keep down the passion of childlike tears and sobbings, which his young manhood had not yet outgrown.

It is painful to see it standing vacant there—it is a greater heartbreak to put it away, and audibly acknowledge to the heart, which can no longer deceive itself, that here never more the father will sit and take sweet counsel with his children; but it is well thus

to rise bravely, and lift with loving reverence this solemn chair away, for the mother and the sister are coming down now, and young Hugh must be a man and brave for their sakes; so the youth drew his own seat into the vacant corner, and put his father's chair away.

And now they are all sitting together about the fire, striving spasmodically to speak to each other, to keep down and bind each the strong force of their individual grief. Three faces greatly like each other—worthy more than one look, though none of them are beautiful.

Could not be beautiful—the very charm and fascination they have, keeps them from beauty; too variable, too faulty for anything like perfection, these faces never could be angelical; but they are human. Ready to

be moved by the slightest breath of emotion, full of all the conflicting elements of life — sanguine, rash, daring, susceptible; and with a sad lack of the prudencies, a failure even in necessary caution, you see the candid open souls looking out through eyes, which in their most unmoved state, present to you a luminous blank like the sky, out of which lightnings—sunshine—are ready to leap and glow; even now, subdued and grief-worn though they are, you can perceive the prevailing temperament still.

The night wears on — a single candle upon the square table lights the room dimly; the little maid-servant has carried away the tea-tray, and now they have resumed their seats for a consultation which no one is able to begin.

At length Hugh—poor Hugh! he did

not think it was so hard to be brave—commands himself enough to open the discussion.

"Mother, we must—we must lose no time—what are we to do?"

A very simple question—yet so difficult to answer.

"I cannot tell, Hugh—I have not been able to think, and yet I have been thinking," said Mrs. Melville. "We have no friends to help us — we must help ourselves in some way. My dear bairns, it is right you should know at once—we must work —we must all work."

Isabella glanced up quickly, and put her hand into her mother's.

"I am ready to do anything—whatever you think best,—only decide, mother, and let us do what is necessary without delay."

"Mother," said Hugh, "I see you looking at me; you think I will grudge to leave my profession—and so I might if there were less need, or if I could believe that my—my father's intention would be frustrated in the end. Let us try to speak of him," said Hugh convulsively, "mother, let us try to speak of him calmly—for he is not lost—he is not lost."

But to speak calmly—calmly in this house, which the dead has left to-day—it is impossible.

"Then, Hugh, you see," said his mother, when they had again subdued themselves, "you see it is not possible. I would make any sacrifice, undertake any kind of work to keep you at your studies—but you see, Hugh—you see, it is not possible."

"Mother, do you think I could be con-

tent to lose my share in the work and the sacrifice?" said Hugh. "No, I have been thinking, too. Suppose we go down to-morrow, you and I, mother, to Mr. Wardrop at the office, and see, if it be possible to hear of a situation. I might not be fit for anything great at first, but I am not too old to learn."

Poor Hugh! he almost smiled at himself when he said this "anything great;" for the greatest height to be attained in Mr. Wardrop's office, was the serene eminence of patience and a hundred and fifty pounds a-year.

The widow sighed heavily, as she looked at her son bending over towards her, with his face already kindling a little out of its blank of prostrate sorrow. Young Hugh Melville—Hugh Melville's cherished beloved

boy—to go down with him as a petitioner, to the prosperous hard man in the office and sue for the poor boy-clerkship for which alone her genius son would be fit; her proud affection shrank from it with a pang—she would rather secretly have toiled herself, at the most ignoble work, to be spared this harder humiliation, in the person of her son.

"We are not a very extravagant household, mother," said Hugh, smiling faintly. "We shall surely be able to live; fifty pounds—they will not offer me less than fifty pounds a-year."

"My poor boy!" said Mrs. Melville, involuntarily.

"Could we live on fifty pounds a-year, mother?" said the youth; "it is not much, to be sure; but we could do, could we not?

a pound a-week—so many working men have only a pound a-week."

"Yes—we could do," said his mother, slowly; "yes, Hugh, we could live; but you cannot be dressed and lodged as a working-man, you know; and then there is Isabella."

"Yes, mother," said Isabella, quickly, "what am I to do?"

Hugh started with a slight proud motion.

"Mother, I shall be able to make enough for all; if we must live very barely for a while, it will only be for a while—and what could Isabella do?"

The mother looked at them wistfully; she too would fain have spared Isabella; but her better judgment came in.

"Perhaps I am not fit for much," said Isabella; "but something I surely can do—

and what I can, I must, Hugh. Could I teach, mother? I could sew at least—what is it I can do best?"

"You could sew!—you will kill yourself, Isabella," said Hugh.

"I am not delicate; I shall not kill myself—mother!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Melville, "we have spoken enough about this to-night—wait till to-morrow; I am able for no more now; but we will need to send Jane away, Isabella, and do everything ourselves, and—" hesitated the proud widow, "if it were coming to the worst, and Hugh's fifty pounds too little to keep us, we might let a room. Hugh, my dear, you must not look proud; we'll have many difficulties, but we'll speak of them more to-morrow."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning brought in a drizzling, wet, miserable day, which kept all within doors who could remain; but the widow knew too well how small the contents of her purse were, to delay the visit to the office. Her husband had been for some time ill, and now it was very near the quarter-day, and she was entitled to receive his salary—nearly the whole quarter's salary—perhaps

all, if the managing partner at the office had a heart like other men.

So she put on, for the first time, her melancholy widow's bonnet, and letting its heavy crape veil fall over her face, that no one, not even Hugh, might see the tears which, slowly oozing out, kept her eyes always wet, closed the door of their little house, and descended the steep street to the town. Hitherto this little family had enjoyed their life—had lived in it cordially, taking all natural pleasures they could, and eschewing the discontent and envy that embitter all. For this reason it was, that they lived high up here, at the top of the steep, narrow Everton Street, for in their sight, from this eminence, was the river's mouth, with all its passing ships and sunsets, and

the beauty of the prospect was property to them.

The rain came drizzling down, a shower of small incessant drops, and the heavy clouds, still full of this chill vapour, lowered heavily over those suburban houses upon their little hill. Now and then, somebody on pattens went up or down the resounding street, or a child ran at full speed across to the one little universal shop, which modestly broke the uniform grass-plots and green railing of the houses on one side; but other passengers there were scarcely any, and mothers with babies stood at the windows, contrasting the wet street without, with the cheerful fireside within, and feeling all the more comfortable for the comparison.

But these two who have left no cheerful

fireside—whose thoughts have no spot to rest on in this world, behind them or before them, that is not saturated with their present grief, go on slowly over the wet pavement, through the rain, scarcely aware of where they go. Those other passengers who crowd round them as they penetrate into the town—those heavily-laden waggons and vociferous omnibuses, and the high blank ranges of warehouses on either side of the way—it is those which seem to move, to glide past like ghosts, a long shifting spectacle, while the sorrowful wayfarers could almost persuade themselves, that they themselves stood still, and were spectators only of the strange panorama.

Mr. Wardrop's office is in a dingy street near the Exchange—a street of a mixed character, with rude shops for sailors—

outfitters, chronometer-makers, and other such, on one side and at this corner at least, a heavy mass of dark stone buildings—offices—on the other. The stone building would be handsome if it could—that it is stone is undeniable, and in a region of brick, this is something; besides that, it has windows with which some heavy gambols have been played, by way of making them ornamental; but the attempt has not succeeded. On the other side, those begrimed brick erections are low, and give all possible advantage to their opposite neighbour, within the range of whose abundant windows lie a little snuff-shop, with a magnificent Highlander at the door—a little outfitting-shop with an oilskin coat surmounted by a sou-wester, looking like the skeleton of some unhappy victim of the bird of prey within,

hung up just over the threshold as an example to the unwary—a little cook-shop with steaming, savoury, rude dainties, attracting poor little penniless-boys to its windows to admire, and passers-by to its interior to partake—with a long range of others, in something like a similar arrangement, stretching away into the dark level of the street.

Young clerks, youths bound to Bank and Custom-house, with mystic slips of paper in their hands, come and go continually, swinging office doors behind them, and pushing through the groups of porters, who wait for employment on the steps: and up those steps—already this morning stained with innumerable feet, pass the widow and her son.

Mr. Wardrop is seated in his private room, an apartment of tolerable dimensions

It has a dusty looking carpet on the floor, a dusty little grate in which burns a red smouldering fire, which looks dusty and suffocated too. Between the two windows stands an office table, with a slope on each side for writing, and at each side stands a comfortable stuffed leathern chair; the bare walls have some maps on them, and some strange skeleton views of foreign ports—things which you can fancy have been chosen, for the one quality of ugliness, which they possess in a high degree. Some other chairs, not anything like so luxurious as those which are at the table, stand erect like sentinels along the wall, and a black coal-scuttle holds an important place in the foreground—almost as important indeed as does Mr. Wardrop himself.

For Mr. Wardrop himself is the only

occupant of the room, in spite of the presumptive evidence afforded by the two slopes on the writing-table, and the two comfortable chairs. He is a rusty looking man, with a quantity of reddish-brown whiskers, and a considerable display of teeth. The teeth are white and in good condition; you fancy, at the first glance, that their brilliancy serves him instead of linen—instead at least of the visible linen with which other mortals enliven their habiliments—for he has a great black satin stock, between which and his rusty whiskers, a poor collar is smothered, and the front of his shirt is invisible. But the face is not a bad face, and you would be inclined to fancy that this man, with his equals, was a good enough fellow, however he may be, with those who are below

him; below him—but very likely you and he would differ, as to who those persons were.

In the outer office there are two clerks of respectable age, one of them newly installed as poor Melville's successor; but the rest are all lads, in various stages of development, some of them merely boys yet: they all think kindly of "poor Melville" *now*, and poor Melville's widow is ushered respectfully into Mr. Wardrop's room.

"Well," said Mr. Wardrop, sharply, looking up; but no one answered him, for Mrs. Melville was recovering her choked voice, and Hugh too, had a struggle, to keep himself from boyish tears.

The merchant laid down his pen, and looked at them a little anxiously as he

rose; for Mrs. Melville was like a lady—he did not think at first, that she could be his clerk's wife.

"I am Mrs. Melville, Sir," she said at last, with difficulty, "the widow of—"

"Oh," said Mr. Wardrop, sliding back into his chair. "Take a seat. Yes, I was very sorry—very sorry; pray take a seat, Mrs. Melville."

The widow sat down; her limbs and her eyes were alike failing her; and again exerted herself to be calm.

"And this is my son, Sir, my only son. We have come to beg a favour of you, Mr. Wardrop," said Mrs. Melville. "We have lost all in losing *him;* and now Hugh must take his father's place—if he can get a situation. But we have no one to apply

to; you knew his father, Mr. Wardrop—my poor Hugh!"

Mr. Wardrop looked keenly at young Hugh Melville's moved and sorrowful face. The young man was about twenty, a studious-looking, slight youth; "like his father—too fanciful for business," said the merchant within himself.

But this was not the case; his father had not been too fanciful for business, and Mr. Wardrop knew it; but one does not like, when one is a merchant, to feel that one's clerk lives in another, higher atmosphere than one's-self, wherefore Mr. Wardrop involuntarily to himself, slandered his intellectual clerk, and did not know he slandered him.

Yet he saw the grief of both, and could not help being moved a little.

"Anything I can do—" he began; but that was not a wise beginning. "These casualties must happen, Mrs. Melville," said the man of business; "very sad and melancholy no doubt, but inevitable; and let us hope it is better for him, however it may be for you. Has your son been in any office? You seem a good age," continued the merchant, turning to Hugh. "How is it that your father never spoke to me of you before?"

"I have been at College, Sir," said Hugh. "My father was educating me for the medical profession. I have been three sessions in Edinburgh."

Mr. Wardrop rubbed his hands impatiently:

"Now this is the thing you see—this is what I always remark," he said with

some heat; "people bring misfortunes on themselves by their own imprudence, and then throw the blame on Providence. Why, Mrs. Melville, what were you thinking of?—here, in your situation—with your means—have you been wasting this young man's time at College—why *I* can't send my sons to College—when he might have been bringing in money to you these five years!"

"But we thought we had enough," said the widow, meekly, though her cheek flushed, "we had enough to live on, as we were content to live;—and Hugh's education—oh! Mr. Wardrop, it was his father's pride and hope."

Mr. Wardrop poised his pen on a finger of one hand, and pulled his whiskers with the other—all the time shaking his head

in protest and dissent;—for pride and hope —alas! what has a clerk with a hundred and fifty pounds a-year to do with pride?

"I am astonished that Melville could be so imprudent," said the man of wealth. "Why didn't he look forward, and prepare for the possibility of such a thing as this —such a thing as this now"—it was the solemn death which had carried Hugh Melville out of this darkened and cumbered earth into the unspeakable heavens, of which the man spoke—"such a thing as this might happen to any one of us—but what would be said of *me*, Mrs. Melville, if I left my family dependent on charity, with nothing but my life between them and starvation? It's always the way you see—these men are reckless and improvident all

their lives, and then they throw the consequences on us."

He did not mean to be harsh—he did not mean to be unjust—in his heart he pitied the bereaved family;—but to help them involved difficulty—and it was so much easier to be virtuously indignant at the cause, than to lend a willing hand to remedy the effect.

And the widow was not used to the compulsory meekness and humility of those who must ask favours. She rose from her seat, her frame trembling with proud love, which put her sorrow down, and taking to itself the strength of that, calmed it for the moment.

"My husband was not improvident and reckless, Sir—my husband was the purest, the most honourable!—I cannot say how

unjustly you blame him—it is too soon—too soon yet—I cannot speak of my poor Hugh;—but if you only knew—how self-denying—how just. It is true he was proud of his son—it is true he wished to place his son in a better position than himself;—but that—it was no discredit to a father."

"Sit down, Mrs. Melville, sit down," said Mr. Wardrop, leaning back in his chair. "I may as well settle with you while you are here. I suppose there is no insurance, or anything of that kind—your husband would not have his life insured?"

"No," said Mrs. Melville, again sitting down, worn out, though Hugh remained standing, pale and indignant, by her side.

"I thought not; now you see, a prudent man in poor Melville's circumstances, would have exerted himself to get a situation for his son, four or five years ago, and so put him in the way of independence, while the money he spent in sending this young man to College, would have much more than sufficed for a life-insurance; it is deplorable the folly and short-sightedness of some people; however, I suppose something must be done. Well, what do you think you are fit to do?"

Hugh's heart swelled—the poor young heart unaccustomed to slight or hardships—and he would fain have covered his head proudly, and turned his back upon the questioner—but it would not do; for Hugh had vowed to himself, that he would be brave for his mother's sake.

"I cannot tell, Sir," he answered modestly, "I know little of business, but I am very willing to make any exertion, and anxious to learn. I can keep books —I can—"

"Yes," said Mr. Wardrop, with a slight contemptuous wave of his hand, "but I never give any salary the first year; and I suppose that would not suit you."

Hugh's countenance fell; but a kind of impatience possessed him. He could no longer be humble.

"You understand our circumstances, Sir," he said, with some haste and less respect. "We have nothing that we do not labour for; and I am anxious and willing to work as much as a man's strength can, for my mother and sister. I know very well that there is no such mystery in the business

of an office, as to require a very long initiation; and the habit of study and of overcoming difficulties is surely not against me. I ask you, Sir, will you help me to obtain a situation, for my father's sake? If you do I shall be honestly grateful, and you will have done an act of kindness; if you do not choose, I can say no more."

He delivered himself of the last words with nervous haste and warmth, already trembling, lest, in giving vent to his feelings, he had injured his cause; but it was not so. The half defiance did not irritate Mr. Wardrop; it rather put him down.

"Yes—yes—you speak very well; it is very easy for theoretical people to depreciate the work of an office," said the merchant. "You will know better when you have been in one a few years—something different

from your slow work at College; but as I tell you, I myself never give any salary the first year, and besides I have already more clerks than I quite need; however, I will speak to a friend of mine who may have an opening; you may look in again in a day or two. I will keep it in mind; and if you can hear of anything yourself, I will be glad to use any interest I may have, for your father's sake."

Hugh bowed and uttered some inarticulate thanks—so did his mother—and then they rose to go away.

"Stay a moment. I have some further business with you, Mrs. Melville," said the merchant, ruffling over the leaves of a memorandum-book.

They waited, expecting what it was. Mr. Wardrop's lips moved as he made

his calculations; then he rang a little bell, and a well-dressed youth, one of his clerks, appeared at the door.

"Send Mr. Thomson to me," said the great man.

The lad withdrew; and then a lingering feeling of delicacy seemed to smite the merchant's heart. At last, after a little hesitation, he rose himself, and meeting his cash-keeper at the door, waited there till he had received from him a little packet of notes.

"Thirty pounds—you will find this correct Mrs. Melville," said Mr. Wardrop. "I have not deducted all the time your husband was away; but it will be quite right."

There was nothing farther from his mind, than any intention of meanness. Nor would he have grudged to give the widow the

entire quarter's salary; but it did not occur to him. He arranged it in the usual methodical business way. It did not come into his mind, that he should make any allowance for peculiar individual circumstances; for Mr. Wardrop was not in the habit of having transactions, where individual circumstances were to be considered. And so unconsciously, with serene self-commendation, he gave to poor Mrs. Melville, the three rustling ten-pound notes, to him a very little sum—to her all she possessed in the world.

CHAPTER V.

THE little parlour was drearily out of order; no one had the heart to arrange it, either while the father lay ill, absorbing all care and attention, or in the desolate calm which followed his death; and the little servant could only do part of what was necessary—she had no genius for order, more than was common to her class.

Isabella was alone. She was eighteen years old; a thoughtful girl, maturing into

reflective womanhood, and when the door closed upon her mother and Hugh, she sat down upon the little sofa, and leaning her head on her hands, began to think anxiously, sorrowfully, upon the new life which lay before her. A life darkly breaking out of heavy clouds; but this was its morning hour, its new beginning, and Isabella heroically wiped off the tears, which would swell into her eyes, and forced her thoughts to silence, when again and again they repeated that name, which never more should be addressed to a living man. Father, father! the word haunted her; but though it wrung her heart to put it away, she did it—did it bravely, laying all the past into his grave; and now, she looks steadily away out of that full past behind with all its thronging figures, into the unknown blank before.

What to do? alas! what to do? her brother could think cheerfully of the work, by which he might be able to maintain them all—perhaps—there are so many peradventures in youthful minds, let experience say what it will—by which he might elevate himself and them to a better position, a higher place; but the highest end the sister could look to, was adding a little, a very little, to the principal store which it must still lie on Hugh to furnish. Long weary labour for a very little gain—scarcely any hope of earning enough to be a substantial help. It is a sad discouragement this to the efforts of women—an inevitable one as it seems.

She had few accomplishments. Isabella had been very little at school, and at home they taught her only what they knew. A

little old cheap piano stood under the book-shelf, but there was very little music to be brought out of it, and Isabella's acquirements in that respect did not exceed those of ordinary school girls. She could sing, so as they liked to hear her at home, but was as innocent of science in her singing as the birds—and these were her sole accomplishments.

Poor Isabella! a new gush of tears came over her cheek. What after all was she fit for? Neither for household service nor for teaching; and though she helped her mother to make her own neat dresses, she dared not undertake, she fancied, to make them for other people. All these years she had lived pleasantly, thinking herself of some use in this bright little house—now—could she do nothing now?

Alas! ye young spirits, who can look for something when you labour—can have a great aim in view, and think of the heaven-pointing ladder of ambition before your foot is on its lowest round—can work to give independence to your dearest; alas! have pity upon those who must not hope for this—who pine and yearn notwithstanding to help—whose hopes would fain mount as high as yours, whose hearts rise as warmly—but upon whom fate lays its chill finger, and says, it is impossible.

That this is wise and well, we do not dispute—nor that it is inevitable; but when you think of disappointed hopes and blighted energies, think sometimes of this distress. Think pitifully, if you will, of the girl who breaks her heart, because she

loses or never has gained the love of one —but think as pitifully of her who being loved, and with a young aspiring heart within her, cannot struggle out of the natural bondage—cannot independently *support* those for whom, drop by drop, she would spend her life. To endure hardship and labour demands a kind of heroism—to endure to be useless is the hardest fate of woman.

Isabella rose—it looked such a sad climax to her thoughts—to put the little room in order—to take the dust from the books and arrange them in their places—to lay away pieces of sewing thrown down by the listless hand of grief, which Jane had piled in a little heap in the corner of the sofa; and, finally, when the brightened room showed marks of her labour, to

bathe her eyes and her hands once more, and to sit down to her work.

This, at least, she could do, and constant sewing all day long, would be hard work, if it was nothing else; that was some consolation.

Jane had been the *little* servant a year ago, and they called her so still, though she had started up into a great girl, with a soft, good-humoured, comely face. As Isabella sat at her sewing, Jane presented herself, first, by cautiously opening the door, and glancing in, and then by introducing her whole person; she was fresh from her work, not remarkably tidy, and had a puzzled look on her face, as if she had something disagreeable to say.

"Please, Miss Melville, mother's been," said Jane.

She had a spoon in her hand, and began to rub it vehemently with her apron; but still the poor girl looked very much like a culprit, and did not seem at all to like her position.

"Has she?" said Isabella passively.

"And please, Miss Melville—but I told mother you'd think it was so cold-hearted and cruel like," said the girl, bursting into tears.

"What is it, Jane—what has happened?" said Isabella.

"Oh please! I told mother you'd be angry, and never speak to me again."

"Hush, Jane, like a good girl—you need not be afraid for me," said Isabella: "if you have done anything wrong, tell me, and I'll try to excuse you to my mother."

"It isn't that," said Jane, still sobbing; "it isn't anything I've done—it's what mother told me to say; and please don't be angry, for I can't help it."

"I will not be angry, Jane."

"Mother told me I was to ask, if Missis was going to keep a girl any more; for if she isn't, mother's heard of a place; and I knew you would think it was unfeeling like—but it's mother, Miss Melville—please, it's not me!"

It was a shock to Isabella; she could scarcely command herself; but she did, with an effort.

"Very well, Jane—you shall hear when my mother comes in; but I am not angry—your mother was quite right."

The girl withdrew, looking wistfully back, to ascertain that there was indeed

no anger in her young mistress's face, There was none—but the young, proud, sensitive spirit felt the first shock painfully. They had been very kind to this girl, Jane, and had done a hundred little gentle offices for her mother who lived in the neighbourhood. Isabella felt a sudden recoil —a painful withdrawal of esteem, and though she reasoned with herself again and again, and in her mind declared the mother to have done only what a mother should do, it still hurt and annoyed her. It was the beginning, and again she tried to brace herself for the new life—if she could not work she could at least endure.

CHAPTER VI.

ISABELLA laid down her work and hastened to the door, as her mother and Hugh passed the window, to open it for them. The parlour had grown bright under the influence of a little clear fire. The hearth was swept, the room neat, the table spread for their homely dinner; and for the first time a certain air of cheerfulness was in the little parlour.

"Well, mother," said Isabella anxiously, as she received from her mother her wet shawl, and drew a chair for her to the fire-side. "Have you heard of anything?"

"Mr. Wardrop will do what he can for Hugh," said the widow. "We could not expect you know, my dear, that there was to be a situation just ready for him; but Mr. Wardrop has promised his influence, and will speak to a friend of his, he says, who perhaps may have an opening; so I think we may hope that Hugh will get a situation soon, Isabella."

"Yes, I think so," said Hugh. "His manner is not good—that is all; but these men of wealth who need nothing but wealth to give them standing, are very apt to fall into that fault; it was just manner I think—nothing more—though that is bad enough."

"Very likely Mr. Wardrop has risen from nothing, as people say," said Mrs. Melville; "that would account for it—at least he is a common person. I should not like to hear you, Hugh, speaking to Jane's little brother, as Mr. Wardrop did to us; but he lowered himself—not us—and that is a consolation," said Mrs. Melville, a slight flush of injured feeling returning to her face.

"I am to call in a few days," said Hugh in answer to Isabella's further question, "and he would keep me in mind—that is what he said. Now of course he is a man of influence, and could provide for a dozen such as me, if he exerted himself; I think there is no fear."

"I am very glad," said Isabella; "and now, mother, you must see what I can do. Jane has been speaking to me to-day; she

says her mother has found her a place, if you do not intend to keep a servant any longer."

"Jane has spoken to you? well, well, Isabella, we must make up our minds to all that," said Mrs. Melville, looking more angry than she would acknowledge. "She must go then, immediately. I thought if Hugh had got a situation, and you and I could have managed sewing for some of the shops—we could do that perhaps—that there might be an effort made to keep Jane; but now she must go—yes, perhaps it is very well."

It was two o'clock, and now their mid-day meal was placed on the table. Mrs. Melville glanced at Jane as she made her appearance, with secret displeasure, remembering involuntarily the cloak she had

given to Jane's mother, when this winter began, and how Isabella had taught the little brother to read; but mixed with these thoughts were others—the out-door menial offices—the household errands—how all these must fall now either on herself or Isabella; and the widow shrank and felt it a humiliation.

Nor must you blame her, good lady, who think, that the clerk's wife was rather your servant's equal than yours—for rank is the strangest, most subtle thing. They had only one little maid—you have a regiment of liveried attendants—very well—but you could not shrink from the pity of the crowd more than these did—you could not keep your daughter more jealously from any passing glance, which so much as implied disrespect, than this poor widow

would. And she could not forget that she was a Greenlees of Greenlees.

After dinner Mrs. Melville sat down at the fireside, with a little bundle of papers—it was easy to see what these were; here, with its black seal, is the doctor's bill, which balances one of those rustling ten-pound notes, and there follow others, which will leave only a very small residue, when they are all paid. Mrs. Melville's pale face grows blank, as she holds the money in her hand and sighs over it.

"It is not that I did not know it all before, Isabella," she said, shaking her head mournfully; "but—"

The good mother stopped; to begin a new life with something less than five pounds, and no means at present of earning more. A sudden fright crossed her; but

she would not speak distrustfully to her children.

Those listless days! It was in vain that Isabella took her work, and Hugh got his books and tried to study. Both of them felt that this was wasting time—time in which they should be working for daily bread; and Hugh's eye wandered down the page, and wandered back again, passing dreamily over words, which had no sense to the mind, absorbed in other thoughts; and Isabella, sitting apart, went on with her work unconsciously, scarcely knowing what it was that passed through her fingers. Both were impatient, hardly restraining themselves from its expression—for here they stood in urgent need, and yet perforce were idling the slow-footed time away, while Mrs. Melville in the kitchen was dismissing Jane.

With the next day came another enterprize. Again Mrs. Melville put on her widow's bonnet with its heavy veil, and taking Isabella this time, directed her steps to the town. It was a bright day now, and the sunbeams shone cheerfully over the terraced houses in Everton, sending out gleams from the windows they could reach, and gilding the bare tree-branches which interposed between. At the foot of the hill, the gilded weathercock glitters on the spire of the new church with the gargoyles, and the sun shines pleasantly into the eyes, which those children, homeward bound from school, shade with their little brown hands as they look along the hazy range of this line of street. Great waggons loaded with fragrant hay are coming and going—there is a hay-market close by—and the street,

though here it has green fields on one side of it, and is decidedly suburban, is not without its considerable traffic; for the houses and the people stray further out in this direction, every year.

There is no great interest in those streets—narrow themselves, with still narrower branching off at every side—until you come to a crowded, noisy thoroughfare, where the solemn heathen beauty of this great building, eyeless and inexpressive like a face in marble, strikes you strangely in conjunction with everything around and below. There are low fence walls about it, flaming with placards, and modest book-stalls shelter themselves under the shadow of these. Nay, just here upon this wall, hangs a rude frame full of ballads—ballads which it is advisable not to look at nearer

than from the opposite side—but which doubtless find sale, or the woman and the umbrella who watch over them would not be so faithful to their post. Then opposite those graceful pillars of the portico—opposite the pediment with its inarticulate sculpture, is a travelling theatre, rich in dwarfs and giants, where you will hear music if you pass at night. You hear music, do you say, just now, as you stand here in the broad day, vainly trying to discover what the story is, which that sculptured pediment means to tell? Yes—but that is only from the omnibuses; and there they go, red, blue, and green, all of them with horns—alas, only too eloquent—which people with ears might have warrant for bringing actions against, to the full as good as he had who tried the Catholic

bells; but these are Protestant horns, good friends; conscientious, non-conforming horns, by conviction dissentient from the usual prosaic rules of harmony, but very strongly believing in the abstract proposition, that music hath charms.

There too is the railway, fronting this street like a great stone screen, which you perceive has been cobbled, and exhibits patches of new cloth on the old garment; and a continual stream pours up and down, east and west, of very distinct nineteenth century people—people to whom a grandfather is a remote ancestor, the first of his line; while between them and the sky, with its solemn sightless eyes, stands the fair heathen building, a beautiful blind alien who has no share in this time—no share in these wintry heavens, nor this stir of vulgar life.

And now we have reached the fashionable street—the street of streets for Liverpool ladies. Very indifferently the widow and her daughter pass those glittering windows, with all their up-piled riches, but now and then they pause at a plainer shop and look wistfully into the faces behind the counter. These shops are full of linen, of baby's dresses, of caps and dressing-gowns, and under-garments for ladies. Mrs. Melville thinks her own skill, and Isabella's delicate fingers, might execute such work well; and so at length, after much hesitation and reconnoitring, they venture into one.

But unfortunately Mrs. Melville and her daughter, look like ladies. A clerical-looking person in a white neckcloth, bows them in, places chairs for them, begs to know what

he can have the pleasure of showing them. Mrs. Melville's spirit is broken; she becomes almost afraid to explain to this man, as he stands simpering and waiting before them. If her funds were not so small, she would buy some trifle yet, to cover her retreat.

But at last she manages to ask for the principal; and Isabella, who feels she would be committing some kind of small dishonesty, by sitting down where she has come as a petitioner, and not as a customer, humbly stands out of the way of the shopmen and the entering ladies. Ah! those entering ladies! if they would but look courteous — if they would but have a smile, as the sun has, to meet all eyes withal!—but they look at her in her deep mourning-dress, as she stands timidly apart, in every one's way, as it seems, and say,

" here is some dependent," as plainly as glances can say it. The mammas whom middle age and prosperity have made hard-hearted—but indeed not only them—the young ladies—the half-grown girls—they all look at the humility of the pale girl in mourning, and draw their own conclusions from it—she is poor.

And this ordeal has to be passed through, in various of those shops. They are very extravagant shops, the cheapest of them; but for all that, the workers are paid very little; and most of the shops have more workers than they can supply. From one after another, the widow turns with a sad heart.

At last here is one to which they look, as to a forlorn hope. It is a very plain shop, and there is a clear Quaker

face—clear as the net of that high cap which surmounts it—appearing over some pretty little frocks within. At least there are no clerical gentlemen, no very fine young ladies, to be encountered on the way to the principal; and Mrs. Melville enters here.

Everything is very fine in those shelves, and upon this counter — fine linen, fine muslin—woollen stuffs, as close as cambric; and the clear Quaker face has a pleasant voice belonging to it, and a sister, who has to be called out of the back shop. But the result is, that Mrs. Melville leaves a deposit, equal to the value of the first work they give her, and that Isabella carries a bundle away in her hand.

They have spoken very little to each other since they left home; they have smiled to each other faintly, as they left the other

shops, and Mrs. Melville has said now and then :

"It is no matter; they do not know us; they are harming themselves, Isabella, by all this ; they are not harming us."

But this was very faint ineffectual comfort, and the smiles which accompanied it, were sadly troubled and pale.

They do not know us, it is very true—do not know that one of us, is a Greenlees of Greenlees, the other a descendant of those reverend Melvilles, who have been honoured for generations, as preachers of the Word ; but though we know, that these are very trifling people, and that their rudeness is but a sign of mean natures, and does no harm to us—still, after all these philosophies, we are yet human, and it is hard to bear.

But now they return, past the same shops. with their humiliated feelings very much soothed, and talking with a grateful kindliness of their two Quaker patronesses. Not that the Quakers were very cordial or very generous, but they used them honestly—simply asked what they could do —simply accepted their services; and Isabella now looked down upon her bundle lovingly, and grasped it tight when they crossed the crowded street. Something to do—something by which to earn those precious pieces of money, out of which their life must be made.

Their life—yet they were in no danger of forgetting, that life cometh not by bread alone; but there is something strangely sobering, in even the far-off sight of want; and to be helpful is a very dear privilege,

to those who have little help in their power. So Isabella held her work in her arm, and her eyes brightened, as she looked down upon it. They had said nothing of their grief to-day—had kept down their tears, and up an appearance of calmness so much as they could; nevertheless the sorrow was not to be defrauded; and as they returned through these loud streets on their way home, it enveloped them in a dreary mist, which even the lavish sun could not pierce through.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK elapsed, and Mr. Wardrop made no sign—in the meantime Mrs. Melville and Isabella laboured diligently, at the work they had got from the Quakers, and carried it back so soon, and so delicately done, that they immediately took a high place, among "the workers" for the very dear, very good shop in which, the Friends dispensed their delicate wares. This, however, though it

was a very great matter for them, did not bring in any magnificent revenue; between them they made about eight shillings the first week. It raised their spirits greatly—it almost elated Isabella—for she began to feel herself of use.

But poor Hugh meantime fell into Isabella's despondency. To get the paper in the morning, to look painfully over its advertisements, to find clerks wanted here and there, and to apply for the situations—writing sometimes three or four letters of application in a forenoon; then to lounge out the painful day, trying to study and finding himself quite unable; to walk about the narrow room chafing at his own inactivity; to eat the bitter bread of idleness, grudging every morsel he took. Alas, poor Hugh! but still when he thought it over

gravely, he had confidence in Mr. Wardrop; still he started and trembled when a step paused at the door; still he hoped for wonders which every day as it dawned might bring forth; and every night laid his head on his restless, uneasy pillow with a sick heart. At last the week was out.

"Mother, I will go to Mr. Wardrop," said Hugh, when another Monday morning began a new week. "It is very hard to bear this delay; and with so much business as he has to attend to, he may have forgotten to send if he has heard of anything; and he said I was to call."

"Well, Hugh, my dear," said Mrs. Melville; "but be patient, and mind those people care little for the feelings of others. I wish I could go too—they might say what they liked to me; but mind be cautious, Hugh.

If you offend him, he may turn upon you and do nothing; and there is nobody else—nobody else to apply to now, who even knows us."

So they brushed his coat, and watched him out; and when they had seen him disappear down the street, returned to their work—Isabella to her seat in the window and her elaborate stitching, and Mrs. Melville up stairs to the two little bed-rooms to put them in order; for Jane was now gone.

It was but a little house—three little bed-rooms above, and a parlour and a kitchen below—but they had to pay twenty yearly pounds for it, and that was now far too much for them. So another thought, slowly through much repugnance, grew in the widow's mind. She must leave the little

parlour—must be content with the lightsome kitchen behind, and have a lodger in her unused room.

This was a great trial; but she began to accustom herself to the thought. Alas! the anticipation was very hard: to receive into her house a stranger—to serve a stranger in menial services for hire. It is impossible for the rich, to understand the misery of such a step downward. On a great eminence you cannot perceive the difference of lower elevations—nevertheless the separate ridges are as clearly marked, and hearts are as like to break on the descent, from one to another of those more gradual steps, as by a precipitate downfal from the highest Alp. For your fallen princess may be as well served with her one attendant, in her cottage, as ever she was in her palace, and

she remains your princess still, and makes her hardships royal; but your poor clerk's widow thrown down from her one superior step, is immediately classed with the rascal many, from whom she is as far apart as the princess is, and the poorer can bear it less, than the greater; it is humiliation in every sense to the one—to the other it is but higher honour.

By-and-bye the household work was done, and Mrs. Melville returned to her sewing. Isabella sat at the little window, her mother by the square table; they did not speak half a dozen words in an hour, and the house was perfectly still, so that you could only hear the swift progress of the needle, the rustle of the sleeve as it brushed upon the work. And in those long, still, lingering moments, with the work which demands her

hands only, quickly progressing, and all her thoughts left free, the full weight of her sorrow pressed upon the widow's mind till her heart had nearly burst; but she said not a word. She remembered him—him—he needed no name now—in all the different periods of his life: the child she played with; the youth who gave her all his earnest heart; the man on whom she had leaned these five-and-twenty years. Nothing she did, nothing she touched, not one common habit of her life but brought him before her—and he was gone.

So they sat together in silence, not daring to speak, lest when they spoke, the grief indulged should break all bounds, and their very work—their needful daily work which brought them bread—be hindered. In the night, when Isabella awoke, and heard her

mother moan, she could draw closer to her, and cling to her, and sob upon her breast; but now, in the daylight, in those hours made for labour, they dared not speak; for there was but one subject of which their thoughts were full.

But still they started at passing footsteps, which sounded as his had done, at passing voices which seemed, in the distance, to have an echo like his; and pitifully sometimes looked in each other's faces for an instant, as one of those sounds went by, with an awe of expectation; for every step without sounded like his, and his voice rung in the air continually. They heard him stir above them—they heard him call when they slept; and yet they knew that he would never call again.

But now Hugh is at the door. He looks

languid, wearied, and no more hopeful than when he went away.

"He says only the same, mother," said Hugh. "I am to call in a day or two, and he will bear it in mind; that is all."

"But, Hugh, my dear, we could not expect, that he was just to be ready for you," answered his mother; "we must have patience. Was Mr. Wardrop kind? did he receive you well?"

"I suppose so," said Hugh, sitting languidly down by the fire.

"And what did he say? you did not offend him, Hugh? You know you thought yourself, it was only his manner that was repulsive. Was he not kind to you?"

"I fancy he had forgotten all about me," said Hugh hastily. "Mother, it is dreadful;

am I to do nothing? I will rather be a porter; I will rather be a labourer; to have you working for me thus—mother, I cannot —I cannot."

And Hugh covered his face, with his violent compressing hands, overcome with sickened hope and restrained grief.

"Hugh, my dear boy, you must just have patience; we must all have patience. It is only a week since we began to try. I knew it was difficult getting employment; you must have patience, Hugh."

But this was just the hardest thing to have. He calmed himself down, poor fellow, and told them how he had been received; how the rich merchant had forgotten all about the poor penniless youth, and growing angry at himself, received him with impatience. And Hugh Melville again clenched

his hands, and pressed them together, as if his throbbing heart was between them; for patient he could not learn to be.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISITOR has just entered Mrs. Melville's little parlour; it never looked so small before, for this great figure fills it up, and overshadows the square table, as if he intended to plant his next step upon it, and crush it into instant destruction; but he subsides quietly instead, into the arm-chair, which groans to receive him, and you feel that "the great wind of his going,"

has filled the little room, with a perfect draught of cold air. Nevertheless the widow and her daughter look pleased to see him, and his coming brightens the languid face of Hugh.

He is a very large man—tall and stout, with a great athletic framework, filled up however, too heavily for athleticism—a large smiling face; a large head, bald nearly to the crown, over which thin sandy hair is carefully drawn like a veil; an immense expanse of black waistcoat, a proportionate white neckcloth; and eyes, good-humoured and full of glee, which at present, in a pause of his discourse, glance down complacently towards his foot; if you follow this glance, you will discover the cause of the complacency—for to serve as pedestal to such a heavy figure, this

foot is a remarkably handsome one, and Mr. Ford is aware of the fact, and looks at it, and smiles.

It requires no penetration to find out, that this is the Reverend Mr. Ford, nor is much necessary when he begins to speak, to make the further discovery, that he is a Scotchman and a Scottish minister; the last not so much by his accent, as by some singular out-of-the-way words, which he uses now and then; words neither Scottish nor English, but ecclesiastical, and savouring of Presbyterial Church courts.

He has been speaking very gravely; and you could fancy him a Catholic priest just now, as the somewhat heavy lines of his face fall into a solemnity of expression, which looks a little too demure and strained; and there is something about his head

besides, a sort of rude force and impatience, in its outline and profile, which are not at all unlike the burly, arrogant priest in his might of irresponsible power; but the lines of Mr. Ford's mouth are irresolute, and when you look him full in the face, he is like a monk no more.

But you can fancy he looks like the kindliest of men. He has had a good deal of practice, in the outward appearances of sympathy; but when his facile features mould themselves, into those different phases of compassion, of attention, of regard, as the widow speaks to him, they are not the less evidences of the momentary emotion of the heart, because the face is accustomed; for Mr. Ford, good man, if he is very far from perfect, has at least the milk of human kindness

flowing over in his breast; and though he is at present only a missionary, with something less than a hundred pounds a-year, has a full *levée* every morning, at his lodgings up the hill, and is the retained advocate and special pleader of every kind of poor.

"Well, Mr. Hugh, you must come down with me. I am going to the town this morning," said Mr. Ford: "it is best to put as many irons in the fire, as we can manage, Mrs. Melville; and if Mr. Hugh will come with me, I will introduce him to Mr. Goudie. Mr. Goudie is to be one of the trustees of our new church—a good man—a very good man; and not only so, but an influential one. Admirable people they are, both his wife and he; he comes from Ayrshire; Goudie of Goudie, Mrs. Melville; you may have heard of the family."

"Then he is a gentleman," said the widow, looking up hopefully; "and a gentleman should know what is due—it is strange after all how little courtesy is in the world, Mr. Ford. Do you know now what Mr. Wardrop's origin was?"

"His father was born before him, as people say," said Mr. Ford, with a smile; "a merchant's son, born to great wealth, which he has made greater. It is so in many of those large houses—their business is an estate to them."

Mrs. Melville looked doubtfully down at her work: her hypothesis was defeated—he had not then risen "from nothing;" perhaps had been educated as gentlemen are; still he was a common person—that was a consolation.

"Then there is Mr. Gardner," said Mr.

Ford musing, "we could call on him; and we'll see if there are any others, when we get down to Mr. Primrose's. Now, Mr. Hugh—"

Hugh rose eagerly and got his hat.

"And, Mrs. Melville, we must hope the best," said the good Mr. Ford, bowing with his blandest smile over the widow's hand. "I have not the least doubt, that some of these gentlemen will be able to hear of something for my young friend—not the slightest doubt. Good morning, Miss Isabella; you must keep up your mother's spirits—remember 'all things work together for good'—*good* morning to you."

And looking back as he left the door to bow and smile again, Mr. Ford, throwing across the street a shadow, which reached as far as the opposite houses, and making Hugh

look very small and slender and youthful beside him, went down the street with his light quick step, laying playful hands on the heads of astonished children, and receiving curtseys from beggar women, who knew him of old.

He left the atmosphere clear behind him; the widow wiped some tears from her cheek it is true, but these were not tears of pain; and Isabella set herself to cheer her mother, as she had never been able to do before.

They spoke now more than usual—spoke of the kindly heart of the minister, of the advantage which Hugh would have, being introduced to these great merchants by him, and how there was no chance of Hugh's sensitive feelings, being lacerated again to-day, because he went among gentlemen; and

Mrs. Melville in the fulness of her heart went the length of an abstract proposition: of how much importance it was that ministers should be gentlemen too!

Very true—but good honest Mr. Ford would have winced a little, had she made as stringent inquiry into his origin, as she did into Mr. Wardrop's: for whereas Mr. Wardrop was the son of a wealthy merchant, the good neighbours at home called Mr. Ford's mother, Jenny.

But Nature had given the charm of genial manner to the one, and withheld it from the other; for Nature is as capricious as Fortune; and Fortune in revenge bestowed on Mr. Wardrop a princely revenue, and on the poor minister ninety pounds a-year.

CHAPTER IX.

At the door of the little bookseller's shop, already known to Hugh, as a resort of all ecclesiastical people belonging to the Scottish Church in Liverpool, Mr. Ford made a pause.

"We'll go in here first, Mr. Hugh," said the bland minister, "and see what Mr. Primrose is about to-day."

In front of the counter, on a high chair

made to be very uncomfortable, sits a gentleman reading a Scotch paper; behind the counter is the master of the shop. He is a slow-looking man, with an uncouth brown wig, and a face which has no advantages of form, colour, or expression, to recommend it; but in spite of all this it pleases you, as it gradually lights up a little to welcome Mr. Ford. It is a passive face; you could read in it very easily, the uneventful history it has; not active enough to "push" the business, which might easily be made a great one; getting books for you, when you order them, a fortnight after everybody else; doing printing, when you want that, with the most elaborate nicety, and the greatest delay; holding a *séance* in the mysterious little back-shop all day long, to which all

sorts of people are admitted; receiving confidential communications as into a well, slowly circulating bits of ecclesiastical, and other gossip — such is the life of Mr. Primrose.

He holds out his hand in a slow, characteristic way, and submits to have it shaken; and then he asks, "What news?"

"My young friend here wants to get a situation," said Mr. Ford; "if you hear of anything, Mr. Primrose, pray let me know, or let Mr. Melville know. We are just going over to Mr. Goudie's office to speak to him."

"But I thought he was a student," said Mr. Primrose. "I always thought you were at College, Mr. Melville."

"So, so—yes, you are quite right; and bye and bye he will be at College again,"

said the minister. "But in the meantime we must get him a situation; so if you can hear of one, I shall be much obliged. Has Mr. Goudie been here to-day?"

"Ay, he was here; something about a report," said Mr. Primrose in his slow way. "He had been up at the Religious Institution House at a meeting; but you'll find him in his office now."

And shaking hands kindly with Hugh, Mr. Primrose dismissed them.

It is a hazy, sunny day, and at the end of this street, the dome of the Custom-house breaks through the brown mist, which the sunshine lines and touches, almost into beauty; and down through those narrow streets, you see crowds of bare masts, telling that the docks are close at hand. You might discover that,

even if you did not see them, for groups of sailors, three and four together, swing about through the street, and stop to look in at the windows of those salt-water shops, where there are chronometers, and quadrants, and books in blue paper binding, full of the science of the sea; but the merchants bulk as largely as the sailors, and the other side of the way, and the streets which descend from it to the river, are full of offices. In one of these is the throne of Mr. Goudie.

For to Mr. Primrose, and to Mr. Ford, Mr. Goudie is a great man, and Hugh has been properly impressed, with an idea of his dignity, before they climb the dingy stairs, which are honoured night and morning, by the pressure of his honourable feet. The office is very much like other offices

without, and just another edition of Mr. Wardrop's, is Mr. Goudie's private room.

The great merchant himself is a tall erect man, with a high narrow forehead, and grizzled hair which has been red, and a solemn face. You see too, that he himself has a considerable idea of his own dignity—a grave sober consciousness, that he stands on a "star-y-pointing" eminence, and is the object of much observation—not as a rich man only, but as a good man—a double distinction; and Mr. Goudie accordingly has drawn himself up to his full height, physical and moral, and looks stiff because he is over-conscious, that the eyes of all men are upon him.

But he too shakes hands with Hugh Melville—he too receives him graciously, and takes down his address, and promises

to bear him in mind; and poor Hugh leaves the office treading upon air.

So they make a little round, and everywhere there is the same good reception given to the minister, and the minister's *protégé*, and such a shower of promises to bear him in mind, and assurances of willingness to befriend him, break upon Hugh, all of which Mr. Ford, as he says, "homologates"—that is, adopts as his own, and promises over again—that the delighted Hugh begins already to see himself a great merchant, and to build magnificent castles in the air. Fifty pounds a-year! why with all these friends he may expect to begin with a hundred! and Hugh holds up his head, and glances scornfully at Mr. Wardrop's office, as he hurries past.

For Mr. Ford has some engagement in town, and after congratulating Hugh, that he is now in a fair way to succeed, and exulting over the kindness of Mr. Gardner, and Mr. Goudie, the minister leaves him, and walks cheerfully away — the good laborious, warm-hearted minister, whom all these great merchants like and patronize, and remunerate with ninety pounds a-year.

At the window of the little parlour, they are watching for Hugh very anxiously, for it is now late in the afternoon, and will soon be dark; and Isabella is standing at the door looking out to see if he is coming, when Hugh's bright and hopeful face appears at a little distance, and he waves his hand almost in joy.

"What a fine fellow that minister is, mother!" said Hugh, bringing in with him a gush of the cold air, which has brought that clear fresh flush to his cheek; "we have been received everywhere in the kindest manner—very different from Mr. Wardrop's way, I assure you—and I am quite sure of a situation very soon, Mr. Ford says; I shouldn't wonder if I were busy at one of those desks in a week—and maybe *not* with fifty pounds a-year!"

Poor Hugh! his bright look was comfort to both the others; they let him run on—his mother sitting opposite, looking into his face, and Isabella standing by his side, with her arm on the back of his chair.

"We might save enough in a year or two, to let me go into partnership

with somebody," said Hugh, with bright unsteady smiles; "and then I could secure something, as a provision for Isabella and you, mother, before I began my studies again. After all, it is a scandal to say, that those wealthy merchants are careless about people of our class—so kind as they were, all of them."

"And what kind of a man is Mr. Goudie, Hugh?"

"A grave, gentlemanly person, mother; he took my address, and said he would send me a note, or let Mr. Ford know when he heard — *when* he heard, not *if*."

"And Mr. Gardner?"

"He is what I would call a jolly man," said Hugh, with a little laugh, "with frank *brusque* manners. I am to call

again on him; and then there's Mr. Hollows —that's the great cotton-broker—Jane's father was in his employment — I am to get an introduction to him; and altogether, mother, we've had an excellent day's work, and I'm very tired and very glad. No fear of us now."

CHAPTER X.

It is Christmas day.

The evening of Christmas — and many a happy household party has reached the climax of its mirth. Eight o'clock, and in so many houses the hours have fled to this point, and still are flying, and another and yet another magical memory, is added to the list of those, which already make home radiant. Next door the children

have had such a boisterous joyous evening; and on the other side, married sons and daughters have been visiting the father and the mother, and now are sitting round a bright fire, reminding each other how they used to spend the Christmas times of youth; between these two intervenes a little room—look into it.

In the warmest corner, beside the square table, the mother sits at her work. It is very fine, delicate work, and you see her sometimes press her hand over her eyes, as if they pained her; but, except for a moment, now and then, when she does that, she never pauses in her labour, though this fine stitching sorely fatigues her eyes in the candle-light.

Behind her, further away from the fire, is Isabella, doing the same kind of work;

and though her eyes too sometimes smart, she never allows herself to lift them for a moment, except when she has to thread her needle. Next week ladies will admire this work, and call it beautiful, and congratulate themselves, on the advantage of going to such a shop as the Quaker one; but they will never think of the weary fingers, which have elaborated this, nor of the throbbing brows that have bent over it, and perhaps it is well.

On the other side of the fire, with the writing-desk on the corner of the table, sits Hugh. He has some scientific books before him, and is writing such an essay as he would have needed to prepare for his Professor, had he been at College this year; but he works by fits — sometimes absorbed and buried, writing at the great-

est speed—sometimes pausing for a long stretch of thought—sometimes throwing down the pen impatiently, and pressing his clasped hands on his forehead, till their grasp upon his head is painful. Poor Hugh!

There is one candle on the table, and the fire is very small—so small that the corners of the little room are quite chill, and Isabella, sitting at some distance from the hearth, secretly shivers with cold; but if she drew near the fire, she would lose the light, so she says nothing, but labours on.

They have nothing to say to each other, —nothing to say—for the women cannot afford to be agitated, and hindered from their work; so they speak of hope in inferences, and make their commonest things

allegorical, in a vain wish to cheer each other; but except now and then, at night or in the morning, they do not speak directly about the sad prospect before them.

"Isabella, my dear, you are getting tired," said her mother. "It will learn you to be pitiful of those, who have this work to do all their lives—when you are done with it, Isabella."

"It is not hard, mother," said Isabella quietly.

"No, no," said Mrs. Melville, again pressing her hand across her eyes, "it is not hard; I like it myself—I always did like fine plain work; but sometimes I think it hard to see you always at it—never mind me—it is unthankful to say such a thing, when so many would be glad—"

Hugh's hands compressed his forehead, till the pain made him groan—then he leaned it upon his little desk, and exclaimed:

"Oh! mother, mother!"

"Hugh, my poor man!—but God will send us help, my dear bairns; we are His special family—the widow and the fatherless—and if ever a true heart cried to Him for help, it was him—it was your father. Oh, Hugh, Hugh! you will break my heart; be patient, for God will help us."

But Hugh, poor Hugh! covering his face for shame, because he was a man, and would not weep before any eyes, even those most dear to him, struggled with convulsive sobs—struggled to keep them down and be still.

"You'll hear of something, Hugh; Hugh,

my dear bairn," repeated Mrs. Melville, with tears in her eyes.

Hugh could not answer her—his heart was full of bitterness; all those good people who were to bear him in mind — those rich, influential, wealthy men, who had sickened his heart with false hopes, and elated him, poor artless boy, into short-lived exultation—in his secret mind he called them foes—his thoughts arraigned them, and found them guilty of heartless indifference and broken faith.

Nor was it only the bitter disappointment, they had occasioned himself, which now prostrated Hugh, but they had been the instruments of that disenchanting process, which brings the "light of common day," at his years, so miserably over the fairy world of youth. Those old tales of the fairy-land,

how true they are amid all our scepticism—how the poor changeling at first sees the beautiful elves, with their glittering crowns and aerial music, but bye and bye gets a glimpse beyond, to the real misery of the hectic fairy life.

So it was with Hugh: the beautiful external garments of good deeds and noble motives blew aside, and he saw the cold world beyond in its native selfishness—saw it, but still not truly—for the misery was exaggerated now, as before had been the joy.

But his pride came to his aid, and his affection; he caught his mother's wistful, tearful glance, and saw the pale face of Isabella; and he got the mastery over his violent emotion.

"If they had only promised nothing!"

he exclaimed: "if they had but said honestly they could do nothing for me!—it might have been harder at first, but not so bad—not nearly so bad as this waiting. Mother, I wish you would spare me one day—I wish you would go with me to-morrow to Mr. Goudie and Mr. Gardner. They have no interest in me now; they might have if they saw my mother. Will you go with me to-morrow?"

"I will do anything, Hugh," said the widow, "anything that will be of use—or whether it is of use or not, if you want me, my dear."

"And then," said Hugh, "if we see that there is nothing, to be hoped for from them, then I must look to something else: I might perhaps be assistant in a school, or I might give lessons here at home,

if it were anything, however little! I could be content I think, if I were working, whatever the work was."

"But Hugh, I would not," said his mother. "You must do nothing unbecoming your father's son—it would break my heart."

"My father's son must earn his bread, mother," said Hugh, gloomily, "what matter how it is done—what matter after all how one gets through this miserable world?—the shortest way—the purest way—only to be done with it—to cast its slough—to rise above all its wretchedness."

And in that deep melancholy, which sometimes falls upon the sanguine spirit, Hugh Melville again pressed his clasped hands on his brow.

His eyes were covered—he did not see

the tears which fell upon his mother's work, nor the quick flush which came, and went over the face of Isabella;—he saw nothing —heard nothing—till with a sudden start he uncovered his face, as Isabella's voice broke upon the silence, and without a prelude she began to sing—

"Ah! my heart, I know thy wiles—
All thou hast to say,
Thou hast said before, but smiles
Chased thy tears away:
Yea, the world is dim, I wot,
Dark, and sad, and cold,
Yet full many a sunny spot
Thou hast known of old.

"Ah! my heart, I feel thee rest
In this breast of mine,
Dumb as lark on earth's cold breast,
Ere the sunbeams shine.

Thinkest thou I know not how,
If the day but spring,
Up ye dart, the lark and thou,
To the heavens to sing.

"Ah! my heart, I pray thee mark
How the shadows pass,
Here where dwells thy neighbour lark,
O'er the dewy grass.
Ever as the sunbeams fall,
Falls the following shade,
Ah! my heart, God works in all,
Be not thou afraid."

They had been accustomed to sing this together, but even in psalms their voices never had been raised, since their father died. Now Hugh fixed his eyes on Isabella's face, and watched the painful flush, which sometimes covered it—watched the tears rush into his mother's eyes,

till the work fell from her hands, and they gushed out in a flood. The poor, brave Isabella! her voice quivered, her heart swelled, but still she sang on—and now soft tears moisten Hugh's burning eye-lids, and he too sings—such a song—voices trembling at every word, hearts so full that the breast heaves with their troubled beating, but a psalm of new fortitude, of recovered hope, though they all ended it with tears.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. MELVILLE has thrown back her veil—there is something very interesting, in the singular likeness of those two faces; the mother's a little more subdued and much paler; but yet with its clear characteristic features as sanguine still as the son's—and Hugh with the red gleam in his brown hair, the ruddy tint upon his cheek, the light that comes and goes, flash-

ing out of his eye, and anon disappearing in the clear vacancy, which only waits to have its spirit and life called forth again. Kindly-hearted people turn to look after them, as they go along the street, admiring the son and the mother—or rather admiring the relationship, as they always do where it is seen.

They are on the threshold of Mr. Goudie's office.

"He is a Goudie of Goudie—a gentleman born," repeats Mrs. Melville under her breath to re-assure herself; and now the sacred door is opened, and they are ushered in to Mr. Goudie's room.

Upon Mr. Goudie's desk lie a heap of letters. They have chosen unfortunately in coming this day, for last night the American mail came in, and the merchant

has not yet been able to get through his correspondence. With a slightly annoyed expression he rises from his seat, but immediately Mr. Goudie recollects that it is "inconsistent" to look annoyed; so again he draws himself up, physically and morally; and with his chin resting on his stiff neckcloth, stands very upright before his chair, looking bland, consistent—perfect—a sublimated good boy.

"Oh, Mr. Melville? yes, I recollect," said Mr. Goudie coldly—and this time he did not offer Hugh his hand. "You came to me with Mr. Ford I think—well, I hope you have succeeded in getting a situation."

"I have not indeed, Sir," answered Hugh, "and—you will pardon me, Mr. Goudie—it is of the most vital importance to us—

my mother came with me, Sir, to see if—if—" said poor Hugh faltering before the steady glance of the unmoved face, "if you think there is any chance — any hope."

"I am sorry I myself am quite unable to do anything, Mr. Melville," said the merchant, lifting a letter from the table and slowly breaking the seal, "I should have been glad to serve you had it been in my power. I think I said to you before that I would bear your case in mind, and if I heard of any vacant situation, would let you, or Mr. Ford know. I am not in habit of breaking my word, and your name is in my memorandum book I find—you may rely on it, that I will let you know when I hear of anything."

"But we are left with no provision," said

Mrs. Melville hoarsely, feeling herself bold to speak to the "gentleman born" more plainly, than she would have done to a "common person," "we are left entirely unprovided for, Mr. Goudie, and these weeks which pass so lightly over prosperous people, are ages to us. Do you think, Sir; do you think we may expect—hope—that you will be likely to hear of anything soon for Hugh? I trust you will pardon me; I am not very much used to asking favours, and I may be too bold—but for our necessity's sake."

The poor, earnest, proud mother! her whole form quivered and moved—her eyes appealed to him, after she ceased to speak—her hand tenderly resting on Hugh's shoulder, presented him to the favour she begged; and Hugh himself, with his clear youthful brow, and his own lip quivering in sympathy, lifted

up too a questioning, entreating glance. It was hard to see them, and remain unmoved.

But Mr. Goudie broke the seal of one of his letters, broke away little particles of the wax, to throw them on the floor, and listened with the same blank, motionless face. When Mrs. Melville concluded, he looked up; he had remained standing, as an excuse for not offering seats to his visitors.

"If I hear of anything, Mr. Melville, I shall be glad to let you know," said Mr. Goudie. "I am sorry to say I have heard of nothing hitherto, and it is quite uncertain when I may; but you shall hear from me as soon as I do."

And conscientiously polite, Mr. Goudie bowed stiffly in honour of Hugh's agitated mother.

They went away. Poor Mrs. Melville! it had cost her a great effort to make this appeal, and, judging others by herself, she fancied it could not fail to be successful. She fancied that if any mother had come to her, pleading for such a son as Hugh, she would have done anything, everything, to help him on; and this man too had children.

But she restrained herself, and said little. Her cheek was deeply flushed, and tears of humiliation and wounded feeling were in her eyes; so they withdrew down the dusty dingy staircase in silence, encountering clerks and mercantile people, who looked with some wonder at the lady—the poor lady!—she drew her veil over her face, and took her son's arm again.

"Well, mother, it is better to know," said

Hugh, as they emerged into the open street, "and now it is useless having any more hope from Mr. Goudie."

"I believe it is, Hugh; yes, it is far better to expect nothing; but he comes of a good family himself, he ought to have known—" repeated Mrs. Melville. "I can understand how a common person may treat us unworthily, for it is only what we *have* they look to, but he should have been a gentleman, this Mr. Goudie—he ought to have known."

"Well, mother, here is Mr. Gardner's office," said Hugh. "He has not so high an opinion of himself at least—I hope we will fare better here."

Mr. Gardner's office was not half so large —Mr. Gardner himself, as Hugh said, not by any means so dignified. The outer

office was something like a shop, presenting a very common-place counter to the visitor, at which a market-woman was at present standing, with her linen apron sewed into a great pouch, divided in the centre, to hold silver and copper. She was paying money to a clerk—a considerable sum—for Mr. Gardner was a broker of fruit, and this was one of his customers.

And Mr. Gardner's inner room—his private room, was a bare uncarpeted place, with common desks fitted up at the windows, much less aristocratic than Mr. Goudie's writing-table. At one of these desks, low enough to be reached, from the level of a common elbow-chair—a very comfortable one, however—Mr. Gardner sat writing. He was a stout man, with a head like a shaven priest's, bald in the crown, and sur-

rounded with a bushy undergrowth of hair, which you could fancy was fixed on, and held close under his chin, by those great black whiskers. The face itself was red, and habitually looked, as if its owner had just risen from table, and had been indulging himself there without much restraint, while the bald white crown above, brought out and exaggerated the hue of the purpled cheeks.

"Well!" said Mr. Gardner, nodding to Hugh as he looked up from his desk, and glanced inquiringly at Hugh's mother; but he kept his seat steadily, and did not seem at all conscious, that there was anything more to be expected from him, than to turn his head a little, and to say "well."

"You were so good as bid me call," stammered Hugh, "and this is my mother,

Mr. Gardner. We came to see if you thought it was possible, that I could get anything to do."

"Possible! of course it is," said Mr. Gardner, wheeling his chair round a very little. "No man who is capable of working, need say it is impossible to get work, surely, in this country—but the thing is, are you fit for work?"

"Yes," said Hugh quietly.

"Oh, you are? Mr. Ford was telling me, you had been at College, and never in an office all your life before."

"It is very true," answered Hugh.

"Well, then, of course if you are deficient yourself, it is no wonder that a place does not turn up. How long have you been idle now?"

"It is nearly two months, since he began

to seek employment, Sir," said the widow, "he did not need and we did not wish him to be in an office before; but now, Mr. Gardner, we have met with the heaviest calamity that can fall upon a family. My husband is dead, and I am not able to keep Hugh at College, till he is properly qualified for his profession. He is not asking for an important situation—a very humble one would content us—but it is of great moment to us, that he should get one; if you will help us, Mr. Gardner—if you think you are able to help us."

Mr Gardner sat in his elbow-chair and looked at the faint, exhausted woman, with her pale, sorrow-worn face, and new widow's weeds, standing pleading before him; then he looked at Hugh—Hugh with his slight figure, his eyes not looking at him, but

following every motion of his mother—and the merchant shook his head.

"He is not like a boy, you know. He can't be taken into an office, and put to any little job like a boy. He should have been sent to business half-a-dozen years ago. It does not do, you know, Mrs. Melville—it is a certain fact it does not do, to make a young man a Jack-of-all-trades; if he knows about physic, get him into a druggist's shop—that is what I would advise; for I really know of nothing that would suit him, and it is a serious responsibility recommending a person of whom one knows so little."

And Mr. Gardner hitched back his chair, and again took up his pen.

They went out again, this time cowed out of all appearance of indignation, broken

spirited, and not knowing what to do.

"Perhaps I *might* get a situation in an apothecary's," said Hugh, despondingly. "I never thought of it before; but that, no doubt, will turn out as difficult as the clerkship. Well, well, when the night's darkest it's nearest the dawning; and it's dark enough now."

"Are we to go any farther?" said the widow faintly.

"Let us try the cotton-broker—let us go to Mr. Hollows; we cannot be any worse than we are, and it is another chance."

Languidly they pass along these crowded, echoing streets, and just before they have reached Mr. Hollows' door, a man like a warehouseman, with morsels of cotton

adhering to his short coat, takes his pipe from his lips, and touches the rusty brim of his hat to them in sign of recognition. It is the father of their little maid, Jane.

"Is this your dinner-hour, Hodgson?" said Mrs. Melville, unable even, in her weariness, and with cause of offence against him, to depart from her kindly custom with this man.

"Well, you see, Ma'am, all the day's a big dinner-hour to me now—with nothing to eat though," answered Hodgson, who was a smart, active man, slightly like a poacher, who had been almost everything that a working man could be—soldier, policeman, and a dozen crafts besides; "for I've quarrelled with the master."

"I'm very sorry for that," said the

widow. "And was it your fault or his?"

"Well, part one, part another. I'll not say what's not fair; but I am not the man to be put upon, you see, Mrs. Melville; and I gave him a bit of my mind."

It was Hodgson's special weakness; he was greatly given to deliver bits of his mind.

"And what was the cause, Hodgson?" said Hugh.

"Well, it's not a long tale, Mr. Hugh. You see I've been in the sample-room at George 'Ollows; and he'll tell you himself if I was not a handy man, and knew my own place; and six-and-twenty shillings was the wages. Now I'd have got a guinea portering, and needed to go no better dressed than them," and Hodgson pointed with some

dignity to a group of porters at the corner of the street. "A cap I'd have got for half-a-crown would have done me instead of this here, and a common jacket where I've got to wear a coat; and I put it to you, Mrs. Melville, if my missis at home, though she's as good at saving as most, could carry on comfortable, and keep me up like this, for less than six-and-twenty shillings? Well, I knew you'd think so—but the master didn't; so he's been keeping off five shillings every Friday, not for ill-will to me, but 'cause he thinks I should save up, and have something to reckon on; and tells me the money 'll run on in his hand, and I'll have a hundred pound afore I know where I am. Ah! but I'm not so green as that, I can tell you; so I up and said it was now I wanted my full wages,

when the children was young, and there was schooling to pay, and all that; but never a word would he hear me—so I did get provoked. I had worked for it—wasn't it mine? and I told him a bit of my mind. So the short and the long of it is, he won't give me all my money, and I won't take less; he'll not yield, and I'll not yield; and so I have lost my place."

"You should have had another first, Hodgson," said Mrs. Melville; "it is not so easy getting places now."

"Well, I'll give you a bit of advice, Mr. Hugh," said the man. "I have seen you at George 'Ollows too. Don't you go for to think that you'll get a place in his office. He's got nothing but 'prentices to do his clerk-work; one lad he has, I know, for ten shillings a-week; and all

the rest's them cheap hands, that's just like learning; don't you go there. A man would get better wages portering than in one of these offices; and you'll find I've told you right."

They had little heart after this conversation to continue their journey to the office of Mr. Hollows; but making allowance for "a bit of Hodgson's mind" being slightly exaggerated they proceeded — ineffectually however, for Mr. Hollows was not to be seen.

And so the day concluded—still more hopelessly than it had begun.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE best thing we can do is to advertise, I suppose," said Hugh, as they sat in the evening, consulting together; "but I cannot put all the divers ways in which I would be content to work, into one advertisement, mother. One might be for Mr. Gardner's suggestion—an apothecary's shop; the other for a school-assistantship, or to give private lessons; any of all these would do."

"But Hugh, my dear, it costs so much to advertise," said his mother anxiously; "and so few people think of looking at the advertisements."

"We have no other resource, mother," said Hugh; "we must try this means, for no other is possible to us."

Mrs. Melville acquiesced very doubtfully; for two advertisements would cost nearly a week's work of both herself and Isabella.

But Hugh had recovered his spirits. No longer waiting on the tardy goodwill of others, he began again to plan for himself, and again was hopeful.

Just then the postman's double knock startled them. Isabella threw down her work, and hurried to the door.

A wafered note, directed in an unknown

hand to Hugh. With a flush of expectation he tore it open:

"Dear Sir,

"If you are not otherwise engaged, I should be glad if you would look in to-morrow. A gentleman called to-day, who was speaking of something which perhaps might suit you.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES PRIMROSE."

"Mother!" exclaimed Hugh with exultation.

"I said that, I said that," said Mrs. Melville, wiping her eyes; "I knew there would be help sent to us, for God is kinder than man."

"Well, never mind the advertisement

now," said Hugh, taking up the paper on which he had begun to write one, and balancing it against the not very elegant note of Mr. Primrose. "These magical pieces of paper, how they change the aspect of everything! Something that will suit me: what can it be, I wonder? Perhaps, mother, Mr. Goudie relented after we went away."

"No, I think I should almost rather it came from a stranger," said Mrs. Melville. "And it surely does, Hugh: any way it is a providence, and we should be pleased to think of a worldly heart turning merciful; but still, still—I cannot help it—I would rather be indebted to a stranger."

"Perhaps somebody else Mr. Ford has been speaking to," suggested Isabella.

"I think somebody whom God has

moved," said the widow gravely. "I am beginning to learn to have little dependence upon man; but, bairns, He is our promised and pledged protector, and whatever good it is, it has come from Him."

The next morning early, Hugh Melville set out, full of hope and expectation, to see Mr. Primrose.

"He is in the back shop; there's nobody with him," said Mr. Primrose's man; and Hugh with some awe, stepped through, behind the counter, into the bookseller's mysterious den.

It is a very small place, boxed off by a wooden partition from a black lobby. This lobby leads from the shop to sundry undiscovered regions, up a stair which you can dimly discern in the distance, with a little printer's imp on his way down,

triumphantly swinging by the rail. Fastened to the wooden partition is Mr. Primrose's desk, over which the gas burns faintly; for that window in the wall, though you almost brush it with your shoulder, when you stand beside Mr. Primrose's high stool, is darkened with a wilderness of paper put up in blue enclosures, marked by the revenue stamp; and close at Mr. Primrose's back burns a fire, with the heat of which the atmosphere—though there is scarcely enough of air of any kind to be dignified with the name of atmosphere—is so charged that you breathe it in, a dusty glow, unwholesome and suffocating; but Mr. Primrose's accustomed lungs take no harm, and the innocent man places for his visitor a seat beside the fire.

"Yes, it's Mr. Melrose," said Mr. Prim-

rose, applying a short rusty stick of iron which held brevet rank as poker, to the fire; "he's a kind of literary man you know—didn't you know? I thought everybody had heard. It was him that wrote those letters to the "Courier,"—but perhaps you don't see the "Courier;"—and I print little things for him now and then—little things—addresses to children, and such like—about this size;" and Mr. Primrose held up a sheet of note-paper. "He was in here yesterday, wanting some invoice bills, I think—and it was then he spoke about this; it's to copy manuscripts, Mr. Melville."

"To copy manuscripts?—then it will be merely a temporary thing?" said Hugh, his hope failing.

"I don't know. I've seen him with

long papers—he has plenty of words," said Mr. Primrose with a grave chuckle; "so I said, if it suited you, I would send you over to his office to-day; and this is just about the time to see him."

"I will go then immediately," said Hugh; "thank you, Mr. Primrose."

"You'll look in," said Mr. Primrose, following him to the door, "you'll look in as you go past again, and let me know."

Hugh promised and hurried away.

Mr. Melrose was a man in great business—in greatly remunerative business—employing a great number of labourers at very low wages, and himself making money in handfuls. He was a tall man, with rather a demonstrative-looking face;

showily benevolent you would fancy, if you saw him on a platform at a charitable meeting—and you would not be far wrong.

For he *was* benevolent—generally a kind-hearted man—giving magnificent subscriptions to missionary societies, and greatly moved with pity for the heathen abroad; nevertheless with a quiet conscience, paying with fifteen shillings a-week, scores of hard-working labourers, and leaving them on such a revenue, to bring up families of hapless young heathens at home.

"You will work in my own house, Mr. Melville," said Mr. Melrose. "I like to be at the office early, so you could perhaps be over in the morning by eight o'clock; and then you can have an hour—say

between one and two—for dinner—and leave about seven again at night. I will give — well suppose we say fifteen shillings a-week, till these papers are finished."

Hugh was a little disappointed—still this was something.

"Very well, Sir," he said unresistingly.

"You will not be long employed on them—I should say not more than a fortnight; and I shall expect them to be very clearly copied, and grammar, and spelling, and all that, properly attended to; but you have got a tolerably good education I hear."

"I have been some sessions at College," said Hugh, rather abruptly.

"Ah, yes—and your father died; I am

sorry to hear it. To-morrow then, Mr. Melville, at eight o'clock."

Hugh went away, not absolutely disappointed—to get anything to do was a great matter, however small it was—but he was subdued a good deal; and as he returned home, he smiled to himself to think how much different always, was the hope and the fulfilment. The Expectation floated joyously in its fluttering, graceful garments half way between the earth and heaven; the Reality, with girded loins, stood upon the painful soil, planting step by step laboriously, scarcely able to lift its face at all to the skies; yet is it not well, happy and well, poor youthful soul, that the hope will still live on—will still lead your longing glances forward; still fill you with this security which nothing

real possesses; till at last you shall know who it is that has cheered you, when you see the face of the angel who leads you into heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is a very strange sensation in sitting alone, in a great unknown house where you are a perfect stranger; hearing the domestic sounds, which vaguely penetrate through the closed door; hearing people go out and in; hearing voices, footsteps, terms of relationship; and yet seeing nothing, but the four blank walls which surround you, and the immovable pieces of

furniture in the one silent room. If you are only waiting a few minutes for the appearance of some one you have called on, you realize this.

The outer door closes heavily—who has gone out? and unconsciously you form your own idea, and see an imaginary person making his way down the steps. Some child calls "Mamma," and imagination immediately presents to you the mother; or the mamma pronounces a Christian name outside the closed door, which mysteriously excludes you from the world within this house, and you wonder who it is. They have all a strange interest for you, these unseen people; you trace that step in the room above, and are able to distinguish it from others, and you know that voice far off, from the other voices it talks

with, though you cannot distinguish a word of what they say. You feel as if you were in an enchanted place, where the inhabitants are invisible; and when the door opens, and a prosaic every-day face looks in upon your dream, you feel a kind of shock, as if you had fallen from the clouds.

It is thus that Hugh Melville feels, sitting, the whole day through, in the house of Mr. Melrose. It is a full half-hour's walk from his own home, and he has to leave Everton while it is still dusk; neither does the distance permit him to return to dinner, so that his mid-day hour is spent in some public grounds, which fortunately lie very near, where he eats his biscuit, and looks out upon the town lying under him, with the wintry sunbeams throwing

such a sheen upon its veil of smoke, that it looks like dishevelled golden hair. These grounds are a little elevated, and have a small round building, called an observatory, on them—an observatory, however, which never seems to observe anything, as you find its gate perpetually chained and padlocked; but from the stair which ascends to it, you have a tolerable view, through the smoke, to which this sunshine gives a peculiar effect, fine and graceful, of the multitude of separate roofs which form the town, with one great building—that beautiful heathen one called St. George's Hall—standing out distinct and well-defined, overtopping all the rest; while a heavy dome or two, and innumerable mediocre spires elevate themselves hazily over the smoke, which seems to support itself by them,

as it undulates between their upward-pointing fingers. Under this elevated terrace-walk, is a quiet street, well-behaved and respectable, with a carefully swept pavement, which the maids in those very still, genteel houses, attend to every morning, and along which, in this mid-day, there pass only ladies, and nursery-maids with children—for the neighbourhood is very "genteel."

But all the rest of the day, from the gray dawn of the winter morning until the early winter night has been dark again for several hours, Hugh sits in this little room busily writing. The room is carpeted and has a fire, a smouldering fire, alive most of the day, except when the servant whose charge it is, forgets to attend to it, which happens now and then; and there is an office table at which

Hugh writes, and half a dozen chairs; for Mr. Melrose is in the habit of receiving *poor* visitors, who come to him about work, and asking charity, in this out-of-the-way apartment.

And here, Hugh works all the day—alas! sad work — copying Mr. Melrose's *words.* It is a strange *mélange* which passes through his hands—manuscripts, pamphlets on subjects as various as the days of the year, scraps of verse which Mr. Melrose has carefully put up by itself and labelled "poetry," pious addresses to children, witty letters to newspapers—but Hugh has to copy them all; to do it in his clearest, most careful hand, and to endeavour vainly, with well distributed semicolons, to make those disjointed words into something like sentences; but

indeed, and alas! they are but words; and Hugh one moment laughs aloud, and another in disgust throws down his pen. For it is a sufficient trial of one's patience to read foolish papers—to copy them, to linger over their wordy, weary paragraphs, is a greater misery still.

And it is all so complacent—the good man is so pleased with his own performance in the whole! Hugh remembers how dissatisfied he used to be, with his own sensible essays at College—how, when his Professor complimented, and his fellow-students congratulated him, he himself, albeit very well pleased with the approbation, was never thoroughly satisfied with the performance; for Hugh was conscious of a fine, secret conception of his subject, which some way or other never would properly

express itself, but always came whirling down with drooping wings, out of the free heaven where he first beheld it, and feebly crept upon the earth, as he endeavoured to show it to his fellow-men. But if no one else knew how far the execution fell short of the conception, he knew it himself, and that was enough.

There was nothing of the kind here; the verses were sad stuff — Mr. Melrose called them poetry; the newspaper letters were vulgar and impertinent — Mr. Melrose read sentences out of them, and chuckled over the wit, which no one saw but himself; and drearily Hugh sat at the writing-table, and copied—copied, as if they had been the most precious utterances of wisdom, these productions of ignorance and conceit—anger, disgust, and contempt,

following each other through his mind, as he went over his distasteful task.

But as he worked, a thought struck him, and he paused a moment to consider it. His old essays looked very sensible, as he remembered them, after all this; and literature was a profession to many men who had no claim to genius. Hugh leaned his head upon his hand, and thought and pondered, a great ambition taking possession of him. To write a book! There was something grand in the idea.

But what kind of book? With a puzzled look Hugh returned to his copying. Not a great poem—not a great novel—these were not in his way; and he shook his head in his self-communion. He was beginning to lift up his hand against the

world—there was something very pleasant in the idea of being able to have a fair downright blow at it, if he only knew the way; and Hugh thought, he should like greatly to break a lance on things in general, and hang up his shield before his tent door, inviting challengers.

The idea made the blood course more quickly through his stirred veins; yes, in his still boyish consciousness of power, he would shiver a spear upon the world—the world with its tough, impervious hide, which cared so little for him with his youthful chivalries and enthusiasms. "Down with her, little Burney," said Dr. Johnson, when the great wit was coming to where the new star had just risen. "Down with them—all of them," said the impulse of the young, strong life in Hugh; but there

was not a morsel of malice in the thought. He would denounce, perhaps in no very measured terms — from no ill-will, poor boy; from a certain, riotous enjoyment of the new freedom—an exultation in getting his arm lifted to its full extent, to be brought down for this downright blow. His pen flew over the paper, dreary as his work was. A book upon things in general —a defying trumpet-blast of challenge to all the world—it gave a new charm to his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is a cold January day, and the wind whistles loudly around those houses on the hill. It has been a very wild night, and people shake their heads as they speak of vessels ashore, and lives lost; and still the waves are lashing, white and broken, in wild confusion on that bleak stormy sea, which you can perceive from the summit of the hill; and closer at hand, doors are

blown open, and driven close again with a violent report, like a gun; for all this eminence is greatly exposed to the fierce winds from the sea.

It is so cold, that, contrary to their usual habit, Mrs. Melville and her daughter have been sitting close by the fire; but now the short afternoon is darkening, and first the mother rises to take her work to the window, and then the daughter, for they dare not risk half an hour's careless expenditure of candle-light.

"Hugh expected to be soon back to-night, Isabella," said Mrs. Melville; "you had better see about getting the tea, for it is too dark for work just now."

Behind the parlour is the little kitchen, but they cannot afford two fires; so the fire has gone out there, and on this cold

day, the small apartment with its blue and red tiled floor, looks very desolate and chill. Isabella's slender figure in its black dress, does not by any means make its aspect more cheerful, as she moves through it, and very soon she has returned to the parlour, with the kettle in her hand.

And now Mrs. Melville sits down by the fireside, and leans her head upon her hand, and tries again, by those often-repeated calculations, to make the two ends meet—the ends which hopelessly remain apart, and will not meet; for though they have been trying to live somehow upon her own earnings and Isabella's — ten shillings a-week for three of them—there still is an account, though it is a very little one, at the provision shop which used to supply her, and beside that, there

remains the five pounds, the quarter's rent, which they will have nothing but Mr. Melrose's thirty shillings to meet—alas! what can they do?

In the meantime the kettle boils, the little fire burns briskly, and Isabella goes about with a light elastic step; for the young heart is springing up again in spite of itself—in spite of the burden it shares—the blank want which lies before, the grief which still stands fresh and vivid behind. Isabella almost feels it a sin; nevertheless, it is very true, and her heart does rise to the dawning of the morning—does begin to sing songs to itself, as she sits at work the livelong day, in spite of all she can do to keep it down.

And if you glanced through the window as you passed, visions of a house-father

coming happily home bye and bye, and joyous brothers dropping in from school, would rise upon your mind; for the little fire burns with a will, and has lit half a dozen genial gas-flames, and works away at the kettle, with a genuine interest in the comfort of the family, which is quite pleasant to see; and the kettle itself sits merrily upon its glowing resting-place, and sings with a persevering cheerfulness, which it is almost impossible to resist. Pleasant too is the tinkling ring of those clear cups and saucers, in which the firelight reflects itself; and Isabella goes about with a soft step, which you hardly hear, and her mother sits in the shadow, and looks down upon the fire.

Hugh, who, attracted by the light, has paused to glance in at the window, feels

for the first time since his father's death, that here is again the pleasant home, he used to return to, so gladly, and his heart rises. Poor, artless, simple girl and boy! they both know that this is real want, this dread cloud, which draws nearer day by day, but notwithstanding their hearts grow light — light as those hearts can always grow, which have only righteous, pure, unremorseful grief to bow them down.

A slight tap at the window startled them, and Isabella hastened to open the door to Hugh. He came in with a fresh, glowing, radiant face; it roused his mother; and when she saw her children stand together, both of them with that renewed elasticity in their look, it touched her heart. It was well she was in the shadow, for tears

which would have pained them, rose to her eyes; the widow could not so easily rise above the bitter waves of grief. She knew they had not forgotten him; she knew that with love and honour, they would cherish all their days their father's memory; but still he was not all to them, that he had been to her; and there was a pang in the satisfaction, with which she saw the joyous tide of their young life swell again in their hearts.

"Well, mother, I have finished my work for Mr. Melrose," said Hugh, "and here is the fruit of it; but that is nothing to be glad of, you say, Isabella—neither it is, only I called at Mr. Primrose's on my way up."

"And did you hear of anything, Hugh?" asked his mother anxiously, as he placed

a sovereign and a half sovereign in her hand.

"Yes, mother; a teacher in Cheshire, Mr. Currie, wants an assistant, and a note from Mr. Ford will be a good introduction, Mr. Primrose says; so I think I should go there to-morrow."

"Are you able to undertake it, Hugh?" said Isabella, as she sat down at their humble tea-table.

"Am I able to undertake it! hear her, mother! Well, I confess I am not a great classicist, nor a great anything else indeed, but I suppose I know as much, as the majority of applicants for such situations do; and if I get it, I will work hard to do my duty."

"And what is the salary, Hugh?" said his mother.

"The last one had forty pounds a-year, and lived in Mr. Currie's house," said Hugh; "perhaps, without board, he might give fifty; and that is as much as we looked for in an office, mother."

"But very likely it will be necessary for the assistant to live there," said Mrs. Melville, with a little alarm.

"That would not be pleasant; but even that," said Hugh, "if I could send you my salary, and get over on Saturday to see you, mother—even that might do."

"We should be very dreary, Isabella and I," said the widow. "But no doubt, Hugh—if you can get it on no other terms—no doubt you should take even that."

"And, Hugh, will you be good to the boys?" said Isabella, smiling. "Will you

look solemn and wear spectacles, and awe them into forgetting that you are half a boy yourself?"

"I am past twenty—not far from twenty-one," said Hugh, drawing himself up a little. "So be you silent, you eighteen years' old girl—you have no experience. Mother, I have got a magnificent idea; I am going to write a book."

"What kind of a book, Hugh?" said his mother, with a smile.

"It is not quite so easy to answer that," and Hugh shook his head with a look of comical bewilderment. "The subject, things in general; the form, essays, I suppose; and see if we don't have a good hit at some of those fellows, mother."

But Hugh did not say who "some of those fellows" were; nor did he condescend

to particulars about his magnificent idea, for it still was floating hazily about the horizon, and had not yet acquired shape and form.

And so the evening passed, happily, hopefully, though they were living at the moment on the merest pittance, and knew that the wolf was at the door, and that they could make no defence; but the brother and sister, in their innocent elasticity, were still children, and the mother was charmed out of her sorrow to see them glad.

CHAPTER XV.

It was about mid-day when Hugh, fortified with Mr. Ford's note of introduction to John Currie, Esq., Bristol Park Academy, left home to cross the river. The little Everton street was full of yellowish mist, through which the spires of the adjacent churches loomed strangely, like spectres; but further on, in the denser town, this mist intensified into solid fog, which irritated

the lungs of the passengers, and clouded with an impenetrable veil everything at a yard's distance. You still could find your way easily enough through the streets, but they had a strange appearance. Here, where you yourself stood, was a clear space, busy as on every other day, while round it on all sides rose dense walls, closing it in up, to the square of sky which roofed it above. It is true those dark barriers receded before your advancing steps, but it was only to close in more completely behind; so that whenever you paused for a moment, you found yourself on an oasis, a visible island, revealed out of the boundless waste which lay around.

And as you draw near the river, the heavy tolling of a bell strikes your ear—what is it? you would think it a knell, so

mournfully it tolls out of the unseen: but it is no knell, but a voice of safety, calling to the bewildered boats on the river where they shall land; and now, when you have descended to the dim landing-stage, and see faint funnels just perceptible at its edge, other tinklings become audible, small voices of ships lying covered up, and enveloped in the great blank of this fog; and now, with some trembling, you step on board the steamer—when you stand at one end the other is almost invisible—and are launched forth upon the river.

A man up there upon the paddle-box, stands with his hand upon the bell, sounding it every three minutes, and anxiously contracting his brow in a vain endeavour to see. Beside the man at the helm stands a second man anxiously on the look-out; and

at the other end of the vessel—for these river steamboats have helms at both ends—are other two, carefully investigating the blank before them, with all its unseen dangers; while an engineer stands between those two steel spokes, ready in a moment to stop the engine.

It is impossible to describe how much excitement there is in this. The passengers now and then leap up upon the seats, with a momentary idea that their eyes are sharper than those of the look-out, and again disperse to the sides of the vessel, and anxiously peer into the fog. The strangest scene it is. The water is as still as a lake, moved with scarcely perceptible ripples; and here we lie, for you can detect no motion, with those blank walls shutting us round, and nothing visible of heaven or earth, but the yard of

motionless water on either side, and the faint sky above; shut out from every human eye or hand, as you can fancy, the universe closed up into the confines of this blind vessel—and through all, the measured toll of that funereal bell, the tinkling of those inarticulate spirit voices, filling the invisible way on either side.

The man on the paddle-box is a very good-looking, ruddy Saxon man; the one on the prow of the boat a strange little fat person, whose shape suggests to you one of the sides of a vase, which has been cut through the middle—for from his little round head there is a gradual slope to a sort of waist he has, just under his arms, and immediately his person enlarges, till you have quite a perfect copy of the bowl of the vase.

As the boat cautiously and slowly advances from the landing-stage into the river, there arises a controversy between these two.

"That's the barque's bell on the starboard bow," said the paddle-box man, as a faint tinkling, coming you could not well make out from what direction, interrupted the dull knell from the river's side.

"No; that's her right ahead, Harry," said the section of the vase.

Another faint bell rang on the other side.

"The barque's ahead — that's *her* bell now," repeated the dogmatical fat man.

There was a pause, and Harry sounded his own bell. Again it was answered by another, very close at hand as it seemed, and

positively now on the right side of the little steamer.

"There! it *is* the barque's bell," exclaimed Harry triumphantly. "I knew it was on the starboard bow."

And to the starboard bow rushed the passengers, not at all satisfied with this near proximity to the controverted barque.

"Stop her!" roared the fat man. "Port! port! or we'll be into that boat ahead."

The plunging engines stopped in a moment, and immediately the funnel and mast of a tug steamer loomed through the mist, backing, like an unruly horse, upon this boat; the passengers leaped on the seats again, the men screamed hoarsely to each other, and for the moment a collision seemed inevitable.

"All right!" With a long sigh of relief,

the people jumped from the seats, and the fat man at the prow put his hands into his pockets, while Harry sounded his bell.

The passage over, usually accomplished in less than ten minutes, occupied on this occasion nearly an hour, and was just a succession of similar hair-breadth 'scapes. At length they were near enough to hear the bell, and see the blazing fire on the Cheshire side. Harry waved his hand, and cried, "Hurrah!" as he sounded his bell.

But another boat is just backing out from the Woodside slip, and is close upon them. "Port!" cries the man with the sou-wester on the paddle-box of the other boat. "Port!" echoes the fat man loudly. "Port!" he says, "Port!" scream the passengers in a chorus. "Port it is,"

answers the man at the helm gruffly, in an injured tone, and very soon the conclusive "all right" sets the excited crew at rest.

Hugh Melville landed, congratulating himself that his mother and Isabella had no idea of what a fog was on the river; and set briskly off for Bristol Park. Mr. Currie had a large number of day-scholars and a smaller one of boarders. Hugh rather thought he would like the situation, for he was a warm-hearted youth, with less conceit of himself and his acquirements, than is common at his years, and had a knack of liking the people he was thrown into intimate contact with, which seldom failed to bring him regard from them in turn.

Poor Hugh! he walked along hopefully, throwing round him pleasant anticipatory

glances, and thinking in his sanguine way, that in all likelihood he would soon know the road more familiarly, and establish acquaintance with those lounging hackney coachmen, who held up their whips to him soliciting his custom—soliciting *his* custom! Hugh laughed under his breath, and blushed secretly, as he pondered bringing his mother and Isabella over here on some of his holiday afternoons, and selecting one of the grandest of these vehicles to give them a drive; for there seemed such immense capabilities in that fifty pounds a-year.

Mr. Currie was an active little man, with an embrowned acute face, very like a sailor captain. He received Hugh kindly, though there were pains and penalties glancing in that sharp black eye, as the boys in the school-room knew. But the

kindness of a sensible man was in his manner to Hugh Melville; alas! and there needed to be—for Mr. Currie laid down Mr. Ford's introductory letter on the table, and told him the situation was filled up.

Poor Hugh! as he walked back again to the ferry he took no notice of the cabmen —no notice of the splendid brougham, which one of them has just led out to the foremost place in the rank—for there was no possibility of drives to Mrs. Melville and Isabella now. He was very much cast down — it was not possible to avoid being so — and his despondency fell as thick around him, as the fog did round the steam-boat on the river; but once fairly out again, in that brave little boat, and in the midst of danger, Hugh recovered his spirits; and by the time he had safely reached

the other side, and the excitement of this scene was over, his thoughts had freedom to return to his book about things in general, and he triumphantly concocted half a dozen sharp sentences of his introduction, on the way to Mr. Primrose's shop.

Various people were lounging as usual in Mr. Primrose's shop, and he himself was behind the counter. This good, kindly man had shown considerable interest in Hugh; and though he could do nothing more to help him, was most ready to communicate to him news of any "opening" he heard of. As he entered, a group of young men were talking gravely, with some apparent awe.

"He was at the office the same day," said one; "went home perfectly well, dined as usual, and an hour after was dead."

Mr. Primrose shook his head and said:

"Awfully sudden."

"But they say, what is almost as wonderful," said another of the young men, "that he has left nothing. I hear there will be no more than enough scantily to cover his debts, and no provision for his family."

"Yes," said the first speaker; "but they are getting up a subscription on 'Change to help them, and there's no doubt they will raise something handsome."

"Who is it that has died?" said Hugh.

"Mr. Wardrop," was the answer.

Hugh Melville started—Mr. Wardrop! the man who not very long ago had asked the widow, what the world would think if *he* left his family on its cold charities, as her husband had done. And he was gone, the prosperous man, without an hour's ad-

versity to teach him to know himself—gone, penniless out of all his wealth, leaving a poorer, far more resourceless household behind him, than his clerk's. The intelligence shocked Hugh greatly, and with strange fancies he pondered on what followed. No man thought himself called upon to help the destitute family of the improvident clerk, who had failed to make provision out of his hundred and fifty pounds for his orphans and his widow; but quick was the sympathy, which made itself into subscriptions on behalf of the improvident merchant's showy sons and daughters. A strange contrast. Hugh elevated his young head involuntarily, and said it was well—well and right this blind injustice of the world. God gave by it the common bread to those who could not toil or suffer. God gave to those

who could do both, miraculous manna out of his hidden treasures, and blessed the bread they earned, with noble qualities of soul developed in its earning — it was well.

Yes, young philosopher, very well; ease to the incapable, enough to the weak—for you who are not weak, no enough, no ease, but strenuous labour to train your soul withal; not what one calls poetic justice, but the far higher and grander evenhandedness, with which God distributes to His world.

"And the place was filled up," said Mr. Primrose, with a disappointed look, when Hugh had sufficiently recovered himself to tell him the issue of his errand. "Well, we must try again. But what are you thinking of now?"

"Anything—I am not particular," said Hugh with a smile; "anything that is attainable. I think I could give lessons in Greek and Latin, and I have a smattering of French and German too. I might teach well enough, I fancy; but the pupils, Mr. Primrose—one must have pupils before one can teach very well; and where they are to come from, is another matter."

"Private lessons, ay! at your own house, I suppose?" said Mr. Primrose. "I'll speak to some of the young men about it; I daresay many would be very glad—if we could only hear of them."

Some one touched Hugh on the shoulder. He turned round; it was a young man four or five years older than himself, who had been quietly looking over some books at the end of the shop.

"You are Mr. Melville's son, are you not?" said the stranger; "if you can undertake these languages, I will be glad to have lessons from you."

"Yes, I am Mr. Melville's son," said Hugh, vacantly; his father's name, for the moment, making him forget the importance to himself of the closing sentence of this abrupt speech.

"My name is Aikman," said the young man. "I saw you once in the office—for I was in Mr. Wardrop's office along with your father; that was your mother with you, was it not? Come along, and let us arrange about the lessons."

And taking his new acquaintance familiarly by the arm, John Aikman led the passive Hugh away.

CHAPTER XVI.

"I've got no friends here—I have not many anywhere indeed," said the stranger, thrusting his arm into Hugh's. "I thought I should like to know you that day you came to the office. And yon was your mother—I thought so. Yes—" and the young man gazed down upon the pavement, as if to look for something he had lost—"I once had a mother myself."

"And what are you doing here alone?" said Hugh, with kindred frankness.

"Well, I told you I was in Mr. Wardrop's office; the truth is, I wanted to go to sea; and to cure me of that, they sent me here to Liverpool to be a junior clerk, and live on what I made It hasn't always been very easy, I can tell you."

"Has it not? yet I should be very glad to try," said Hugh.

"You? ah! yes, but you would be very different; they sent me up here a wild lad, with not a creature to look after me. Do you think, suppose my mother had been alive to care about me, I ever should have been—but it's no matter—I haven't been very bad, Melville; you needn't look scared; I've just been like other young men."

Hugh made no answer, for the youth

was almost as thoroughly pure as mortal could be.

"I mean to say I've run about a great deal," said Aikman, a little warmly. "I've seen the inside of most of the places of amusement in this quarter, good and bad. I've been in a good many drinking-parties, though I've a capital head myself; and I tell you, you need not shrink from me, for I've done nothing any man could call vice. I've only been lingering on the marshy borders of it, what you call dissipation, and I'm as heartily sick of it all as ever man was."

Hugh murmured an inarticulate assent; he did not at all know how to answer this.

"What will your terms be?" continued his impetuous new acquaintance. "I had

a man last year who taught me French, and charged two guineas a-quarter; will that do?"

"Do! I should think I had no right to ask more than the half of that," said Hugh.

"Nonsense! you don't know anything about business; buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest; is it not a grand idea that, Melville? a perfect gospel."

"Do you think so," said Hugh.

The young man changed his tone.

"That poor man thought so, who died the other day. I wonder what he thinks of it now, if one could learn; and I say—I don't want to be inquisitive or hurt your feelings—but did your father die suddenly, Melville?"

"No."

"I was at home then—that is, at my uncle's," said Aikman, "all the home I have now. You'll let me come and take my lessons at your own house, will you?"

"Surely, if you choose it," said Hugh.

There was a considerable pause. Hugh was a good deal astonished with the manners of his new acquaintance, but no less interested in him. He was rather an uncouth man, taller and stronger than Hugh himself, with great stooping shoulders, and a strangely single-minded face. If you passed by his side, it was impossible to catch John Aikman's eye; his looks, his thoughts, his not very graceful person, all went sheer forward; and it seemed almost as certain, that he must come in contact with some other mind, direct in the way on which with all his might he was bearing down, as that a smart collision

now and then with some one who crossed his bodily path was an inevitable necessity.

"Very well then, I'll come to-morrow night at seven. I don't think you'll find much harm in me," said Aikman, stopping suddenly under the light of a lamp—for it was now dark—which showed Hugh a very pleasant and rather bashful smile upon his face. "Shake hands, Melville; I should be glad if we were friends."

"And so should I," said Hugh, frankly extending his hand. "To-morrow then at seven. Good-night."

And John Aikman left him, proceeding straight forward with a plunge, over the muddy street, defiant of the cabs and carts which were traversing it in little bands, and entangling themselves at every opportunity—right forward with his great stoop-

ing shoulders and projected head, looking so much in earnest, that you could more easily believe in his ability to lift that loaded wain, and toss it out of his road, than that it should do any harm to him.

And Hugh forgot the lost situation—forgot the book about things in general—and went home quite light-hearted and full of happy interest in this stranger.

"There is Hugh, mother—he looks quite bright; he must have got it," said Isabella.

"Well, Hugh?"

"Well, mother? Oh, about Mr. Currie's—the situation was filled up."

Mrs. Melville sighed.

"I thought you would have been greatly disappointed, Hugh."

"So I should, mother; so I was at first; but the scene on the river was so strange, that I forgot my disappointment; and then I came up to Mr. Primrose's, and made an acquaintance —a friend I should say—the strangest, frank, pleasant fellow! I've undertaken to teach him the languages, and he's to take his first lesson to-morrow night."

"Hugh!"

"Yes, mother—he was in Mr. Wardrop's office, and saw us there; but have another piece of news for you, very strange and sad—Mr. Wardrop is dead; he died in a moment, they say, only a few days ago; and has left his family destitute."

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh—what a visitation!"

exclaimed Mrs. Melville when she could speak.

"But, Hugh, I thought he was a very rich man," said Isabella.

"So he was, I suppose, but he has left nothing behind him; and now they are as poor as we are."

"Oh, bairns, twenty times poorer," said Mrs. Melville; "for they have never been used either to work or want; far, far poorer than you. And there are three or four daughters of them—what will they do?"

"I heard that the merchants were getting up a subscription for them," said Hugh.

The widow put up her hand to her eyes; it recalled so strongly her own bereavement.

"I am very thankful to hear it," she said, as she lifted the work which had fallen into her lap; "and it's a comfort that there is charity in this world still, and a great stroke opens folk's hearts."

"It did not open their hearts to us, mother," said Hugh with some bitterness.

"Neither it did; but our want, Hugh, was not like theirs: what would be wealth to us will be poverty to them; and they have never learned to strive, and perhaps not to be content. But about this new friend of yours; how did you become acquainted with him, Hugh?"

"I spoke to Mr. Primrose about getting pupils," said Hugh, "and Aikman heard me, I suppose; for he addressed me immediately, and said he would take

lessons from me. He is about four-and-twenty, I should think, a strange, straightforward looking fellow; I think you will like him mother."

"A *young* man," said Mrs. Melville, casting a sort of precautionary jealous glance towards Isabella, "and is he to come here?"

"Yes. I thought you would not object —and that will be two guineas a quarter mother."

"I wish you knew a little more about him first," said Mrs. Melville: "well, we must keep him at a distance, Hugh, that is all; and the two guineas are very good. I am glad you are in the way of something—if you could only get a few more."

Keep him at a distance! Hugh laughed

aloud; but again Mrs. Melville's eye turned to Isabella, for the mother was jealous and proud for her child.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is again evening, and everything looks very solemn in the little parlour: the hearth is swept, the fire bright, the room arranged in superlative order; and Isabella is carrying away a basket of work, while Hugh lays down, with some demonstration, upon the table, a great old Latin Dictionary, a Greek Lexicon, and a heap of rudimental books. It is only half-past six yet, but Mrs. Melville

is anxious to have her daughter and herself removed to the kitchen, where they have lighted a little fire for the occasion, not very greatly to the satisfaction of Isabella, who thinks there could be no harm in seeing this, the first stranger who has entered the house for three full months, and having their usual evening's conversation varied a little; and who, besides is greatly interested in every person, who is interested in Hugh.

But unfortunately while Isabella is still busy collecting her work, and Mrs. Melville, who guards the door this evening, and will not let her daughter open it, has just been giving a dole of bread to a poor little beggar, whose piteous face she has not been able to resist, there rapidly approaches a great shadow, covering the small

suppliant on the step; and Hugh's pupil asks for Mr. Melville, and is admitted.

Mrs. Melville follows him into the little parlour; looking at his shoulders from behind, she by no means admires John Aikman; but Isabella, who looks up suddenly as the door opens, and catches the half glance of comical terror he gives her, and the deep colour which in a moment flushes up to his fair hair, smiles in spite of herself, and is pleased with the face. Poor John Aikman! he is afraid of young ladies; and a consciousness of his own awkward gait and manner strikes him, as, somewhat cowed, he advances to shake hands with Hugh, and makes Isabella such a bow as irresistibly tempts her to laugh, and makes her feel perfectly at home with the bashful visitor.

"Isabella," said Mrs. Melville, in an under tone of admonition.

And lifting her basket, Isabella, it must be confessed, very unwillingly disappeared into the kitchen.

Mrs. Melville remained for a few minutes, and Mr. Aikman's blush subsided; but he still continued awkward—not much unlike a great dog who wishes to propitiate new friends, but cannot tell how to do it. They spoke of Mr. Wardrop's death, and he told the story to them circumstantially; but Mrs. Melville, though she left the room pleased with her visitor, carried away with her no great opinion of his conversational powers.

The two young men drew their chairs to the table. Hugh played with his books, a little embarrassed, and scarcely knowing how to begin, while Mr. Aikman bent down

his head between the two large hands, which arched their long fingers among his hair, and intently studied the pattern of the table cover.

At last he looked up abruptly:

"I had a schoolboy's Latin and Greek once, you must know," he said, laying hold of, and whirling about one of the books, so as to threaten an instant disruption between it and its boards. "I don't know how much remains — not much I fancy. Give me the Virgil."

The Virgil was handed over the table, and pulling the great dictionary to him, Hugh's scholar began to construe—but with a very moderate portion of success; and Hugh expounded, and explained, and talked of rules and quantities, till nearly half an hour was gone.

"I say, Melville," exclaimed at last his somewhat restless scholar, "do the ladies leave the room because I am here? I shall be quite grieved if they do; would all this stuff disturb your mother?"

"My mother is not easily disturbed," said Hugh, looking up with a slight smile, curious to ascertain whether Isabella had any share, in the thoughts of his new friend.

But there was no one further from John Aikman's thoughts—at least in the way of desiring her company; for young ladies were an unknown species to honest John, and he thought of them only with alarm and trembling.

"Because, you know," continued John, "if Mrs. Melville does not positively dislike all this, and will suffer me just to come in

quietly, and feel that I am not in the way, I shall get on much better I know. I am a rough sort of fellow, I suppose," said John looking down upon his hands, and spreading out their long and rather well-formed fingers, as if *they* were the offenders, while again the bashful pleasant smile, awoke his face into life; "but there's no great harm in me; so that if your mother would not object, Melville—"

"I don't know—we can speak of it when our studies are over to-night," said Hugh, remembering his mother's jealous looks at Isabella. But good straightforward John had not the least remembrance of Isabella, save that which made him wish there had been no sister in the way.

So for another half hour longer the work went on.

"It's only eight," said Aikman drearily. "Suppose we give up the books now and have a talk; it's only the first night, mind. Well, how often am I to come?"

"Why, as often as you like; I never thought of that, Mr. Aikman," said Hugh, laughing.

"Mr. Aikman! don't call me that, Melville, like a good fellow. As often as I like! that won't do. I might like oftener than pleased you; and then you will be having other pupils. Melville, let's ask your mother?"

"Very well, I'll go and bring her," said Hugh, laughing again.

Mrs. Melville was sitting quietly at one side of the little round kitchen table, Isa-

bella at the other; they had a light between them, and were both working busily; but the kitchen, unused to a fire, felt very cold and chilly, and the draught came in behind Mrs. Melville in a manner by no means pleasant. Besides, she had just been thinking, that the two guineas a quarter would not be entire profit, if another fire and another candle had to be deducted from them; and Isabella sat beside her more silently than usual, plying her needle; for Isabella was just a little piqued at being sent away so hurriedly from the room, after the visitor's face had influenced her so favourably with its capabilities of amusement—and she was not above liking to be amused. So they laboured on, and spoke little, and were

in a very favourable mood for receiving Hugh's proposal.

"I wish you would come into the parlour, mother," said Hugh, entering the kitchen with a smiling face, "Aikman is very anxious to see you, and says he should be much more comfortable if you would not let his presence disturb you: he thinks it is his coming that has driven you away—and you have made a conquest, mother."

"We don't know him, you see," said Mrs. Melville again, with a stolen glance at Isabella.

"Well, come in now: we want you to decide how often he is to come."

Mrs. Melville rose slowly, and laid aside her work.

"I suppose I am to remain here, mother," said Isabella, with a half-conscious smile.

"I think so, to-night, my dear. I will not stay long in the parlour."

For Isabella had seen her mother's jealous glance, and when her mother withdrew, secretly laughed within herself, amused and not unpleasantly excited. It seemed so ridiculous to be afraid of this good awkward Aikman.

And Aikman for his part never missed the sister—they arranged that he was to come three times a-week, and he went away very soon, carrying Hugh with him to the door, to slip his two gold pieces into his hand as he said good night; but it was not till he had reached home, and

was thinking it all over, that he recollected that "the girl," as he irreverently designated Isabella, had not accompanied her mother into the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE quarter day has drawn near rapidly—now it is the last night of January, and to-morrow Mrs. Melville must pay her rent.

The thirty shillings from Mr. Melrose, and John Aikman's fee for his lessons lie carefully hoarded in Mrs. Melville's locked drawer—the one locked drawer in which she keeps her small secrets. Three glitter-

ing sovereigns and a half; but the account at the provision shop has run up to twenty shillings, spite of all she can do, and her rent is five pounds.

Gravely Mrs. Melville turned over those shining coins, but no good fairy multiplied them; there they lay, fixed, stereotyped, always and only three sovereigns and a half—and it was so difficult to make them do the work of six. The widow had dreary calculations over them every day, and every day repeated to herself the alternative—to take a lodger or to leave her house.

"Only wait till next week, mother," Hugh had said again and again, as he applied for new situations; but next week always came and went as unproductive as the one it followed; and Hugh's coat began

to grow shabby, poor fellow! and his heart to fail him—while still continually Mrs. Melville and Isabella laboured all day long at their sewing, and John Aikman came to have those strange lessons of his at night.

The hearts of all were failing—for hardship and meagre living began to have an effect upon their physical condition, and with pale faces came sick hearts; but still the wonderful natural buoyancy supported them, and in the evening when the fire shed its pleasant light through the little room, and the kettle sang by its side, and the cups glanced on the table, you would have thought it the cheerfullest, most content of little households; and, indeed, for the moment so it was, despite of all the griefs and troubles that dwelt

in it—so small an amount of outward comfort after all, can suffice to cheer the susceptible inner man.

It is a snowy morning the 1st of February — a Monday, bleakest of Mondays. Hugh has gone away on his daily dreary walk to the town, to see if there is a possibility of getting this last situation, which he has seen advertised in the 'Mercury;' it is a youth's place in an apothecary's, with fifteen weekly shillings of wages, but his heart is as sickly anxious about it, as if it were an estate. When he returns, Isabella and her mother must go down to "the shop" with their work, and at present they are labouring very industriously to have it ready.

"Foster's account is a pound, Isabella," said Mrs. Melville; "I think I must pay

it; and that we must try to content Mr. Elias with the half of the rent. I have made up my mind; if Hugh gets no situation, or hears of none this month, we must sell the furniture, Isabella, and get cheap lodgings somewhere; for we cannot pay this rent off our own work, and I cannot make up my mind to have a lodger."

"Very well, mother," said Isabella, passively.

"And there is Elias; open the door, Isabella. I hope the man's heart will be softened—I hope he will be content with this money now."

Morris Elias was their landlord; a Welshman as usual, but not a quite favourable specimen of the Welshman. This man had made his money hardly,

not without various downfals on his way to prosperity, downfals which had made him hold his possessions with a hard grasp, now that he had attained to them. And it is not very easy to deal with poor tenants—people whose little quantity of furniture may be carried off any night, leaving the defrauded owner of the empty house without any redress. So men who would have cheated him in this way without scruple, if necessity tempted them, railed upon Morris Elias, and called him hard.

He had a large face, not at all unlike, either in features or expression, the countenance of that other Welshman, the goat of his native mountains; and hair of precisely the same colour as the skin, thickly fringed the long leathern cheeks.

He saluted Mrs. Melville briskly, for she had never been behind.

The poor widow faltered, when she returned his good-morning, and as she went up stairs to bring those hoarded gold pieces out of her drawer, cried to the father of the fatherless to soften this man's heart. This insignificant, small man, not worth a moment's account in the world's eye, but he was as great as ever arbitrary despot was to her.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Elias—but my son has been able to get no employment yet, and I cannot pay the rent—not all the rent just now," said Mrs. Melville, with a little tremulousness. "I have got the half of it here; you will do me a favour if you will take this now, and give us a little time to pay the rest."

He took the money and turned it over in his hand.

"Two pound ten—only two pound ten—and that sovereign's light *I* can see. Well, you know, Mrs. Melville, I wouldn't harass anybody—but this won't do."

"I am very sorry," repeated the widow, "I cannot help it indeed—but bye and bye—"

"Bye and bye; yes, it's very easy to say that," said the landlord, "but people lying out of their money, don't find it quite so comfortable, I can tell you, and all the profit there is on a house like this, isn't, I declare to you, worth the trouble of collecting the rents; and as for the loss, it's dreadful. But I can't do with it, Mrs. Melville—no indeed, upon my word I can't."

"You shall have it as soon as it is possible, Mr. Elias," said the widow. "I have not the money now, or I should pay you at once."

"Well, you can tell me *when*, at least," said Elias, "say a fixed time and I'll wait: I don't mind waiting, say a fortnight; but if it's longer—I can't help it—I am never done putting my hand in my pocket for one thing or another about them houses; and I must take means to get my money."

Mrs. Melville was silent for a few minutes—her face flushed and grew pale, and she clasped her hands painfully together, but with sudden resolution she answered him.

"Very well; we will say a fortnight—you shall have your money, Mr. Elias."

The man looked confused—he was not

used to see such painful expressions, upon any of the prosaic faces he ordinarily met; and without any more words he hurried away.

"How will you get it, mother?" asked Isabella, with astonishment.

Mrs. Melville had put her work away, and now opened the writing-desk. Her lips were still compressed, and looked white and rigid.

"I will try one way," she said, "there is only one way, Isabella, and it is a trying one. I shall write to your Uncle George. Pride must not stand in the way of justice, and his own children are dead, so many of them—his heart must be softened. Perhaps he will do something for Hugh."

And the widow wiped her eyes, and began to write a letter.

" My dear Brother,

" It is twelve years now, since I left Dundee, and since that time we have had little intercourse; but I know by my own experience, how much you must have been tried with the losses in your family. I am now almost as much bereaved as you, though two children have been spared to me; but I dare not try to speak of my husband still—my poor Hugh! I believe he was the best man that ever widow mourned for.

" But I am left a very poor widow, my dear brother; I would sooner have done anything, than made this application to you, remembering how displeased you were when I left Greenlees; but all that is long over, George, and I am now a desolate woman, with no provision to look to in

this world. My son Hugh we wanted to make a doctor, and he has been at College for some years, but of course now, it is vain to think that he can continue his studies. Since his father's death he has been unsuccessfully looking for a situation; but, except thirty shillings he got for copying manuscripts for a gentleman, and two guineas from a young man who is taking lessons from him, we have had nothing to depend on, but what Isabella and I can make by sewing. We make about ten shillings a-week; but it is hard to live on ten shillings, three of us, and our rent is oppressing us just now.

"The quarter's rent is five pounds—we have to pay high for even a little house here—and I have only the half of that to meet it with. The landlord has

given me a fortnight to pay it in; but if I cannot get it then, I must sell my furniture, and go into lodgings, and this would be a great loss, for my furniture is the only property I have.

"My son Hugh is a good dutiful boy, most anxious to do his utmost, and Isabella, poor thing! labours till my heart breaks to see her; but we cannot make this up. We may keep ourselves living; but to make up a sum of money is quite impossible. If you will help us, I shall be very grateful; and though it is exceedingly painful to ask it from you, still there is no one else, I can apply to in the world.

"My love to my niece Esther; she is the same age as Isabella, I think; but my poor Isabella has to do a woman's

work, and is burdened with more than a woman's care; and with our best wishes for her and you, and begging that you will at least write to me,

"I am,

"Dear George,

"Your affectionate sister,

"ISABELLA MELVILLE."

"Here is Hugh, mother; but he is not smiling; he cannot have got the place," said Isabella, who had been looking for her brother at the door, having finished the work she was engaged on.

And as Mrs. Melville finished her letter, Hugh entered; but, poor fellow! he was

not smiling. He came in with a sort of languid weariness, and threw himself down on a chair.

"No," he said, "no," answering the inquiring looks of both, and the "Well, Hugh?" of his mother. "No, the place is filled up again. Mother, who are you writing to?"

"I am writing to your Uncle George; I am asking him to help us, Hugh."

A painful flush covered Hugh's face.

"Are we so far gone as that? must you, mother?"

"My dear, it is for the rent," said Mrs. Melville; "and I have just been telling Isabella what we must do: if you get no

situation this month, Hugh, we must give up the house."

Give up the house — the little home —the sole refuge they had from all these troubles; but passive and acquiescent, Hugh only answered like his sister "very well."

The letter was put up and sealed; and now Mrs. Melville put away the writing-desk, and Isabella covered the little table, and put a meagre meal upon it: so meagre a meal that they drew down the blind, lest prying eyes, looking in through the window, should discover their poverty.

And now the work is carefully folded up and put into a basket, and leaving Hugh at the desk, writing the first essay about things

in general—which is a great solace to him, poor fellow!—the widow and her daughter go away.

CHAPTER XIX.

THIS fashionable Liverpool street is crowded; it is a narrow street, mean enough so far as architecture is concerned, and with shabby shops occurring now and then, to break the line of great ones; and it is a strangely mixed crowd which throngs along its limited pavement, and clusters round its plate-glass windows. There is always a great sprinkling of poorly-dressed young

women, by whose air—the extreme fashion with which their shawls are arranged, and the elaboration of collar and bonnet—you see the poor seamstress or dressmaker, whose strong ambition to be "genteel," labours like other passions to overcome the impossibilities of fate; and close beside them, lingering at the same windows perhaps, rubbing shoulders as they pass, are lavish plentiful women—young mothers, whose dress and whose children's dress, seems to have been contrived for the sole purpose of extravagance; elder women, in every fold of whose rich garments you read profusion, which does not know itself to be profuse. Here the make-shifts of very poor poverty elaborately fashionable; there the easy wealth, which in its luxury and costliness scarcely thinks of the fashion it follows. They pass

each other every moment: the one with poor cold hands, stiffly crossed under the tight thin cloak or shawl; the other wrapped about in furs and velvet mantles, till their shape is almost lost; and these two classes muster most strongly in this street of provincial fashion.

In their humble black dresses, and with those pale, disconsolate faces of theirs, Mrs. Melville and her daughter pass silently through the loungers, pausing at no windows. Again, as when they came here first, they have little heart to speak to each other, though Isabella has been asking about her cousin Esther, whom Mrs. Melville saw once when the child was only five years old. Happy cousin Esther! who never all her life has felt the chill of poverty—but Isabella pauses in her half envy, and remembers and

pities her cousin—motherless, brotherless—and Isabella feels that she herself is richer than Esther Greenlees.

And now the placid Quaker face smiles over the counter to Mrs. Melville—the careful Quaker eyes examine and approve the work, but without much expressed approbation, lest the worker should be elated, and think of a higher price — and now the next week's supply is issued.

A prayer that this may be larger than usual is on Mrs. Melville's lips, but the Quaker anticipates her, by saying that they will have only a diminished quantity of work now, and perhaps for some time longer — since several large orders which they have been making up, are now completed. She says it with the utmost quietness, this good Friend, as she packs

up the bundle, and sees it deposited in the basket; for it seems to her that the difference between eight and ten shillings is so trifling, that it should disturb no one.

But Mrs. Melville and her daughter exchange blank looks; and Isabella, who has not been so well tutored in self-restraint as her mother, has to turn away, and hide her face, because she cannot quite keep down that burst of tears; for she thinks of the fire daily growing smaller in the contracted grate, and feels that she cannot bear to see her mother and Hugh sit down much longer to the morsels, on which they have been keeping in life. Cannot bear!—for Isabella is only beginning to learn that everything can be borne—that there is no affliction so strong, as the

human life is—no trouble which the heart may not live through.

And so they turn home again, this time anxiously consulting what to do.

"Perhaps your uncle's heart may be touched," said Mrs. Melville. "Oh, Isabella! I almost feel as if I am forgetting your father, when I ask for help from my brother George; but our necessity surpasses even that. You must not suffer, my dear bairns, for your mother's pride."

"Greenlees—Greenlees—is it a common name, mother? Look at this," said Isabella.

They were passing the greatest of Liverpool hotels—before it stood a hackney-coach unloading a multitude of trunks. Several of these stood on the pavement, under the

care of a black servant; and it was to one of them Isabella pointed.

Mrs. Melville stooped down, and read: "Quentin Greenlees, Esq., H.E.I.C.S."

The basket fell from the nerveless hand of the widow; her face became very pale.

"Isabella, it is my brother Quentin; it is your uncle. Oh! God help us now, and soften his heart to us; but I have not seen him for thirty years."

"Mother, is it my uncle?—are you sure?—we must find him now," said Isabella. "He will be here, no doubt; mother, for Hugh's sake!"

There was sudden excitement in poor Isabella's eye—for Hugh's sake!—to deliver him from the humiliation and misery which

it is so dreadful to women, who themselves could endure anything, to see borne by a man. Isabella lifted the basket, and became bold; for her mother for the moment was overcome.

The black servant stood careless bu curious, looking on. Isabella advanced to him hastily:

"Is Mr. Greenlees here?—are you his servant?—is he in the inn?"

The East Indian answered in the affirmative; strong agitation always is authoritative; and the command in Isabella's voice enforced attention.

"Isabella! Isabella! what are you doing?" said Mrs. Melville, faintly.

"He is here—my uncle is here—come, mother—for Hugh's sake."

Mrs. Melville suffered herself to be led

to the door of the inn, but she leaned on Isabella more heavily than she had ever done before, and Isabella's own frame was trembling so that she could scarcely steady herself.

They had changed places for the moment. It was the daughter who asked for Mr. Greenlees; it was Isabella who held up her mother—almost dragged her up the staircase after the man, who conducted them to Mr. Greenlees's apartment. And now when they have reached this room—this room with its blazing fire and glancing mirrors, which looks so stately and splendid to their unaccustomed eyes—Isabella has to lead her mother to a sofa, and place her there tenderly, before she recovers her strength.

It is between two and three in the

winter afternoon, still perfect daylight, though the skies are covered with clouds; and unable to rest, after the first weakness of excitement is over, Mrs. Melville watches the door, starting at every step, and Isabella stands by the window, looking out sickly, mistily, but with a singular consciousness of everything, however minute, which goes on in the street below, although her whole senses are absorbed with anticipation.

There is a wide space before the window —a sort of gulf into which four or five streets converge—and Isabella watches the people come and go, looks at the gleam of gas in yonder shop, with a wonder why it is so soon lighted—shudders as the spring-cart, which comes galloping out of this street, scatters the group of children here, and nearly runs over one—attentively

follows the course of a poor woman, whom her fancy has distinguished from the crowd, so long as she can see her, and when she disappears, finds another slow gliding figure to fix her dreamy interest upon. She has full time; for they have waited nearly an hour, before any one enters the room.

But now there comes a slow step approaching gradually—a step easily distinguishable from the flying noiseless pace of waiters, or the hurry and loudness of ordinary guests. In this footstep there is a certain calm proprietorship—a consciousness of being in some degree a resident here and supreme. Mrs. Melville and Isabella look at each other with pale faces, feeling a trembling consciousness that the unknown is coming now.

The door is thrown open, and the widow rises to her feet, leaning heavily upon the arm of the sofa. A spare, dark-complexioned man has entered, and advances to the fireplace with a stiff bow. His features are good and his eyes intelligent, but he has a trained face which expresses nothing—politeness—a feeling of what is due to himself as a gentleman—but not anything more.

Mr. Greenlees has bowed a second time —an interrogatory, slightly impatient bow —before the widow is able to speak; and she only can speak then, when she perceives a slight start, and wondering look of perplexed recognition cross his face as he looks at Isabella.

"Sir—Mr. Greenlees—are you the Quentin

Greenlees, who left Perthshire thirty years ago?"

The stranger started considerably, and looked at her with keen scrutiny.

"I left Greenlees, my brother's house, thirty years ago. Yes, I am Quentin Greenlees."

But Mrs. Melville's firmness forsook her; her youth with all its bright, and all its sad remembrances came up before the widow's eye in an instant. Her voice sank into irrestrainable sobbing.

"I was like *her* then," said the mother, motioning her hand toward Isabella. "Quentin, have you forgotten your only sister?"

Mr. Greenlees made a hasty step forward—then he checked himself—and re-

peated as if in the form of a question "my only sister?"

But the widow was unable to answer him—she sank into the corner of the sofa and covered her face with her hands, while Isabella hastily coming to her side, took one of those trembling hands within her own, and fixed her clear eyes, full of tears as they were, on her uncle's face.

For her uncle's face expressed suspicion, doubt, distrust; she stood before him, the slight, pale, exhausted girl, with eyes glowing through her tears; an instinctive motion as if to shield her mother from the faintest shadow of doubt—a defiant attitude, firm, brave, unflinching. He looked at her, his heart moved with strange remembrances—a face like this, but happier—a face which never to him had exhibited such force of

character, because unusual emotion had never visited it; with strange curiosity he gazed upon her; and she, the sole defence she could make for her mother, looked with clear passionate eyes into his face.

"Is it so?" asked Quentin Greenlees.

"Uncle," said Isabella, and her voice came unusually distinct, because with unusual difficulty, from the lips which faltered, and the throat which tightened with strong and painful feeling; "if you do not choose to remember my mother, let us go away; but you shall not doubt her. We have borne many things; but this my mother must not bear. You do not know me—I am Isabella Melville—she has nobody in the world but Hugh and me; but if you have forgotten your sister we will go away; for no man shall suspect my mother."

Poor Isabella! her utterance became convulsive before she ended.

The grave face relaxed a little. Mr. Greenlees took Isabella's hand and put her away, himself sitting down on the sofa beside his sister.

"Isabella," he said, in a voice which, though its composure sounded almost callous to them, was still kind; "we have been long separated—I did not recognise you—but I do recognise your daughter; give me your hand, and compose yourself, Isabella."

But it was some time before the widow could compose herself. She did it at last.

"This is the Isabella Greenlees I knew," said the Indian, pointing to Isabella Melville. "She is like what you used to be, Isabella; and you married young Hugh,

the minister's son? Well, he was a good-looking boy; perhaps it was quite natural: and George was highly displeased — that was natural too. How did you find me out?"

"We saw your name in the street below," said Isabella.

"Ay? well, it is singular. And so, Isabella, you are a widow? How are you left? Only a son and a daughter alive, I think. But how are you left?"

"Quentin, I have been poor—what you would think very poor—all my life," said Mrs. Melville, "though we were very content; but now we are—I cannot soften it—I cannot use a less emphatic word—penniless—destitute."

"Humph!" Mr. Greenlees again looked suspicious.

"Mother, I think we had better go away," said Isabella, rising. "My uncle does not trust us; let us go."

"Niece, sit down," said Mr. Greenlees, turning round to her with a half-angry, half-amused smile; "this is no concern of yours; let me talk to your mother."

"Isabella," continued the Indian, "I suppose everybody believes, that everybody else who has been in India returns home rich. Now I beg you will understand definitely, that I have not come to give my money away, either to the deserving or the undeserving. I am in good health; I am not an old man. I have every intention of establishing a household of my own, now that I can maintain it properly. Knowing this, you will be better able to answer me

simply the questions I ask: Did you come to me to-day in the hope that I would provide for your family?"

"I will tell you what I have done to-day," said Mrs. Melville, rousing herself, "and that will be my best answer. You know that George has had little intercourse with me, and still less kindness for me, since I left Greenlees—before *that*, Quentin, if you had known what a dependant's life was there, you would not have blamed me for going away; but in spite of all, I have written to George to-day, asking him to give me five pounds, or the half of five pounds, to pay my rent, and save the little furniture, which is my sole property. After I had done that, Isabella and I left home to carry to our employers the work we had

been doing. It was a whole week's work—we got eleven shillings for it, and we were returning with work for another week—returning home to my son, Hugh, who for three months has been vainly seeking a situation, when we saw your name. I trembled to come to you, Quentin—I confess it—for I knew you would think of me as a beggar; but Isabella said for Hugh's sake, and for that I could bear anything. Oh! Quentin Greenlees, I want nothing for myself, but Hugh—my son Hugh, only put him in the way of earning honest bread!"

"Uncle," said Isabella, who had nervously remained apart, trembling and leaning on the table, "I am able to work and so is Hugh—and most willing. We do not want anything from you—but help him to get a situation, uncle; you could—you are able, help him to work for himself and us."

"Eleven shillings—eleven shillings," repeated the Nabob; "my sister, Isabella Greenlees, working for eleven shillings. Isabella, I am bewildered—you have come upon me very suddenly. Where do you live? Go home now, and return at night and bring your son, Hugh. I would come myself but I am not quite used to this climate yet. Perhaps you had better come and dine with me—yes, that will do; and see here, niece Isabella, bring your mother in a cab, for she is quite weak you perceive. There, wait a minute, you had better have one to carry you home."

"Thank you, Quentin," said Mrs. Melville, faintly.

"But remember what I say, encourage no vain expectations—if your son is not too ambitious, I may try what I can to get a situation for him; but nothing else re-

member, Isabella—for I have worked hard all my life, and I come home to enjoy my income for myself and in a family of my own. I always keep my word; I am not a man to say one thing and do another. Now, there is your coach; return at seven and bring your son, and till then good-bye, niece—good-bye, Isabella."

CHAPTER XX.

It is only a hackney-coach, ticketed and numbered, and with a proprietor's name shining on its panel. Those drab cushions too, are not by any means odoriferous, nor have they been new these several years; yet this vehicle is not much unlike Cinderella's coach and six, to these two worn-out women who occupy it. They were both very much moved and agitated at first;

Isabella still indignant, and scarcely sobered out of the excitement of her defiance — while Mrs. Melville, overcome by a host of sad memories, could hardly realise that here was a dawn of hope. But bye and bye, the buoyant heart again got uppermost— be the waters never so bitter, it was not long to be kept down, that strong up-springing heart—and with a gush of delight they both of them thought of Hugh. To carry hope to him in his despondency, to put it in his power to exercise those gifts of which they were so proud, to make him a helpful man, taking his due place in the world—that was worth suffering any slight for.

And now they begin to compare notes, and find out that in reality they have received

no slight; that it was perfectly natural the stranger should be surprised, even suspicious, and that his kindness at last was all, and more than all, they could have looked for; and by the lamplight, for now it is dark, Isabella discovers that this piece of paper, which her uncle placed in her passive hand, when he bade her bring her mother in a cab, is a five-pound note. And Mrs. Melville says, that they will send the money to Elias immediately, and regrets she sent this morning's letter; and Isabella wonders aloud what Hugh will think, when he sees the coach; and subsiding each into their corner, and each feeling her weariness a pleasant enhancement of this present ease, they look out upon the lighted road, the shop-windows glancing past them, the reflected lights

flashing along the wet street; the weary figures gliding in and out in that perpetual maze, coming and going without a moment's lull. And the hackney-coach is a fairy chariot, and Isabella laughs and weeps, as she asks again, what will Hugh think when he sees them.

Hugh is sitting at the writing-desk, with his pen in his hand, wondering what has become of his mother and his sister. An hour ago Hugh's spirits were greatly elevated; he had finished his first essay on things in general, and when he read it over, it read exceedingly well, and he was much exhilarated. But the essay was finished, and he could not manage to his taste, the first sentence of the next. The afternoon darkened, and thrifty of the candle-light he sat

down, and brooded over the fire, and made himself anxious about their delay. Darker and darker grew the night, and they came not. Hugh grew very unhappy; and now he could not prepare for them—he could not make the room look comfortable, and ornament it, with the singing kettle and the glancing tea-cups, as Isabella would have done had he been late, to cheer him in his weariness. Poor fellow, he felt himself very useless; he could neither toil for them as a man should, nor serve them like a woman, and in his heart he grew very sad.

So sad that at last, in self-defence, he lighted his candle, and returned to the second essay. But just then, as he forced his thoughts back to it, came the vehicle

to the door. Hugh listened to its wheels with languid wonder—there was no interest in it for him.

But he hears the little green gate thrown open, and starts up with terrible alarm, thinking of some accident—no accident Hugh — but only two faces gleaming, smiling, in the doorway, pale and tear-wet indeed, but bright as they have not been, since Death was here.

"I knew Hugh would wonder," said Isabella, laughing, and again she began to cry.

"What has happened? mother! Isabella!" cried Hugh.

"He will get you a situation—Hugh, keep up your heart—he almost promised. Your uncle Quentin from India—oh, Hugh! my

dear, it is a providence!—but I must tell you everything."

"And though we are to dine at seven, we may get a cup of tea just now, and I'll go for the kettle, mother," said Isabella.

It was not difficult to raise Hugh's heart to as great buoyancy as theirs; and before Isabella had filled the kettle, her brother was up at "the high top-gallant" of rejoicing, as light-hearted and sanguine as though disappointment had never been.

"But, mother, I am afraid it is very much out of order to take tea before dinner," he said, laughing, as with considerable appetite he took his mother's bread and butter. It was quite a merry tea-table.

"Never mind, don't tell Uncle Quentin,

Hugh," said Isabella; "but be very quick for you have to dress."

"And, Isabella, Jane is at home just now, out of a place; you must run and get her to stay in the house, while we are away," said Mrs. Melville.

They had soon all their arrangements made, and though the dress of all was of the plainest, Mrs. Melville gave an affectionate finishing touch to Hugh's neck-cloth, and smoothed the hair of Isabella—the brown hair with its red sanguine gleam, which now suited better the reviving, hopeful face—with motherly pride. They were not beautiful we have said, and even in her black dress, and with her pale face, nobody could have compared the faulty, variable, imperfect Isabella, to an angel; but among

human people these two were noteworthy. Mrs. Melville secretly recalled to her mind, all the sons and daughters of all the households, which she had ever known; but "at the moment," as she said to herself, she could not remember any two worthy to be placed beside them.

> "Creatures not too bright and good
> For human nature's daily food,"

but creatures very loveable notwithstanding, whom you embraced "bodily," faults and all.

And now Jane—good-humoured, blubbering Jane—who cries to come back, as she cried to go away, is installed in the kitchen now bright with the suddenly kindled fire, and with her little brother beside her for

company, commences her temporary guardianship of the house, by an examination into all the cupboards and shelves, and wondering exclamations uttered under her breath, at the order of all. For Jane has no particular genius for order herself, and contemplates, the present arrangement of her old dominions, with awe and terror. "For if Missis has me back, I'll never please now, when she's got to do things herself this way," soliloquises Jane.

And now that stately coach, misnamed a hackney—in reality a fairy vehicle, with a benevolent gnome in second-hand capes, driving it for this special occasion and no more—draws up at Mrs. Melville's door, and with secret excitement they enter it, and are driven away, to the renewed awe of Jane.

They have little conversation on the road—they are far too much absorbed for that; and the mother and the sister are imagining, what Quentin Greenlees will think of Hugh, while Hugh himself draws pictures of this new uncle, and wonders how he will receive them. At last the vehicle stops, the benevolent gnome descends from his perch, and a spruce waiter flies to receive the guests, overcome with politeness and devout attention to the visitors of the eastern nabob; and immediately they are ushered into the shining, brilliant room with its great fire, and lights and mirrors, which dazzle their unaccustomed eyes.

CHAPTER XXI.

"So you wrote to George? How long is it since you have seen George, Isabella?" asked Mr. Greenlees.

"Not for twelve years—not since we left Dundee," said Mrs. Melville; "he had then a fine family about him, but now they are all gone except one little girl—I mean one girl—she cannot be little now, for she is ages with Isabella."

"One girl—yes, you are fortunate in your girls," said the Indian, with a smile. "I should judge my niece Esther to be by no means unlike my niece Isabella. The fashionable young lady character was of quite a different kind in my day—I remember yourself, Isabella—I believe strangers scarcely knew the sound of your voice."

The mother was immediately roused; she thought this a reflection on the part her daughter had taken in the afternoon's interview; but she saw the uncle's eye resting kindly on the spirited face of Isabella, which now indeed, that all necessity for exertion was over, looked as shy and quiet as man could desire; and Mrs. Melville was satisfied.

"I was in a very different position," she

said apologetically. "I was trained, not as if there were any faculties in me to develope, but as if education was something external to be fitted on. Isabella has had none of this. She has grown—she has not been fabricated—but no doubt she wants a great deal, which I should greatly wish she had; for we have been able to get but little education for her;—and my niece Esther is motherless, Quentin—but she must have had many more advantages than Isabella."

"Has she? well, we shall see," said Mr. Greenlees. "And so, Isabella, our old family patrimony must go at last into a strange name. Her father should make a condition in his will, that the name should descend with the property. She will be marrying immediately no doubt—all your

girls do. Nephew Hugh, have you ever seen your cousin?"

"No, Sir," answered Hugh, starting and feeling his face suddenly flush crimson as he perceived the drift of the question.

"Well, well," said Mr. Greenlees, laughing, "we shall leave you to make acquaintance with her, when it pleases Providence; and now, my boy, about your situation—what are you to do?"

"Anything you please, uncle," answered the submissive Hugh.

"Anything I please! nonsense. I have no pleasure in the matter. What have you been doing, young man? what can you do? Perhaps it will be better to state my own plans to you clearly, that you may understand me. Isabella Greenlees, your mother, is my

sister—very well—I confess it—but you must understand that what I have, I have made, single-handed, and that my family has rendered no such service to me, that I should sacrifice my own comfort for its advantage. Now, young lady, no fierce looks I beg, and no hot speeches, young gentleman—I don't mean to imply that *you* want my money, or that anybody wants it. I only desire you clearly to understand our relative position; I am willing to help you to work for yourself—I will remain here a few days longer than I intended, and put myself to some trouble to see that you get a situation—but I have not returned home to play the rich uncle. Very well, niece Isabella;—defy me with your eyes as much as it pleases you—look at me as if I should

be honoured, far above my deserts in having an heir like Hugh. Possibly—very possibly —but I shall prefer trying first to achieve an heir of my own; and it will be better for us all to have a thorough understanding on this point."

"Uncle, I do not want to be your heir," said Hugh, a little agitated. "I want to be no man's heir; I have no desire to be enriched by windfalls. Riches indeed, at all, perhaps fortunately, because they are quite out of my reach, are no great object of ambition to me. But my mother and my sister have been working to support me," continued Hugh, the eloquent blood again rushing over his face, "have been toiling day and night to maintain *me*, who should have maintained them. Help me to restore the

natural order, uncle; help me to do the duty of a man to my own household, and instead of looking for anything more, I shall thank you for this all my life."

"You are a young man, my good fellow, Hugh," said Mr. Greenlees, "you are undertaking a very considerable burden; but I will say nothing of that. What have you been doing? what are you fit to do now."

"I have been doing little else than study all my life," said Hugh, "but I am not idle naturally, and I could apply myself. Just a few days, I am sure, would carry me over any of the mysteries of book-keeping; so anything, uncle—I am ready for any situation you please."

"Hum! would undertake to be Governor-General I fancy, if I had the nomination, and

Lord Dalhousie were only out of the way," said the Indian, again with his half-comic smile. "Suppose now I were offering you an appointment in India."

Mrs. Melville started, and rose half from her chair, with strange eagerness, but falling back again, fixed her eyes full on Hugh's face.

"No, uncle," said Hugh, "I cannot suppose you would offer me anything of the kind; and if it were quite the same to you, I should prefer superseding Lord John Russell, to superseding Lord Dalhousie—if you please, uncle."

The nabob laughed.

"Very well—your boy is bold, Isabella; but I have no idea of sending him to India, so you need not look scared. Very well,

Sir,—so I suppose any situation I can find for you, between a tolerable clerkship here in Liverpool, and the highest place in Downing Street, will be accepted—is that it, Hugh?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Very well—that is settled so far—give me a cup of tea, niece Isabella—is there anything I could do for *you* now in the way of getting situations?"

"No, uncle."

"Yes, uncle—no, uncle—the one cheerfully said—the other with a considerable frown; you will find a situation for yourself, I presume, Isabella Melville—you will not trouble me."

Isabella was angry in spite of herself—the hand, with which she was giving Mr. Greenlees his tea, shook and spilt it, and

altogether, Isabella was disturbed and uncomfortable.

"I will not trouble you, uncle; nor be a burden on Hugh either, though you think so; I never can make myself rich. I am a woman; but I can work for myself, and I am thankful."

Poor Isabella! the tears were in her eyes, but she disdained to shed them. Mr. Greenlees lifted the hand which rested on the table—lifted one of her fingers rather—and held it up to examine it; it was the small delicate forefinger of her left hand, on which the honourable scars of the needle were only too visible. The sharp, keen eyes of the man of the world softened as he looked at it.

"Poor little thing! poor little thing!" he

said with a more affectionate tone, than he had yet employed, as he put it gently away. "Hardship is hard indeed, when it falls upon such as you."

Such as you, Isabella! Let the strong man say so, who thinks himself so much more powerful to resist than you are; but send the tears back from your eyes, and lift your young head, with the woman's consciousness of strength which is not seen—strength mercifully given of God, unknown to its possessor, till her hour has come—but lying there hoarded in its secret store-house, ready for the time of trial. Strong was the sinewy, active frame of the vigorous man who pitied Isabella—strong the constitution, which had passed unscathed through the fiery Indian climate, and the girl beside him

was young and immature—slight of form and delicate of mind; but bring hardship upon them both, and he would have faltered a hundred times, before she failed; yet he pitied Isabella.

Pitied Isabella! but nevertheless continued to discharge upon her those provoking jokes of his; but his kindly tone soothed her feelings, and again her heart rose, and she began to retort upon him. He settled himself comfortably in his chair, ordered Hugh to draw his mother's sofa nearer the fire, applied for cup upon cup of the tea which Isabella was dispensing; and as the hours darkened, and Mrs. Melville began to think of going home, the new-found uncle glowed into genuine enjoyment. He told them of his life in India. He exchanged

remembrances half sad, half pleasant with his sister, of the old home years of youth; and gradually they felt the relationship—felt the kindly tie of blood, uniting them to this stranger.

But just as they had forgiven him all his sins, and just as he had received his fifth cup of tea—considerably to the horror of Isabella, who had been for some time secretly adding to the contents of the teapot, spoonful after spoonful, as each successive cup was returned to her—a visitor was announced. With a sudden start, Hugh Melville threw himself further back into his chair, and fretfully impatient, Mr. Greenlees rose, while solemnly important as usual, Mr. Goudie entered the room.

It looked very much a family party as it

was. The great, luxurious, easy-chair in which the Indian had been reclining, stood at one side, or, indeed, not far off the front of the fire-place; Mrs. Melville's sofa was opposite him, and beyond his uncle in the fireside corner sat Hugh, while Isabella stood before the table on which the urn bubbled, and the tea sent forth its fragrance. Mr. Goudie was considerably discomposed; he had come to see a solitary bachelor, and unexpectedly lighted on a family; and as he bowed with ceremonious stateliness towards the ladies, he murmured something of intrusion.

"No, no—no intrusion," said Mr. Greenlees rather testily. "The night must be extremely cold, Mr. Goudie; you have brought in a freight of that chill atmosphere in your

great-coat I believe. Pray be seated, Sir."

Mr. Goudie took the chair placed for him, at a considerable distance from the heat-loving nabob, and cleared his throat. The solemn man felt just a little confused and uncomfortable; for there, opposite to him, evidently a person high in favour with the East Indian magnate, sat Hugh Melville; the same Hugh Melville who had, just a month ago, been praying for a situation from him.

Mr. Goudie explained the reason of his late call; not without embarrassment. He had been attending a committe-meeting, and on his way home took the opportunity—his carriage was waiting below—his time was really very much occupied—and he had not

been able sooner to say how much pleasure it would give him, in any way to serve Mr. Greenlees.

"I am happy to hear you say so," said the nabob briskly, "for I should be glad of one service from some of you Liverpool merchants. But this is not a time for business. I shall have the pleasure of calling on you, to-morrow, Mr. Goudie. It was at your office I saw you before; yes, I remember—my nephew and I will call upon you to-morrow."

Very stiffly and not without sundry uneasy feelings, Mr. Goudie remained for a quarter of an hour longer, and talked about the things to be seen in the town, and his desire that Mr. Greenlees should have a tolerable idea of its good qualities. He

ended with an invitation to dinner, which Mr. Greenlees was concerned it, would not be in his power to accept; and so after a little more polite ceremonious parley, the visitor went away.

"Catch that wind he brought in with him, and let it be sent down to his carriage, Hugh," said Mr. Greenlees as the Liverpool merchant disappeared. "I know it's lurking in some corner of the room yet. There! I feel it in my neck. Niece Isabella, your tea is cold, give me another cup."

Another cup! Isabella slid in clandestinely another spoonful of tea, in dismay; another—and yet another. This was the sixth which she handed him now.

"A pompous man that," said Mr. Greenlees. "I had some remittances sent

through his house in India, and his partner there has bidden him be civil I suppose. Do you know him, Hugh?"

"Yes, uncle. My mother and I had an interview with him once—*I* have had several."

"You, Isabella! Well, what think you of his mightiness? what did you want with him?"

"A situation for Hugh," said Mrs. Melville: "and he was not rude—no, Hugh, it was the other man who was rude. This one behaved politely enough, though he repelled us: but I heard he was a Goudie of Goudie, Quentin, and I expected better things."

"The more simple were you, Isabella," said her brother. "Men, you see, are born

in castes—there is no disputing it—but though I carried your old-fashioned Scotch prejudice in favour of Goudies of Goudie, out with me when I began life, I soon learned better. Ay, you have the caste division, a perpetual arrangement of nature, but then it is just as visible in one family as in a kingdom. Now look at that girl," said Mr. Greenlees, leaning his head upon his hand, and looking dreamily at Isabella, as she stooped over the urn, replenishing her teapot for another cup to her uncle. "I fancy she is not dressed particularly well. Yes, I dare say it is neat enough, Isabella—don't deprecate. I'm no judge—but at all events, there is nothing remarkable about it—not a ring, not an ornament; and that poor little finger of her's sadly

disfigured with her needle: yet one can see the girl's a lady—I assure you I perceived it, the moment I glanced at her this afternoon."

"Thank you, uncle," said Isabella, laughing and blushing, but again she spilt the tea.

"Well, Quentin, I am glad you think so," said Mrs. Melville composedly: "but Isabella has some right, for she is come of good family on both sides of the house."

The nabob laughed.

"I see you are not to be convinced, that good family sometimes proves a failure," he said. "But to return to our text. Did Goudie please you for his parentage sake, Isabella? did that cover all other sins?"

"He was not kind. I went and pleaded with him, thinking he at least would have a gentleman's feelings," said the widow, "and he was not kind, Quentin. He disappointed me—hurt me very greatly: so I thought as little of him as I could."

"Very well—we shall call on him to-morrow, Hugh," said Mr. Greenlees, "and see if he hurts *our* feelings; but I suppose there is no great chance of that."

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