THE

HAVEN UNDER THE HILL.

A Novel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'BETWEEN THE HEATHER AND THE NORTHERN SEA,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THIS BOOK

I Dedicate

TO MY FRIEND,

MRS. JOHN LUPTON,

OF MOORLANDS,

A SLIGHT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF

HER UNFAILING KINDNESS, AND OF HER WISE AND

UNDERSTANDING SYMPATHY,

MADE VISIBLE

THROUGH MANY YEARS.

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THE HAVEN UNDER THE HILL.

CHAPTER I.

'WHERE THE KEEN SEA-CURRENT GRINDS AND FRETS.'

'As a child
She still was simple—rather shall I say
More simple than a child, as being lost
In deeper admirations and desires.'
SIR HENRY TAYLOR: *The Eve of the Conquest.*

THE finest and highest peace is that which is wrought out of strife and pain; the most thrilling harmony, life's Vesper Hymn, heard when the burden and heat of the day is over; but the peace and harmony of the early morning is sweet and pleasant to the memory.

The Haven Under the Hill was not less bright

and picturesque, not less quaintly beautiful when Dorigen Gower was a child than it is now.

In those days the old sea-town was, so to speak, an undiscovered place, alike unknown of artists, tourists, speculators, or Railway Kings. Yet the charm of the old haven was not the less strong and striking because no one painted it, or sang of it, or wrote of it. Nay, is there not now to those who knew it and loved it then a sense of discord, of loss and intrusion, of broken unity, of sweet silence interrupted by jarring sound? Is there not pain in the increasing pressure of modern rush and hurry, upon the place that was anciently so restful and so still? Is there nothing to lament in the incursion of modern use and fashion upon ways of life that were distinctive, peculiar, well-nigh unique?

We will go back awhile, back to the Hild's Haven where lived four thousand men who went down to the sea in ships—men noted for their skilfulness and bravery even where others were skilful and brave. And they were home-built ships that they sailed in; wooden ships of such beauty, strength, and stateliness that they had long and justly been the pride and glory of the place. Captain Cook knew of them. He had sailed on his first voyage from the rock-girt harbour at the mouth of the Esk, and none but

Hild's Haven ships would content him when his mind was set on sailing round the world. The Scoresbys, father and son, they too tested the oak-built ships of the place when they sailed on their adventurous voyages to the whaling grounds of the Greenland seas. And even when these had become matters of historic note the town was still distinctively a seaport, the seventh in the kingdom it was said.

Everywhere there was the presence of the sea. On the calmest day you heard the low ceaseless roll of its music as it plashed and swept about the foot of the stern, darkly towering cliffs on either side of the harbour-bar. Everywhere the place was blown through and through with the salt breeze that was 'half an air and half a water,' scented with sea-wrack, and laden not rarely with drifting flakes of heavy yeast-like foam.

The rapid growth of the town had been owing entirely to its nearness to the sea. When the making of alum was begun at various points and bays along the coast, vessels were needed for carrying it to London, 'whither,' as an old chronicler tells us, 'nobody belonging to Hild's Haven had ever gone without making their wills.' This was the beginning of the shipbuilding trade, which grew and flourished so vigorously, lending

such an interest to the sights and sounds of the place, and finally becoming its very life. What would the old haven have been without the clatter of its carpenters' hammers, the whirr of its ropery wheels, the smell of its boiling tar-kettles, the busy stir and hum of its docks and wharves and mast-yards? And where, in the midst of so much labour, could there have been found any time to laugh or to dance, but for the frequent day of pride and rejoicing when the finished ship with her flying flags came slipping slowly from the stocks to the waiting waters, bending and gliding with a grace that gave you as much emotion as if you had watched some conscious thing? . . . It is a little sad to know that one has watched the launching of the last wooden ship that shall go out with stately masts and rounding sails from the Haven Under the Hill.

Those of the men of the place who were not actually sailors were yet, for the most part, in some way dependent upon the great changeful, bounteous sea.

All about the sands, on ledges of rock and slopes of shale, were perched the dwellings of the fisher-folk, surrounded by boats and nets, by oars, sails, and lines, and all the other picturesque belongings of their ancient craft. When Leland

visited the place it seemed to him only 'an have-net holp with a peere, and a great fischar toune,' probably little more than an outgrowth of the more important world which had clustered round the Abbey of St. Hild on the eastern heights above the haven. In days yet farther away the monks themselves were employed on the perilous waters; and when the royal Ælfleda sailed on her voyage to the Holy Isle to visit St. Cuthbert, the first voyage from Hild's Haven on record, doubtless the vessel in which she embarked was none other than one of the Abbey fishing-boats, commanded, if not altogether manned, by her brethren in the faith; for the Monastery of Hild, like many other monasteries of the order of Iona, was a double one, including both monks and nuns, the difference in this instance being that during the life of Hild and that of her successor, Ælfleda, the rule and sway was entirely in the hands of the abbess.

It was a beautiful place to have been born in, beautiful with history, and poetry, and legend—with all manner of memorable and soul-stirring things. A young and ignorant child might know but little about them, and be able to realize less; yet a child dowered with the temperament which had been bestowed as sole dower upon the girl whose history is to be given here could not by

any means have escaped the influence of such greatly impressive surroundings.

Her father, John Gower, was a jet-worker, neither more nor less than this; a master jet-worker, who had not been too eminently successful, as the world counts success. But, let it be plainly said, by descent he was a man who in days gone by would have been accorded the grand old name of gentleman. He knew it, and the local antiquaries knew it, yet the fact was of less importance to him than it should have been. He had quietly ignored it until it was as a thing forgotten. What had it mattered to him in his struggling youth and sorely-tried manhood that once upon a time the Hild's Haven Gowers had intermarried with the De Percys? What had he been benefited by the known high worth and honourable social standing of those long-dead ancestors of his? He had asked these questions of no one save himself; had he asked them of anyone else—of any man of wider knowledge, keener insight into non-apparent truths, he might have been answered that he had benefited much. Nobility obliges, somewhat less imperatively for being unacknowledged, it is true, still the obligation presses. Courage is in the veins, and strong silent fortitude, and determination to the death. So far this man had not fought the battle of life

overwisely, but he had fought well; that is to say, with an unfailing desperateness that admitted no thought of yielding. It might be that he was only obeying the instincts within him, but such instincts are worth something, and are generally to be accounted for.

At this period of his life, something past his middle-age, he was a grey, downcast-looking man. He was tall, and had once been of straight build and bearing; but the yoke which he had borne had bowed his head noticeably; and his dark face had still the look of past trouble, perhaps, also, of trouble to come. It was seared and lined more deeply than his years warranted; and though some of the lines about his mouth betrayed a certain capacity for humour, others betrayed that this same capacity had been straitly repressed.

He was a naturally unpretending man; and, as much by choice as by necessity now, his surroundings were unpretending likewise. For some half-dozen years he had been slowly finding the good that had been wrought out of his former ills; and, if it had pleased him so to do, he might have made some outward sign of the altered condition of his life; but it was characteristic of him that no such sign was given.

There might be some distrust in this—distrust

of himself, or of what he would have termed 'Fate;' there might even be some tinge of superstition, akin perhaps to that which kept the mother of the Rothschilds in the narrow, sombre Frankfort street, where prosperity had first dawned upon her family. 'If I desert the little house and the despised street, Fortune will desert my children,' she said. And we—who are wiser—laugh at the fear that was so unreasonable, but was it unbeautiful or unnatural? Did no man ever look back with regret upon his premature recognition of Fortune's favours? Did no one ever live to feel that he would even accept the cost and the pain of going back in the world's estimation, if he might be sure that at the end of the return journey he would find things as he left them? . . . . Perhaps, after all, the superstition—if such it were—that kept John Gower in the narrow house by Wiggoner's Wharf was not so certainly a sign and mark of foolishness.

It was not a picturesque house in itself; but its high-pitched, dark-red gable, which was turned toward the harbour, and was all rounded and embossed with luxuriant ivy, made a very distinctive feature of a picturesque scene. The narrow windows were ranged in pairs; the ivy crept under them, over them, between them.

Down below there was a courtyard with high brick walls, and steps leading quite to the edge of the water. Boats and other small craft of various kinds were moored to the posts by the wall; just beyond there was a great black wooden gallery standing out on rugged piles, and darkly overshadowing the strong, slowly-moving tide.

One May morning—a Sunday morning—when Mrs. Gower opened the door, a rush of soft west wind swept in over the water; the world, even down there at the bottom of Kirkgate, seemed full of life, and light, and gladness.

'What a chaänge!' a woman was saying up on the wooden gallery to the left, and a voice from another gallery overhead replied volubly:

'Ay, isn't it? My master 'll be rare an' glad. He's been laid up i' the Frith o' Forth for a month back. There's been a matter o' four hundred sail waitin' there for a chaänge o' wind. Ah sud think they wad some on 'em get away t' night afore last; t' wind had a bit o' hold o' t' west. But what a wind it was; an' what a raäin! As you saäy, it *is* a chaänge this mornin'!'

Mrs. Gower waited till this conversation had ceased; the glad, unsubdued tones of it jarred

upon her Sunday-morning mood, and she sighed for her neighbour's sin. She was an austere-looking woman, with pale-red rippling hair slightly touched with grey, a square forehead that betokened the possession of some mental capacity, and grey eyes that looked calm and inquiring, but not perceptive; nor did they seem like the eyes of a woman easy to be entreated; still there was no want of gentleness in her manner when she turned to her little daughter, who was waiting to be taken to Zion Chapel by her father, for the first time since the previous autumn. Mrs. Gower, having lost one child by croup, had, not unnaturally, endangered the life of the other by close confinement.

'Now go an' walk up an' down t' yard a bit till your father's ready,' she said. 'Don't stand still or you'll catch cold; an' don't go near the water-edge, you've got your best frock on—an' it's the Sabbath-day, remember.'

The Zion Chapel of that date stood in Kirkgate, and drew within its walls the descendants of some stern old Puritan families who otherwise had found no real rest for the sole of their foot. It was a survival, even in that day; and its straiter traditions kept their harsh hold only over the few whose inherited tendencies disposed them to accept the gloom and terror of its

atmosphere as safeguards which none might despise save to his soul's imperilling. And above all other days the 'Sabbath-day' was one to be kept with an austere and joyless solemnity, into which not so much as any echo of the life lived on the other days of the week might creep. The tone of Mrs. Gower's voice would have told with certainty that Sunday had come, to any perceptive listener.

Her mode of speech resembled as little the true North Yorkshire dialect as it resembled pure English; but it was not unpleasing, nor did it strike you with any jarring sense of unrefinement. This middle dialect is commoner now than it was then. The grand old unintelligible Bœotian speech is becoming rare, and is only to be heard in its integrity on the bleak moorlands, in secluded dales, in a few fishing villages that yet lie happily out of the reach of railways.

The child either did not hear, or speedily forgot what the mother had said. Was she in a dream? Were the cool, soft west wind and the brilliant sunshine intoxicating? Perhaps they might be to one who had been shut in a close room the winter through. Surely this was a new world into which she had stepped so lightly! The ivy leaves on the old red wall had never glittered and danced in that way before,

never rustled and whispered all the way down from the house to the harbour-side in such tones as these. The water was lapping about the foot of the steps, the boats were swaying dreamily. A great dark schooner was lying close to the neighbouring wharf; her bowsprit with its pendent ropes stood out across the line of vision; through a network of shrouds and other cordage, the docks and staiths on the farther side of the river could be seen. People were walking there; tall, white hanging cranes were gleaming in the raff yards. Above, a few prim, peaceful-looking houses of the Georgian era were standing on the top of the hill. The windmill beyond was motionless, and stretched out its gaunt arms athwart a bank of pearly cloud that was floating by. The radiance of flashing light seemed to heighten, the mystery of soft grey shadow to deepen, as the moments went on, confusing the child's recognition of things old and familiar; she was moved as by some faint touch of the new dawn that shall be when the old order changeth.

Imagine her as she stood there; a slight, pale, fragile-looking child of some seven or eight summers, dressed in deep mourning, and with an almost pathetic unpicturesqueness. She was not pretty, but her face struck you at once as being capable of either prettiness or something beyond it.

The stamp of mental activity, of keenness of inward vision was already there, giving character to the finely-cut features from the forehead down to the well-curved mouth and deeply-cleft chin, and lighting up the large, changeful, blue-black eyes with passing gleams of mystic beauty that would have been the despair of any mere painter of carmine cheeks and yellow hair. Her bonnet —a closely-fitting bonnet, of drawn black silk with a white net cap inside it—rested upon a mass of beautiful dark hair that was enough of itself to give an impression of strong vitality; but notwithstanding a general appearance of frailness, other signs of vigorous life were not wanting. The nervous moulding of every line and curve of her figure would have conveyed no idea of want of strength to any observer capable of recognising Nature's mark of rank as impressed by her own sign-manual upon an artistic organization.

Presently the door opened again, and John Gower came leisurely down from the house. No touch of the ordinary working-man's consciousness of Sunday-apparel marred his movements or took aught from his manhood. If there were any change in him it was toward additional ease, and a more complete sense of the harmony of things. His face was less marked by repression

than usual; and something that was almost a smile played about his lips as his eyes met those of his little daughter.

He came quite close to her, took the small hand that was held out to him in his warm grasp, and said in a tone that was purposely subdued:

'What say you, little girl, to a turn in the Abbey Plain this morning instead of Zion Chapel?'

The child looked up with a glad sudden light on her face—

> 'And the smile she softly used
> Filled the silence like a speech,'

but she made no reply. She was not at any time given to much speaking. As a rule, there was no one to listen, no one to understand. Her father was seldom indoors; and it was not to be expected of Mrs. Gower that she should be responsive to the fanciful wondering and questioning of a child who was always wanting to know something that nobody could tell her.

They went out hand in hand, John Gower and his daughter; out through the door that opened on to the wharf, up between the piles of timber, the bales of merchandise, the coils of rope, the lengths of rusty chain. There was no other way

of reaching Kirkgate, the principal street of the old town, and one of the four ancient gates or ways by which it was entered. The great door that shut in the wharf was closed, but there was a wicket in the lower part of it through which you stepped over a foot or two of planking into the street, and had always a sense of achievement when you had done it. Dorigen sprang out as lightly as a bird. The shops were all shut; wooden window-shutters of dingy green hung crookedly on their hinges against the brown walls. The houses that stood on either side of the narrow irregular street were tall and sombre; garret windows, or rather doors, were swinging open here and there; chimneys leaned threateningly toward the peaked roofs. Some of the houses stood with their gabled ends toward the street; others unceremoniously turned their backs, so as to get a better view of all that was going on upon the watery highway that divided the town. Everywhere in Kirkgate, from the dockyards at the bottom to the widening harbour-mouth at the top, you were reminded of the fact that it ran parallel to the river. Narrow openings, yards, wharfs, and ghauts, let the sunlight through, and afforded glimpses of rippling water, dark tangle-fringed quays, and tapering ship-masts. This morning

there was a joy in everything; a joy that was silent, and vague, and sweet, and no more to be reasoned about than a subtle perfume would have been.

They came to the foot of the church steps presently, the 'church-stairs,' as the people call them still; there was one hundred and ninety-nine of them in those days, wide flat steps winding up the rugged inner brow of the cliff to the plain where the Abbey stands, and the ancient church, and where all the old townsfolk are sleeping and waiting. A little way up the steps Dorigen caught the first peep of the blue sea—the real sea, not the river, but a strip of shining sapphire blue, lying between and beyond the russet red and the deep vermilion of gables, and tiles, and old brick chimneys. A few white-sailed ships were gliding by with swan-like movement, passing between the chimneys, coming into sight again for a moment, and then finally disappearing behind the great fractured angle of the cliff, that stands out so sharply against sea and sky. There is a street on a ledge of alum shale about half-way down the face of the cliff; Haglathe, or the barn of the hag, being the ancient name of it. The houses have been battered by storms, twisted by landslips, fretted and worn by age; still they stand there, leading pathetically toward

each other under the shadow of the tall, dark, storm-swept rock.

It was a sensation to Dorigen when a flight of snowy doves came wheeling out of the shadow into the glowing light, and suddenly, a moment later, the bells in the hardly-visible church-tower on the height above, burst upon the quietude with a great clanging, thrilling sound that was as moving, as full of passionate, poetic eloquence as a Psalm of David, or a cry of Isaiah. The vibrating air seemed full of hope, and holiness, and solemn exultation. John Gower felt the clasp of his child's hand tighten upon his own; and when he glanced into her face, he was not surprised to see the look that was there; but something, he knew not what, made him feel sadder; it was as if a touch of fear for the child had passed upon him.

They went onward, or rather upward; the doves came whirling down so swiftly and closely, that the rush and beat of their wings was quite audible. People were beginning to come slowly up the steps now. The Rector, the Rev. Marcus Kenningham, came by, responding courteously to John Gower's salute as he passed. He was a thin, white-haired, elderly-looking man, but he was bounding up the steps four at a time with characteristic activity of movement. His eyes

rested for a second on Dorigen Gower's face as he went upward. A minute later he turned and came down again.

'Is that your little daughter, Mr. Gower?' he asked in quick high-pitched tones?

'Yes,' said John; 'my only child.'

'Ah, I remember, you lost one last year. Good-morning—good-morning, little one! I'm rather in a hurry. The bells have begun, and I've got a wedding before the service begins. Good-morning.'

He was out of sight again in a moment, lost behind a rugged prominence near the crown of the cliff; but he went on thinking of the scarcely seen child—thinking in a puzzled way, and wondering of whom or of what the rapt, wistful face had reminded him. 'That child is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,' he said to himself as he went up by the broad pathway that leads to the chancel-door.

For Dorigen, too, the moment was a marked one in her single and simple page of history. She remembered it all afterward, when she was old enough to trace the influences that had wrought upon her soul—the sound of the far-echoing, overpowering bells, the keen-eyed clergyman, with the kindly and impressive manner, the lithe, sensitive figure leaping upward out of

sight. She remembered, too, that by-and-by there came a day when the Rector went no more to his parish church by the way of the cliff-side steps.

Dorigen and her father stood for awhile at the top of the ascent. The church, a long, low, grey building of Norman date, was behind them in the crowded churchyard, surrounded by homely tombstones, that told strange, sad stories of the sea in words so brief and simple, yet so complete, that your heart ached with the sense of the over-fulness of the tale. Another time, and Dorigen would have turned to these, but she stood now with her gaze fixed far out over the shining ocean plain, clearer, bluer, and with more of heaven in it than it had ever had for her before. The offing was studded from point to point across the wide bay with some hundreds of sunny sails; light and shadow lay upon the far-off cliffs and nabs to the north, the white-edged wavelets swept up the onyx-tinted sands; but Dorigen noted none of these things; nor did she turn to mark the heights and hollows of the inland scene, the sloping town at her feet, that crept downward till it touched the water; nor the gleaming of the river through the silvery haze, as it went upward like a winding stream of molten glass, hiding itself between the darkly-

wooded banks, that seemed to meet and touch at the foot of the distant hills.

Presently she spoke, the soft pink colour coming into her face with the mere effort of speaking.

'Why do all the ships go up and down, father?' she asked in a pure, low-toned voice. 'Do they never go straight out, across to where the sky touches the sea?'

'Very seldom.'

'But why? What is there out there where the sea is all white and glittering?'

'There is land if you go far enough. If you were to sail out in a straight line, little girl, you would come to a place called Spitzbergen.'

'Spitzbergen! But that is land just like this, not——'

The child could not shape the question she wanted to ask. The ideas in her brain were all vague and dreamy; confused by echoes of Wesley's hymns, and shadows of the pictures that adorned her mother's big Bible. No visions of any island-valley of Avilion, of any Lotus-land filled her imagination, but rather wonderings concerning the experience of Moses on Mount Nebo, when he saw all the lands unto the utmost sea, and the city of palm-trees, even

unto Zoar. Many a time, in her small, flute-like voice, she had sung:

'Could we but climb where Moses stood.'

And Moses had always seemed to be standing upon the church cliff at Hild's Haven, his long white robe lying upon the tall grass that grew among the graves, and his hair floating in the breeze that came from the Northern Sea. Now, all at once the thought came heavily that it was because of her sinfulness that she saw no better land; that for her there was only the passing of merchant ships, and the lazy flight of white-winged gulls. There was truth, then, after all in those stern warnings and denunciations to which she was so accustomed as to be unable to feel the weight they might have had. This clouded vision was an attestation of the fact that human eyes might be so holden by human sinfulness that they should not see. This new and vivid apprehension was awakening and distressing. The child turned suddenly; her eyes were full of blinding tears, the quivering voice half choked by a passionate sob.

'I *will* try, father—I *will* try to be a better girl,' she said, grasping his hand passionately, and drawing him away from the top of the church-steps.

CHAPTER II.

MAINLY TRADITIONAL.

'Let me but see the man
That in one tract can show the wonders that I can.
Like Whitbies selfe, I think, there's none can show but I,
O'er whose attractive earth there may no wild geese flie,
But presently they fall from off their wings to ground.
If this no wonder be, where's there a wonder found?
And stones like serpents there. Yet may ye more behold,
That in their natural gyres are up together rol'd.'

DRAYTON: *Polyolbion.*

THE glory of Hild's Haven is its past history—history not written only in books, not spoken only in the words of legend and tradition, but still remaining in solemn and majestic presence, an embodiment in lofty tower, heavenward-pointing pinnacle, and delicately carved arch of the fact that 'men had then a *soul*—not by hearsay alone, and as a figure of speech, but as a truth that they *knew*, and practically went upon.'

From all the country round about, from wild moorland and upland plain, from the rugged rocks and cliffs that skirt the coast on either hand, and from far out over the lone, perilous waters of the Northern Sea, the Abbey of St. Hild can be discerned. For well-nigh seven centuries it has stood there on the dark, wind-swept height. Within its precincts men have lived and toiled and prayed; generation after generation has suffered and sinned, and passed away from about it and below it; centuries of weary, storm-tossed mariners have hailed it as a landmark. They hail it yet, though no pharos light gleams now from the fallen tower. Are there any who dream that other hidden uses may lie in its wondrous beauty?

Like all beautiful things, it touches the soul to trouble, and the soul knows not why.

The great grey walls rise majestically from the green plain, the light of heaven falls upon turret and gable, and comes slanting through the windows of the clerestory, falling upon carved canopies and broken arches. Here there is a worn, patient face—how long has it borne that stone burden behind upon its shoulders? How long has the grotesque face just opposite mocked at the calm patience? Is there any sense of time up in that world of carved masonry, that

seems near enough to heaven to catch the song of the morning stars? To look seems almost to listen. It is as when one stands on a silent mountain height, and feels the silence full of voices that plead with his better self. Down in the world below there are troubles that darken a man's spiritual insight, but here in the Abbey of St. Hild you are conscious of that sense of increased light and expansion of soul that only comes by utter calm and peacefulness of environment.

John Gower and the child had entered by way of the little white gate in the cloister wall. They had passed close by the massive western front, with its yet beautiful gateway, and its sharply-arched window, where the tracery is broken into graceful fragments, that droop like icicles of stone. It was strange, almost oppressive, to be so near the big weather-worn buttresses, that seemed as if they had been washed by the sea itself. They looked very strong in their decay—mighty to resist, though marked for all time that remains to them by resistance past.

There is a great heap of masonry, the *débris* of the tower, lying in the roofless nave—the whole building is roofless with the exception of the north aisle of the choir. A grey clustered pillar still stands by the north wall; the grass

has grown over the vast uneven mound of fallen stone; huge rugged blocks, held together by coarse mortar, peep out from between patches of ragwort and other rank weeds; russet and olive mosses creep about, many-tinted lichens have fastened upon the brown and grey and yellow walls of aisle and transept. On this summer morning a single spray of wallflower was blooming over where an altar had stood; above, a big black crow looked solemnly down from under the carved canopy that sheltered the niche where a saint had been.

After a time John Gower sat down on the craggy, grass-grown pile within the nave, and his little daughter sat almost at his feet. The sea was shining beyond the edge of the green cliff; it was visible through the broken yet exquisite tracery of the north windows; the square tower of the church on the cliff-top could be discerned through the Abbey gateway. The topmast of a large ship in the river could be seen over the roofs of the east-side houses, its pennon hanging still and colourless in the haze that was deepening over the town. Everything was still up there. The Manor House, which stands in the shadowy green space where the cloisters were, seemed like a great tomb where all the records and histories of the past might each in

its turn have received honoured burial. The blank windows that were all along the front of it were like closed eyes, that might never open, or by any glance or sign betray; and the big dark door was grown up with waving grass, every blade of which seemed to tell of the years that had passed since any went out or in. This was not the real front of the house, but a skeleton front of a dead banqueting-hall, that had been built by the brave Sir Hugh Cholmley, and was blown down one stormy night about a hundred years ago. It is nearly all of the ancient dwelling-place of the lords of the manor that can be seen from the Abbey; and it is quite in keeping with the old wall of the cloisters, the leaning gateways, and the wide, bleak, treeless upland, every rood of which seems charged with some strong spell of its own—a spell that nothing can touch, nor diminish, nor rival for an hour in the hearts of those who cannot recall the day when they were strangers to its influence.

Dorigen Gower was but a child, yet, as we have seen, she was a child of sufficiently vivid conceptions, sufficiently ideal imaginations, and to all children such as she life comes by bounds and leaps rather than by ordinary modes of progression. In after life all behind this Sunday morning seemed like a landscape with a low-

lying mist upon it, through which here and there an object higher than the rest stood out against the sky. But upon this day no mist ever gathered, nor any cloud.

She sat quite still. A robin on the top of a clustered column close by broke the silence with a curt 'cheep! cheep!' and then flew away. The after-stillness was more marked for the bird-note that had broken upon the sunshine, then ceased.

Other voices had ceased also. The quickest conscience at eight years old is not apt to be persistent when its sting lies in the sense of a general inadequacy. The burst of penitence and new resolve that had troubled the child in the churchyard by the edge of the cliff was far away now. She could not have told you how or why it had given way to a new and strange quietness; she could not even ask herself whether this new mood was born of the day and the place, or of the confused weight of knowledge, and ignorance, and vague speculation that beset her.

> 'The cygnet finds the water, but the man
> Is born in ignorance of his element,
> And feels out blind at first.'

There was a look in Dorigen's eyes and about her firmly-closed mouth that kept John Gower as silent for a time as the child herself was.

Then he turned to her kindly—more kindly than usual, because it was Sunday, and he had more leisure to be kind. And there was also a characteristic quaintness in his phrase and accent that was seldom noticeable in the stressful days of labour and care; but the inflexions that he used were, in a sense, peculiar to himself, and not to be represented by any change of orthography.

'Well, little girl,' he said, looking down and putting his hand on her shoulder, 'what think you of it all? It is a long time since you saw the ships through the Abbey windows, isn't it? How much can you remember?'

'I don't know if I do remember; I think it isn't the same.'

'No? Where is the change, then?'

'Everywhere,' said the child, looking round in perplexity. 'It was nearly dark when I was here last time; there was only a little light, and it was a long way off. And there was music—such beautiful music! I think Uncle Than told me after that it was an organ. And then some singing began that was more beautiful than the music. I couldn't see the people that were singing, and—and I think they were angels. They were up above, and a cloud came between, and then the voices went farther away . . . I couldn't help crying then, because I wanted them

to come near. I wanted to ask them about little Elsie.'

The child had spoken with quite reverent gravity. She had no idea that she was relating a vivid dream, or a yet more vivid imagining. Dreams, imaginings, real events had played about equal parts in her small life so far.

It was a puzzling experience for a man gifted with a certain amount of perspicuity—too much to permit him to fall into the mistake of comforting himself with the idea that this child of his was but as other children ; too little to enable him to penetrate into the recesses of her mental being. His ideas of children in general were strangely vague and uncertain ; and so far as he had studied the one child-nature that was open to him for study, he had not yet found any element that might cause his ideas to crystallize or arrange themselves into any definite form. This state of things might be partly owing to the fact that he had had but few opportunities of being alone with his little daughter. He could hardly remember the moment when they had sat together as they were sitting now ; yet it was quite unawares that he was drawn into an experimental mood—a mood that reacted upon himself curiously, seeming to unlock certain of his mental faculties, and set him free from his

ordinary reserve, and in a way that would have been slightly wonderful even to himself if he had noted it.

'I don't know what you're thinking of, little woman,' he said after a time of silence, 'nor do I know what strange stories old Than has been telling you. I'm afraid that, like some other sailors I know, he's got a habit of spinning yarns that require to be taken with a grain more salt than belongs to them naturally. You mustn't take for granted all he says, especially when he talks about abbeys and organs.'

Dorigen looked saddened for a moment—the slightest passing impression, now and always, making itself fully visible on her sensitive features. Presently an eager look lighted up her face.

'But some of the things he says are true, father,' she said protestingly. 'He told me about the snakes, and they are there, you know, down on the scaur. I've seen them ever so many times.'

'What exactly did he tell you?'

'He told me that once in all the country round about there were so many snakes—live ones—that no one knew what to do. And they were poisonous snakes, and they bit the people till they died—just like those that bit the

Israelites in the wilderness. And Lady Hilda went and stood on the edge of the cliff, and she prayed, and all the snakes came up out of the woods and fields, and from the moor; and when they were all round about her, she took a cross and held it up, and then all the snakes' heads dropped off—or Lady Hilda cut them off—Uncle Than couldn't be quite sure which; but they couldn't see, and they went over the cliff down on to the scaur, and were turned to stone. I've seen them there, father, all coiled up quite round, and not one has a head on. Than says that Government has offered a reward if anybody finds one with a head.'

John Gower raised his eyes in due astonishment at this conclusive announcement, and the half-repressed smile that the child was always glad to see played about his lips for an amused moment or two; but he made no reply—shall it be confessed that he had no satisfactory reply to make? The legend that Dorigen had narrated with such earnestness of belief had been accepted by himself until he was at least thrice her age; and even then the place of full acceptance had been filled by a sense of doubt and mystery with which he had not cared to grapple. He had duly read his 'Marmion,' and he remembered, with all the exactness and tenacity of men who

have but little to remember, that Sir Walter Scott, in his note to the poem, had not seemed to dwell with any favour on the views of modern scientists. 'The relics of the snakes which infested the precincts of the convent, and were, at the abbess's prayer, not only beheaded, but petrified, are still found about the rocks, and are termed by Protestant fossilists *Ammonitæ* !'

So the poet concludes his note, and what could be added in the way of explanation by a man so utterly innocent of any science as John Gower? There were no primers in those days to lay bare the mysteries of all creation to whomsoever might possess a shilling and a spare hour. Books had been rare luxuries to this man, and time for reading them a luxury rarer still; so that it was small wonder that his once strong inclination toward literature should all but have departed from him. But the fact that he had at one time desired knowledge with some eagerness disposed him to decided sympathy with the evidently similar desires of his child. Her omnivorous appetite for books had been, so far, thwarted as much as it had been in Mrs. Gower's power to thwart it; but her father had a growing conviction that at some not distant day it would be his duty to assert his own authority in the matter.

Again he broke the silence with a question.

'And what other wonderful stories has old Than been telling you?' he asked, just arresting the kindly smile.

'Oh, not many stories,' said the child. 'He hardly knows any. But he tells me about real things, and I like that better . . . Did he ever tell you about the sea-birds, and why they never fly over the abbey?'

'No; I've never heard it from him,' was the reply.

'Did somebody else tell you?'

'Yes; my grandfather.'

'Your grandfather? What did he say?'

'He said that a great many of the birds of passage that fly over to this coast from Norway and Denmark are so exhausted by the long flight that they sink down as soon as they touch the ground, and rest for days before going any farther.'

Dorigen looked away, silent between incredulity and disappointment.

'Is that the same as Than's story?'

'No; it was nothing like that,' said the child, with a slight touch of the dignity that comes of reserved opinion.

'What, then, precisely was it like?'

'It was because of Lady Hilda, Uncle Than

said. She was very good, and the birds fly low when they come to the place where she lived, because she was a saint.'

'Ah! That is very different . . . Was there anything else about the Lady Hilda?'

'Only about her dying, and the vision that the nun at Hackness saw just at the time when she died . . . Uncle Than says that some people can see her yet. He had an aunt who saw her —I believe it was Miss Rountree's mother. She walked seven times round the church one night when it was moonlight, and then looked up at the Abbey, and Lady Hilda was standing there by a window in a white shining dress.'

'Suppose we should see her now!'

Dorigen did not smile, nor did she shrink, or look afraid. She had told the legends in the same ordinary and commonplace language in which they had been told to her, giving the same commonplace details, but these had not represented the attitude of her own mind. Her natural bent was toward an intense reverence for whatsoever things were surrounded by spiritual mystery and solemnity. The vastness and the tranquil sacredness of the place seemed to deepen this natural feeling, and the child was yielding herself to it more completely with every moment that went by.

'I didn't know you had such a wide acquaintance with the legends of Hild's Haven,' her father said presently. 'I wonder how much you know of the real history of the place. Who was Lady Hilda?'

Dorigen turned her childish, wondering eyes upon him rather vacantly. It was needless for her to admit that she did not know. Lady Hilda was for her a beautiful, white-robed saint, who had lived on this very spot, and had wrought many miracles there. The picture of her in Dorigen's brain was a picture of a tall, shining figure rising out of mists and shadows, and moving among arches and pillars that had never been carved by mortal hands. . . . These were not details that could be reproduced in words for the benefit of a father who seemed to be relapsing into an exact and catechetical mood.

'Ah! so I thought,' he said, after waiting with due patience and some curiosity for an answer. 'Now you seem to have remembered all old Than's tales with wonderful exactness. If I tell you another, how long will you remember mine, do you think?'

'I never forget things, father,' was the grave and not inaccurate reply.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF CÆDMON.

'Above the small and land-locked harbour of Whitby rises and juts out towards the sea the dark cliff where Hild's monastery stood, looking out over the German Ocean. It is a wild wind-swept upland, and the sea beats furiously beneath, and standing there one feels that it is a fitting birthplace for the poetry of a sea-ruling nation.'—STOPFORD BROOKE: *On English Literature.*

HISTORIANS having awakened to the beauty and value of the tale that John Gower told to his child that summer Sunday morning — the story of the founding of the Abbey of Streonshalh by St. Hild, of how she made it 'the Westminster of Northumbria,' and became herself 'a Northumbrian Deborah, whose counsel was sought even by bishops and kings,' these matters may not be touched upon here. But the story of Cædmon, a cowherd of the monastery, a man so

utterly unlearned as to be unable to read or write, must perforce have mention if the later pages of this history are to be understood to any real purpose.

We speak of him reverently to-day, and count him 'the Father of English song,' 'the Milton of our forefathers.' But the opening note of Cædmon's story, as it has come down to us, is a note of sadness, a special note that could only have been struck in the soul of a sensitive and much-suffering man.

'He was of middle age,' says the ancient writer, 'and had never learned any poem; and he therefore often in convivial society, when for the sake of mirth it was resolved that they all in turn should sing to the harp, when he saw the harp approaching him, then for shame he would rise from the assembly and go home.

'When he so on a certain time did, that he left the house of the convivial meeting, and was gone out to the stall of the cattle, the care of which had been committed to him, when he there at proper time placed his limbs on the bed and slept, then stood some man by him, and hailed and greeted him, and named him by his name, saying, "Cædmon, sing me something." Then he answered and said, "I cannot sing anything, and therefore I went out from this convivial

meeting and returned hither, because I could not." Again he who was speaking with him said, "Yet you must sing to me." Cædmon said, "What shall I sing?" And he said, "Sing me the origin of things."

'When Cædmon received this answer, then he began forthwith to sing in praise of God, the Creator, the verses and the words which he had never heard. Then he arose from sleep, and had fast in mind all that he sleeping had sung, and to those words forthwith joined many words of song worthy of God in the same measure.'*

It is probable that the grand old story was never listened to in a less critical attitude of mind. It was true beyond question; it was beautiful beyond description; it was sacred beyond realization.

Dorigen made no remark, but John Gower did not fail to note the intentness of the small, eager face beside him, the quick changing of the colour on the cheek, the dilation of the dark, expressive, wondering eyes. Some of these things he had perceived from the beginning; but when the story of the divine illumination of Cædmon had been added to the rest, the strong

* *Vide* Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History;' also Thorpe's 'Translation of Cædmon's Metrical Paraphrase.'

emotion of the child became less controllable. It was as if every nerve quivered to the sounding of the chord of latent sympathy that had been touched, and touched finely. To what fine or other issues it is one purpose of this record to show.

Johann Wolfgang Mozart writing his concerto for the harpsichord at five years old; Lawrence taking his pencil portraits at the same age; Landseer painting pictures to be exhibited at the Royal Academy in his thirteenth year; Shelley writing wild romances to be published while he was yet a schoolboy—these and scores of others are cited commonly as instances of precocious development, and the citation is made admiringly, as if the prematurely-burdened child were worthy of all honour and praise. If such a childhood—the inner life of it, the inevitable suffering of it—could be accurately recorded, there is no compassionate man or woman in whose heart praise would not turn to pity even while the record was being read.

There is but one childhood to a human life; but one time of freedom from care, of exemption from strife, of ignorance of life's bafflings, its meanness, its complications. If this be marred, it is an ill for which existence has no compensation. All his life a man shall go sadly for the

child that died, not having known the glories and illusions of a happy childhood.

It is quite in vain to blame circumstance, to cast reflections on this child's mother or that child's father. The originating force lies beyond these, though it be transmitted through them, and they shall not be accounted responsible for activities that lie outside their comprehension. To have hatched an ugly duckling is not the ambition of the maternal hen, and none but the hard-hearted would refuse to sympathize with her inevitable dismay when the undesired creature persists in taking to its native element. Her anxiety is but increased by the vagueness of her knowledge of the untried dangers, and to be made to recognise the fact that you have given life to an organism that is daily and hourly passing beyond your ken, can never add to that comfortable acquiescence in the things that are, which is so legitimate an object of desire.

Perfect immunity from anxiety on this head can only lie in perfect obtuseness, and this being a quality liable to the shocks and jars by which enlightenment of all kinds has a trick of coming, can seldom be depended upon for perfect tranquillity. Even Mrs. Gower had made disturbing discoveries, and it was hardly likely that her more perceptive husband should escape alto-

gether. He had no desire to escape; on the contrary, as we have seen, he had this morning fallen into a mood that might be termed experimental. Yet he was not prepared for this display of overmastering emotion. The child had risen to her feet; the small, nervous hands moved outward to his impulsively; her voice betrayed the fervour of her bewildered faith.

'But who was it that came to Cædmon in the night, father? Was it God Himself? or was it an angel that God sent?'

'That I cannot tell,' John Gower replied reverently, feeling that the question was one that required attention of the same kind as he had often been led to bestow upon the question as to the nature of Him who wrestled with Jacob at Penuel. 'That I cannot tell,' he said. Then after pausing a moment he added, 'It is said in the Bible that the prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit!'

'But that was inspiration! . . . Mother says that only the Bible is inspired!'

Here again John Gower hesitated. He had no wish to shake his wife's authority, knowing well that his own views were not sufficiently definite to be of much value on such matters.

'I suspect it depends on how you take the word "inspiration,"' he said vaguely.

He was not satisfied with his reply, being aware of a certain cowardice behind it.

'Are there two kinds of inspiration, then?' the child asked quickly.

'That I can't tell; I should say there might be. I've thought about it before to-day, and I remember there's a passage somewhere in the Epistles that says, "God, at sundry times, *and in divers manners*, spake unto the fathers." I don't see why He shouldn't speak "in divers manners" still.'

The man had spoken with deep reverence throughout, and now he added with humility, 'But it is not for me to say; I've had no learning, and there's more in such matters than one like me can fathom.'

'But Cædmon had no learning!' said the child persistently.

'No, true; but he had something else—something that I've not got, I'm afraid.'

'You mean before he saw the vision?'

'Yes.'

'What do you think it was that he had?'

'There again you're beyond me. Your mother would say it was religion.'

Dorigen paused for a moment, restraining the eagerness that seemed to vibrate through her reed-like frame.

'I should say that too,' she said presently, with childish decisiveness.

'Yes,' said John Gower, with a sigh over his own failure to attain the standard set up for him in his own house—'Yes; I don't see what else exactly it could have been. There was Milton: he wrote "Paradise Lost," you know, and he believed himself to be inspired; and that inspiration could only come to a good man, or one that tried to be good. At the beginning of the poem there's a kind of prayer for fuller inspiration, a prayer to the Holy Spirit—

> '"And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for Thou know'st."'

'And that was after Cædmon lived?'

'Hundreds of years after.'

'Do you know of any others, after Milton?'

'Well, there are poets now.'

'Inspired ones?'

'Again that is more than I can say,' John Gower replied, beginning to feel some regret that the conversation had not taken a different tone. It was occurring to him that he should not like to take the child home with that flushed face, brilliant eye, and general air of excitement.

'But you can tell me what you think, father?'

she begged with curious and altogether inexplicable earnestness. 'You can tell me if you think that there is any reason why God could not send inspiration to anyone now.'

'There is no reason why He could not; I know of none why He should not. . . . And now let us go.'

They went homeward through the churchyard again, and down by the cliff-side steps into the town. The child was silent—lost in an incomprehensible silence—but this was not new, and therefore gave rise to no question; which perhaps was well, since answer of any intelligible kind would have been difficult. Dorigen Gower had to grow,

'As a reed with the reeds by the river,'

for many a long day before full understanding of that morning in the Abbey of St. Hild dawned upon her mental vision.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSE BY WIGGONER'S WHARF.

'How insignificant, at the moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood! How indelibly, as we afterward discover, they affect us; with what capricious attractions and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax of our ingenuous souls, as "with lead in the rock for ever," giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feeling and thought, which abide with us ever afterward, thus, and not otherwise.'—WALTER H. PATER.

THE bells up in the old grey tower on the cliff were ringing for afternoon service, the sun was creeping round toward the west, shining into the soft, sleepy, yellow haze that was upon the harbour. The tops of the ship-masts and the slanting yards looked pale and shadowy, and threw pale and shadowy reflections into the water that had lost its ripple when the tide went out and the breeze

died down. Across, on the other side of the harbour, a thin white smoke went up from the deck of a small schooner. Were the sailors making tea? Dorigen wondered. Was it tea-time? Then again she moved restlessly in her little painted wooden chair, and again Mrs. Gower lifted rebuking eyes from the volume of sermons by Jonathan Edwards that was claiming her deepest attention.

She knew something of what was passing in the child's mind. For years past—from the days when the little one had been just able to walk alone—she had been allowed to spend Sunday afternoon with old Than Rountree, who was not really her uncle, but her godfather, and lived with his cousin, Miss Rountree, in a tiny house in a cliff-side garden on the east of the town. It had always been a pleasure, and gradually, imperceptibly, it had come to be something more, perhaps as much by reason of the child's strong imagination as by anything else. To climb the narrow steps between the sordid houses, to enter by the wooden gate into the garden where daisies grew, red daisies and white, with richly-scented wallflowers and borders of mignonette, was simply to enter Paradise for a little while. The apple-tree was not wanting; it stood in a corner, a big old tree, sparing

of blossom, luxuriant of leaf, and bearing in the autumn its sour scant burden of Yorkshire Greens, with quite the air of a tree that might have had ancestors in the Garden of Eden, that is if the picture-books were at all to be trusted.

Dorigen had been thinking of the apple-tree, thinking of the pink-and-white blossoms that she knew had faded from the old brown boughs unseen by her, dreaming, too, of the new life, of the old romance that were always up there in the house in the garden. She liked to sit and think of it all, of the kindness, the freedom, the general sense of being wanted and welcome that was so much to her always. It was a long time since she had tasted of all this delight; by reason of the winter's cold and her mother's fear, the Sunday afternoons had been missed out of her real life altogether; but time and loss had only stamped them more vividly and truly on the inner life that was, in a sense, so much more than the outer. And all the winter through there had been hope, as well as recollection. She should go again when the summer came, her mother had said. And surely the summer had come now, and Sunday afternoon had come, as anyone might have known by the strange stillness and sleepiness that seemed as if it were of the hour and of the day. The sun was shining full on

the face of the old clock, full into the silver eyes of the brazen man-in-the-moon at the top of the dial-plate. The clock ticked slowly—the afternoon was going slowly; still it *was* going; and again the child moved restlessly in her little chair.

'What are ya fidgetin' i' that way for?' asked Mrs. Gower at last, speaking in stern but subdued tones. Her husband was asleep on the sofa, a fact that added terribly to the hush that had come down over the house. All the afternoon he had slept there, all the afternoon Mrs. Gower had sat uprightly by the table, with her volume of sermons before her. Her bright black calamanca apron was spread out stiffly over her dull black gown, her pale red hair was brushed away under a prim cap of white net, which was relieved only by little bows of gauzy 'love-ribbon,' as it was termed in those days. This was her usual Sunday afternoon toilette, but it was worn to-day with even more than the usual Sunday rigidity. Dorigen knew it, and felt it afresh as her eyes drooped under her mother's hard gaze; then nerving herself for a desperate effort, she went to the table and said in a beseeching, tremulous whisper:

'Can I go to Uncle Than's this afternoon, mother? You said I was to go the first fine

Sunday, and we saw him this morning in the street, and he said I was to go to-day.'

Mrs. Gower looked into the girl's face coldly, sternly.

'And I say you're not to go,' she replied, with an emphasis on every syllable.

There was no appeal. The child's face suddenly grew rigid; she slowly withdrew from her mother's side and sat down again, feeling no disposition to tears, none to anger. These things were not in her way. Her way was to take a blow as a final result, to make no attempt to alleviate it.

She sat quite still now, noting nothing, seeing nothing, but intensely conscious of all things about her. Her father slept on; the pendulum went on swinging with its slow alternate click; her mother went on acquainting herself with the spiritual experiences of a soul of even darker, and sterner, and more puritanical cast than her own, and the expression of her face grew darker and sterner as she read. Dorigen was aware of it, though she did not consciously glance that way. For a few moments life stood still, stopped by the touch of disappointment that should have seemed so slight, but was so truly heavy to the child. She sat with her little hands crossed on her white pinafore, looking round the quaint

home-like room, all unaware of the preciousness the memory of it would come to have for her some day, all unaware that the time would come when she would look back upon such days of weariness and monotony as upon days of perfect peace and rest, the like of which she might never know again.

There was a sort of Yorkshire farmhouse atmosphere about the place, to be accounted for perhaps by the fact that Mrs. Gower was the daughter of a Yorkshire farmer, and had had many things to her dower that had belonged to the old homestead on the edge of Westerdale Moor. The dark oaken bureau, with its rudely carved panels, its heavy drawers with ancient handles of brass, and its many deep recesses, had belonged to more generations of Ullens than the last daughter of the house was aware of. She was very proud of it, and her pride found continuous expression in vigorous polishing. No speck of dust might be discerned anywhere, or any dimness on things meant to be bright. There was a warming-pan hanging in a corner by the bureau, with a handle of shining walnut and a lid of shining brass, and graven on the lid there was a far-off rising sun, with a tall sunflower in the foreground which displayed only its stalk and the reverse of its disc of outer

petals. Many a time Dorigen had wished that it would turn its head, if only for a moment, that she might see what a real sunflower was like; but it kept on for ever staring at the brazen sun. Persistent always, there was something aggressive in its upright obstinacy this afternoon, and there was no relief in turning to the palm-trees; they, too, stood stiff and still, frozen in unresponsive iron-work, and solemn with the touch of antiquarian dignity that time was laying upon each hand-wrought leaf. The palm-trees grew on the oven-door; they had grown there for well-nigh two centuries, as was plain for anyone to see, the workman having wrought the date into his work right noticeably, just above the well over which Rebekah was bending to draw water for the tall camels that stood patiently waiting, always with outstretched head. The camels were as tall as the palm-trees, and Abraham's servant might have been as tall as the camels if he had been standing. But the man was sitting; he always sat still upon the same stone, and he was always staring at Rebekah, who never turned away, or moved her head, or gave the camels to drink of the water that had been in the pitcher for above a century and a half.

Ah! it was terrible sometimes, the silence and

sameness of things. Up at Uncle Than's there was a bird, a grey linnet, that sang a softer and sweeter song than any canary; it could send a thrill through you all unawares by bursting into full glad melody when you least expected it. And Miss Rountree had a window with plants in it that were always budding and blooming, fading and reviving, throwing out hints and mysteries of form and colour in a way that was quite an exercise to see. Yes, indeed, it was terrible to have to sit still without speaking when there was nothing to be listened to, and when you had only things to look upon that could not even look back again.

Up on the high mantel-shelf, among the brass candlesticks and japanned snuffer-trays, there were two tiny black busts, one of John Wesley, and one of George Whitefield, grotesque little things with curled wigs and strips of white pearl for muslin bands. Dorigen had tried to hold conversations with these at one time, but having learnt from her mother what manner of men they were, she had desisted in sheer affright of conscience, being well aware that if they replied at all their replies must be wholly denunciatory.

It will be seen, then, that the life lived by Dorigen in her little wooden chair was not without its depths and intensities. The chair

stood always in a narrow recess between the window and the fireplace, and the recess was filled with blue Dutch tiles of scriptural design which had played no small part in the child's theological training. There was considerable diversity of scene and story, but the stories were not as a rule of a soothing or encouraging nature. As a matter of fact, they served but too often, and too exactly, as visible witnesses to the truth and terror of Mrs. Gower's teaching. The artist had apparently been irresistibly impelled to the seizure of moments of painful suspense. The disobedient Jonah was depicted as only half-delivered from the mouth of the whale, and the expression of his countenance betrayed no vain confidence as to his final escape. The picture of the rebellious Absalom, caught up into the oak while his mule was in the very act of departing from under him, though fascinating in a certain sense, could yet become intolerable when the desire for Absalom's release had wrought itself into your mind as a fixed idea. To live with arrested events of this kind, and other kinds, close to you, and all round you, was inevitably to live yourself into some kind of sympathy with them; and Mrs. Gower would probably have been appalled could she have suspected for a moment that her daughter's sympathy was being

powerfully drawn to the wrong side. If it were true that to sin was to suffer, of a surety it must be equally true that to suffer was to need pity and compassion. This unorthodox idea had taken root in the child's mind already, and was destined to grow there vigorously, with others equally unorthodox, and perhaps less tenable; but each one of them was the natural outcome of a policy of straitness, repression, and lively terrorism.

The fact that Dorigen's desire for books had betrayed itself as a passion was quite enough to keep Mrs. Gower constantly on guard against its indulgence. The greater part of the books were banished to the garret, buried there in a chest that had belonged to a sailor, a Gower who had gone down to the sea to do business in great waters, but had never reached the haven of his desire.

Dorigen knew something of the volumes that had disappeared. She had glanced over certain Waverley novels; she had looked upon the pages of mysterious Greek and Latin school-books with awe, wondering who Cato might have been, and who Erasmus; and wondering next who had read the books, and defaced them, and left upon them marginal illustrations of such strikingly effective design. She knew of other books too,

not written in any dead language, nor dead in any way, though so long buried; but alive and likely to live so long as Dorigen could remember the glimpses she had had of them. A few had been allowed to remain on the narrow shelf above the bureau. John Gower had insisted here; but his insistance had not the value it might have had if it had gone a little further. He was a man who prized domestic peace, and was capable of much unheeded sacrifice for the sake of it. It was only quite lately that he had begun to realize that he was sacrificing his child's good as well as his own wish in this matter.

The handful of books that he had chosen to keep before him were sufficiently varied. Cædmon, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Ossian; lives of John Wesley and Lord Nelson; Sharon Turner's 'Saxon History,' 'The History of Hild's Haven,' Neal's 'History of the Puritans,'—these, with a few others of lesser importance and more recent date, were there, a curious and inconsequent collection, but enough for the ceaseless exercise of a child's passionate desire.

Was it this desire that he saw in her eyes when he awoke from his sleep? He fancied it was; and with a touch of defiance in him he took down the Cædmon from the shelf, turned the pages for a moment, and then opening it at

the account of the poet's inspiration, placed it in the girl's hands. She took it with a quick flush that was half of pain, half of delight. The act was like a declaration of war: victory seemed a long way off and improbable. But victory and battle were soon forgotten; hope and disappointment were alike forgotten; nothing remained but the vividly present story of the past. Vividly present, yes; for there was nothing but time between, and time is so little to a child, distance so much. Milton had lived and sung nine hundred years later than Cædmon; but Milton had lived in London, and had travelled in Italy; while Cædmon had walked on the windy cliff-top, and in the Abbey plain just above, and the voice that spoke to him in the night had spoken not many yards away from where she sat. The child's hands trembled as she turned the pages; for years afterward she remembered how they trembled. The sense of the nearness of the things of which she read was a strong emotion; and she knew no more that she sat in a narrow room made narrower by straitness of human outlook and perception.

CHAPTER V.

WILD WORK.

'So the foundations of his mind were laid,
In such communion, not from terror free.'
WORDSWORTH : *The Excursion.*

OUTWARDLY that afternoon had passed as the afternoons of other Sundays, save for a certain deeper gloom and silence. John Gower was well aware of this, and aware too of the cause. When he went out to go to Zion Chapel in the evening he went uncomfortably, for Mrs. Gower had declined to accompany him, with an accentuation of tone and manner that admitted of no overture, and betrayed moreover a settled and calculated intention, the nature of which he had no difficulty in divining.

He glanced compassionately at the child as he went out, but she did not see the glance. She

had finished the story of Cædmon's life, of his placid and beautiful willingness to depart from life; and now she had turned to the great grand song that he had sung while he was yet living. She had only just begun it. Heaven was opening somewhere overhead, light sweeping into the room with the rustle of angels' wings.

'Shut that book and bring it to me,' said a voice which made her start with its sudden sternness.

The child obeyed swiftly and promptly, as was her wont.

'An' now bring your catechism here, an' the hymn-book.'

Again Mrs. Gower's command was met by silent obedience. Dorigen remained standing by the table, sad, patient, vaguely expectant of coming ill.

'Stand straight and put your hands behind you,' said Mrs. Gower. 'Now look at me an' say the fourth commandment.'

This was done; the words were uttered with a certain mechanical precision, the child's brain being busied with the usual interior realization of the man-servant, and the maid-servant, and the stranger within the gates. Mrs. Gower's mind had not dwelt upon these.

'What do you mean by keepin' the Sabbath

day holy?' she inquired, the pent-up feeling of the whole afternoon betraying itself in her voice and accent.

Dorigen looked into her mother's face with the troubled, wistful look that always came when she was required to be definite; and for a single second a terrible misgiving crossed Mrs. Gower's mind, a suspicion not exactly of latent idiocy, but of some mental want or shortcoming that might point toward irresponsibility. It was not the first time that this misgiving had come upon her, and, as at other times, she put it away. It agreed clearly with her views of original sin to suppose that the child was now and always actuated by sheer perversity.

'You don't mean to answer? . . . I suppose you've conscience enough to know that you've not kept *this* Sabbath day holy?'

The girl's expression grew more troubled: still she kept silence.

'I know what you're thinkin' of,' Mrs. Gower continued, 'I know what you want to say. You'd like to throw all the blame on your father; an' I don't say he wasn't to blame; but that doesn't excuse you. Didn't he ask you if you'd like to go ramblin' about instead o' goin' to chapel like a Christian?'

'Yes; he asked me.'

'An' what did you say?'

Dorigen considered. 'I think I didn't say anything,' she replied.

'There's more ways than one o' sayin' things. You didn't say "no," that I can answer for. You'd never so much as think for a minute whether you were breakin' the commandments or not. But you're breakin' other things as well as them, you're breakin' my heart; an' when I'm dead an' gone you'll mebbe think of it, if ever you learn to think at all. I read of other children, younger children than you, that repent an' get converted an' find peace, an' go on being a comfort and a blessing to everybody about them; but it seems as if I was never to have no comfort out o' you. I've done my best; I've taught you, an' tried to train you up in the way you should go; but for all I can see you might as well ha' been left for Satan to work his will upon. You get more wilful an' more hardened every day of your life.'

None of these accusations were new; perhaps the real terribleness of them, as touching the mental experience of a child, lay in the fact that she heard them with such inadequate concern. They were so old, so true, so inevitable.

'What do you think 'll come of you when you die?' Mrs. Gower asked after a pause.

Again it was required of Dorigen that she should form a definite answer out of somewhat indefinite material. She made an honest effort, but with the usual result.

'Supposin' you were to die to-night, where do you think you'd go now?'

Another blind, painful effort was made. The expression of the girl's face changed in the making of it; her colour came slowly; her eyes were lit up with a bright, unquiet light.

'Now just answer me one thing,' Mrs. Gower said, pursuing her advantage with the conscientiousness that she believed to be her duty—not an easy duty, but one without doubt required of her as the logical outcome of her cruel and Calvinistic creed. Probably no more exact representative of that creed's fiercest and most awful dogmatism ever existed than the woman who sat there, weighing in the balance the soul of a little child. She went on with her questioning. 'Answer me one thing,' she said. 'Suppose you were to die this very hour, do you think you would go to heaven?'

'No!' said Dorigen with desperation, and no one saw that in that moment a jarring touch was laid upon her soul which was to vibrate through the years.

Something in the girl's manner, more than in

the word she said, came like a slight shock to Mrs. Gower; she hesitated a moment.

'You think that?' she said presently. 'You think that if you were to die before bedtime, an' had to be put into a coffin, an' buried in the ground beside your little sister—laid there for worms to feed upon—you think yourself that your soul wouldn't go to heaven as hers did?'

Dorigen looked the same answer that she had given before; she did not utter it.

'Very well,' said Mrs. Gower. 'Then if it didn't go to heaven, where would it go?'

Again the child hesitated, and again she spoke with desperate quietness.

'It would go to hell,' she said, lifting her eyes to her mother's face slowly.

Mrs. Gower's breathing became audible in the momentary silence that followed. Every answer the girl had given was the direct result of the mother's teaching; yet for one moment that mother wished that she had been childless.

'Give that catechism to me,' she desired after a time.

The child placed the book in her hands. It was a little one; and on the cover of it were these words:

'For Children of Tender Years.'

Mrs. Gower opened it, found the section she wished to find, and began with the first question—

'*What sort of a place is hell?*'

The answer came promptly.

'Hell is a dark and bottomless pit, full of fire and brimstone.'

'*How will the wicked be punished there?*'

'The wicked will be punished in hell by having their bodies tormented by fire, and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God.'

'*How long will these torments last?*'

'The torments of hell will last for ever and ever.'

These answers were all given with the same undisturbed, undoubting tone, but it was a tone from which Mrs. Gower's puritanical instinct missed something. It was not inspired by dread, nor yet by compunction. Another effort must be made.

'Bring me the big Bible,' she said, with hopeless determination in her voice.

The Bible was brought; it opened almost of itself at the picture Mrs. Gower desired to see; a picture which had been imprinted on her own brain many years ago, and had never lost its harrowing influence. It was an attempt to do with the graver what Dante attempted to do with his pen in the 'Inferno'—probably the

poet had furnished the artist with ideas. The engraving was dark, with lurid lights in it; the details were drawn forcibly, and with a Düreresque deliberation and definiteness. The flames were gathering and tossing like waves of fire; the sinners might never escape from their furious lashing; might never hide from the grotesque and mocking fiends that were graven there. The endlessness of it all was the point Mrs. Gower dwelt upon. It was the idea that was most terrible to herself; therefore she might hope that it would have some terror for this strangely hard and impenitent child of hers.

'Think of what eternity means; try to get it into your mind that it means ages and ages—millions of years, then millions again; an' at the end of all that it'll be as if it was only just beginnin'.'

Dorigen's face was paler and tenser, her eyes were darker and brighter; but Mrs. Gower saw only the tearlessness, only the firmly-closed and unrelenting lip.

Suddenly—perhaps stung as much by what she believed to be perverse opposition as by zeal—she took the child's small hand in hers, drew it down to the fire with a quick, powerful movement, and for one half second so held it that it touched the bars of the grate. The girl's cry

went through the mother's heart like a stroke of steel, but she was glad to hear the cry.

'There!' she said in triumphant agitation. 'There! if you can't bear your little finger to touch a fire like that, how will you bear if your whole body has to be tormented with fire for ever and ever?'

* * * * *

Dorigen's bedroom, a small grey, simple-looking room, was at the top of the house, and looked toward the harbour-bar.

It was not a moonlight night that night, nor was it starlight, yet still the darkness that the child waited for with such dread expectancy never came; there was only a long, pale twilight. Had it ever so happened before?

The blind had not been drawn—she had forgotten to do that in her agony; and now she was glad, as glad as she could be for anything. She must try with all the might she had never to be glad or happy for earthly things any more.

Her agony, or rather agonies, were over for this time. Her keen, swift imagination had spent itself in the vivid creation and realization of three of the four last things—Death, Judgment, Hell; of Heaven she might not dream.

The present result was chiefly an intense and complete physical exhaustion. The child lay in

her bed, pale, cold, and prostrate, as sick people lie in their extremity; her dark hair was all about the pillow, heavy, wet, lifeless; it was as if that had suffered too.

The day had been a marked day in her life, and now the night was marked also.

Worn out as she was, her brain was yet capable of question, of vague, sad speculation. Though the acute, overpowering sense of the actualness, the nearness, the inevitableness of eternal torture had impressed itself on her imagination until her faculties were no longer capable of feeling the first horror, she was yet alive to the mental pain of connected ideas. Not only

> 'The burden and the mystery
> Of all this unintelligible world,'

but the burden and the mystery of other worlds, less intelligible still, were pressing upon her consciousness, crushing the dawning ideas of fair significance that were struggling within her, waiting for the strength of the years; despoiling the germs of hope, of faith, of all things whatsoever that are of any value in the soul and life of child or man.

So she lay there, suffering, bewildered, unconsoled; yet as the pale grey night went on much of the perplexity died out, even as much of the

anguish had died. The experience of the previous morning returned upon the experience of the evening, and in the still solitude of the night the threads of the twain, warp and weft, were laid upon the loom for her life's weaving.

At last she closed her eyes, and folded her small hands upon the coverlet, appealing in her childish way to that unknown God whom she would fain propitiate, fain worship, even though it were ignorantly. Of all the tender love and longing which lay so deep in her heart she was as utterly unconscious as if it had not been there, so she could make no offering of that. She had nothing to offer. Her whole spiritual life was a series of broken resolutions, piercing to the memory, and most disheartening so far as the future was concerned.

She had nothing to offer, and she did not ask for much; but when her prayer—if such it could be called—was ended, it seemed to her already that she had, if not what she had asked, then something else in place of it. Her eyes unclosed to a surprise. The grey night was no longer grey. A soft amber glow was spreading upward from the sea; there was a single bird-note among the ivy, just beneath her window—a little glad, surprised note that answered closely to something that was awakening within herself. It was

morning, then! The sun was risen upon the earth! Ah! if she might not attain the mountain-top, then surely the angels would come, and take her by the hand, and set her in the way to some city of Zoar!

So, a day and a night, with such new knowledges and such new ignorances, laid in forms and colours on a child's white mind. Life was beginning for her as it begins for most of us, with sudden, secret growths that rise out of the common daily event, and so stamp the event for one lifetime at least. We learn ofttimes in pain which is but a shadow of the pain that comes with the inevitable unlearning.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ANCIENT MARINER.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

* * * * *

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold;
And ice mast-high came floating by,
As green as emerald.'

COLERIDGE.

A REAL ancient mariner, who had sailed strange seas, shot an albatross, and come back to his own country, bringing the ominous bird with him very badly stuffed, such was Than, or Nathaniel, Rountree, Dorigen's friend, godfather, and never-failing entertainer.

It was an entertainment to see his cottage, which was neither more nor less than a small museum of unclassified curiosities. It stood

high on the east side of the town; there was only another house or two between it and the stretch of green pasture-land known for centuries as Monk's Close.

The way to the cottage from the street led up through Salthouse Garth, a close yard with mean, unsavoury houses on either side, and steep worn steps that went up even beyond the rocky terrace where Than's house and garden stood. The light was clear and the atmosphere pure up there, and there was always a breeze, either from the blue moorland, which you could just discern, or from the sea. Dorigen used to stand by the gate, bonnet in hand, that the cool air might blow upon her forehead awhile; and old Than would shake his head, and say it was 'a parlous habit for a little weather-fended thing like that.'

One evening when she went up—it was a fair June evening—the old man was repainting his figure-heads; there were three of them in the tiny garden-plot. One of them was only a torso, nameless and sexless, and with no history save that suggested by the fact that Than had found it lying among the rough stones of the beach after a storm. Twice a year ever since, he had expressed his feelings toward it through the medium of white paint. Dorigen knew all about the two other effigies, and the ships to which

they had belonged. One was a lively-looking Galatea, with a wreath of carved-oak seaweed bound about her head, and white wooden arms placidly folded. It was evident that she had long ago forgotten both Acis and his rival. Lord Nelson stood opposite, bound with an iron band to the apple-tree. Than was painting the hero's salmon-tinted complexion with quite unprecedented depth and brilliancy of tone ; the contrast afforded by his heroic black hair and the whiteness of his scroll-embroidered vestment was striking. Old Than moved to a little distance, brush in hand, his head on one side, after the manner of artists in general, his every feature expressive of the delight and satisfaction he was taking in his handiwork. Suddenly, as he stood there, he heard the click of the gate behind him.

'Ah, there's my little Peace!' the old man exclaimed, putting his paint-brush back into the pot, and stepping with halting step along the gravel path to meet the small figure that was advancing. He was a tall old man, finely-built and fresh-looking. His kindly blue eye and sweet ready smile said all that needed to be said for his temper. You could not look at him and have a doubt about him. Wherever he went there was a certain rare and wholesome affectionateness in the atmosphere, a tender considerateness for others

that seemed to have been won out of the dire dangers he had met and braved. He had faced death—grappled with it, and he had not feared it. You felt instinctively that if there had ever been in him any pettiness or harshness, they had gone out of him in that strife.

'Bless her, then! Ah thowt we wern't goin' te see t' little white faäce na more,' he went on, mitigating the broad Doric of his youth somewhat by use of the curiosities of accent and inflection natural to a man who had sailed the seas with men of all countries. 'Come away in,' he added. 'Leenock's there. She'll be glad ta see thee. Come away, then.'

Miss Leenock Rountree, a little plump, yet prim old maid, was known to 'the quality' of Hild's Haven as an upholstress. It was understood distinctly that she worked only for 'the quality;' and it was also understood that she drew a very fine line as to where quality ended and the want of quality began. To say that you had had a bed hung or a sofa covered by Miss Rountree was to indicate pretty plainly your claim to be looked upon as a person of social consideration. She could express her decisions without giving actual offence. 'I am sorry,' she would say in doubtful cases—'I am very sorry, but my services are bespoke for months to come;'

and there was usually an element of truth in the reply.

On this particular evening she was not in her most amiable temper. She did not approve of her Cousin Than's fetish-worship. Paint was expensive, and when she was doing her best, as she always did, to keep expenses down—well, it was a little provoking to see money wasted. Delicacy prevented open speech on the matter. Than might bring the larger portion to the household purse, but Miss Rountree brought her smaller portion very scrupulously, and the task of making ends meet was altogether hers. Than knew this, and if he had not been a sailor, and therefore inevitably of an extravagant turn, he would have remembered it, and have brought his memory to bear practically upon his expenditure.

Having this small vexation on hand, it was easy for Miss Rountree to add a touch of resentment when she saw the child; but she looked up from the damask curtains to which she was stitching a Byzantine border with eyes that tried vainly to express disapproval.

'Well, miss,' she said with a comic little toss of her head, meant to convey the notion of high disdain. 'You *are* a stranger! We thought you'd forgot us long ago. We didn't expect to

see no more of you when we heard you'd gone to a grand school across the water.'

'Across the water' meant everything to the dwellers on the east side of the town. Perhaps Dorigen hardly comprehended all that it meant.

'I don't think it is a grand school,' she said quietly, taking off her bonnet and sitting down on the little stool that Than had placed beside his chair. Then she looked round for a moment at the plants in the window, at Judy, Miss Rountree's tortoise-shell cat, at the grey linnet that sat silently on his perch, at the stuffed auks on the mantel-shelf, and at the hard scaly-looking thing that Than had told her was bread-fruit from the Isle of Pines. She saw that these things were there, but she did not see them with the quick eye of some observant children; this was not hers until she had ceased to be a child, and then only by cultivation. She was familiar with these things—with the hideous albatross, the strange shells and corals, the palm-leaves, the beautiful sea ferns, the big star-fish from St. Kitts. All these were impressed upon her memory by repetition of the history attached to each; and she would have missed them with pain, but all the same there would have been a certain vagueness about her recognition of them in a strange place. Turning her head a little,

she glanced towards the calabash and the Japanese bowls, the compass, the harpoons of various designs, the closh, and the broken krenging-hook.* Nothing was changed; this she saw with satisfaction; still she met old Than's searching gaze with a sigh, and a look that might have indicated either weariness or disappointment. The old man was fain to know what it did mean.

'An' what does thee do at this fine new school, honey?' he asked in a tone of concern.

'Mostly sewing,' Dorigen replied, with an appreciable touch of disgust.

'Sewing!' exclaimed Miss Rountree. 'But you could sew before you went there. *I* took care of that, to say nothing of your mother. Don't you learn things out of books?'

'Only spellings, and I went on to the end of the book ever so long ago. And I've had to begin again at the beginning: a-c-h-e, ache, a pain; b-a-b-e, babe, an infant.'

Even old Than laughed a small derisive laugh over this.

'What class hev they put thee into, honey?' he asked.

* Kreng—a dead whale. The krenging-hook is used in preparing the kreng for the oil-copper. The closh is a pronged instrument, also used by the krengers.

'Into the third. Miss Hardwick said I was too small for the second.'

'It goes by size, then? Ah sudn't ha' thowt that, noo . . . . Does she punish thee ever—the mistress?'

'Yes, I was punished yesterday for rude language.'

'*For rude language!*' exclaimed Miss Rountree under her breath, as was natural, being so shocked. 'What *could* you have said?'

'I didn't know it was rude . . . . I'd seen it in a book—in Shakespeare.'

'Ah, I've not read much of Shakespeare,' said Miss Rountree, in a tone of self-congratulation. 'But I fancy there are some vulgar things in it . . . . What was it you said?'

'A girl vexed me, a big girl. She made me very angry, and I said I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a girl. And Miss Hardwick heard me, and put me in a dark closet.'

'Well, it was rather rude for a little girl, an' it wasn't ladylike,' here Miss Rountree spoke with authority. After musing a little while she added, 'An' I don't remember ever seeing that in Shakespeare.'

'Don't you?' asked the child in some surprise —it always seemed to her that grown-up people

must know everything. 'It's in *Julius Cæsar*. Brutus is talking to Cassius, scolding him for taking bribes, and he says:

> '"Remember March, the ides of March remember:
> Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
> What villain touched his body, that did stab,
> And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
> And sell the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash as may be graspèd thus?
> I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
> Than such a Roman."'

There was material for a picture in Than's cottage at that moment: the old man himself leaning back in his chair, his thumb in his waistcoat-pocket, every feature of his face expressive of unbounded admiration; Miss Rountree on the other side, her needle suspended in mid air by the over-mastering force of surprise; the child between them, standing with her head thrown back, her face flushed with excitement, her wide blue eyes dilated and disdainful. The scorn and contempt of accent, attitude, and gesture, with which she uttered the last words had the effect of a revelation upon her auditors. Was this little Peace?

The next moment, not heeding, hardly hearing, the exclamations of praise and wonder, she sank into her seat, pale, shrinking from the after-feeling of self-betrayal, and half expecting the reproof that such a moment of forgetfulness would have drawn down upon her at home. This lasted only a few seconds. She sat silent and stirless awhile, then she drew her chair nearer to old Than, put her small hand into his, and laid her head confidingly upon his knee. Quite suddenly she raised it again—

'That's your lame knee!' she said with alarmed compassion. 'Did I hurt it?'

'Hurt it! Little Peace hurt anything! Bless thy little heart, no . . . . There, put thy head down again, an' keep still a bit.'

She obeyed, but presently she said, speaking only half aloud, 'I don't think I ever like being still now.'

She spoke in the weary tone she had used before, and old Than did not fail to perceive it. Something ailed the child, something that he felt was not on the surface, nor likely to be. She was like a grown-up person with a trouble that must be kept always out of sight.

Miss Rountree had also noticed the strange fitful mood of the little one, but she was much too wise a person to seem to notice it. She had

forgotten her resentment, but she had not forgotten to be mildly sententious, this she seldom forgot. In point of fact she was rather proud of her sententiousness, imagining it to be a kind of echo of the superior conversation to which she was privileged to listen on occasion.

'Ah,' she said, 'that's always the way with little people. They get tired of sitting still, because they've nothing else to tire them. Wait till you've battled with the storms of life as I've done, and as your godfather's done. *He* doesn't get tired of sitting still.'

'Nut of'n, Lennock, nut of'n,' the ancient mariner replied. 'When a man's sailed the saut water for eight-an'-forty year he's fain of a bit o' rest.'

'It was when you first went to sea that your knee was lamed, wasn't it?' asked Dorigen, who had always a pitying consciousness of this same lameness.

'Nut just at first, honey. Ah went prentice i' the *Narwhal* when Ah was nobbut twelve, an' Ah'd been goin' on o' five year in her when she was lost. Ah was in her that last voyage, an' it was that very voyage 'at Ah broke my leg. Ah was reeght sarved. 'Twas a fool's trick.'

'What was a fool's trick?'

'Why, jumpin' on te t' back of a fast whale.

Did thee never hear me tell on it? . . . It'll be three-an'-forty year sen come July. We'd left Hild's Haven some time on at t' end o' March, an' put into Lerwick for another hand or two at t' beginning o' April, an' pushed wer way inta t' drift ice off o' Spitzbergen on t' first o' May. That's what them Eskimoses call t' time o' water-drops, a thaw thee knows. But 'twas a late spring that year, an' a cold un. Sometimes t' ice-fogs came down upon us that thick 'at we couldn't see across t' deck, an' sometimes it snew; an' then we'd a gale o' wind 'at rolled the ship over till t' boäts 'at was hung over the rough-tree rail fairly touched the water. It was i' that very gale o' wind 'at Ah catched them auks up there on t' chimna-piece. Great flocks on 'em came flyin' by t' ship for hours, goin' i' t' direction o' t' land, an' keepin' quite close down by t' sea an' t' ice. Ah reckon t' wind was over-strong for 'em higher up. But t' cur'ous part on 't was t' way they kept comin' foul o' t' hawser' —that was the rope thee knows 'at kept t' ship fast te t' ice-floe. An' varry near ivery bird 'at struck that hawser fell doon dead, as though it had been shot. Ah watched hundreds on 'em drop inta t' sea; an' then we fastened a bucket on te t' end of a long pole an' fished 'em out, an' a right good supper we had, Ah can tell thee.'

'You eat them?' asked the child, mingling a touch of disapprobation with her surprise.

'Eät 'em! Ay, an' glad anuff te get 'em after weeks o' saut beef.'

'It was after that that you broke your leg?'

'Ah, honey. . . . Where was I? Ah's nut such a good hand at tellin' a story as Ah used to be. One's head's full o' things, and one goes ower far round te get te t' middle. But Ah's comin' to it. It were along o' that gale, an' other things, 'at we'd such a bad year. Whales was scarce, an' t' ice kept despert close, an' we'd never a chance till iver sa far on i' t' season. An' then one daäy, all of a sudden, we dropped on a fine cow an' made a couple o' harpoons fast in her wiv hardly a bit o' bother. T' wind was blowin' a stiffish breeze, an' we made t' fish fast te t' lee side o' t' ship; an' then we went aboard again, all hands on us, te get a dram apiece, an' something te eät afore we started te flense* her. We were i' all that better sperrits acause we'd been sa doon afore; an' ivery boy and man on us was te hev so much apiece extra for ivery ton o' oil we browt inta Hild's Haven, an' we reckoned we'd a good twenty ton hangin' by the fin that day. Bein' sa set up we didn't hurry ower t' mess; but we went on deck at last, an' our

* Flensing—the process of stripping the whale.

specksioneer* looked mighty important, Ah can tell thee. It were all along o' him bein' sa smart 'at we'd getten t' fish. But all of a sudden Ah seed him runnin' across by t' starn, quite flayed like; an' lookin' oot o' this side, then o' that, as if he'd lost summat. Enoo he turns up his hands iv a sort o' despair—*there was no whale.* . . . The ship had drifted—drifted heavy—an' pressed upon t' fish, an' t' rope had broke, an' away she'd gone to the bottom. . . . It *was* a blank time that aboard the *Narwhal!*'

'But weren't there beautiful things to see?' asked the little one, her imagination craving other food than the loss of tons of oil.

'Beautiful things, honey! Ay, things 'at Ah would go te Greenland an' back te see ower again. Eh, bairn, but words couldn't tell thee o' them straänge skies an' seas, an' splendid colours, an' mysterious leets an' darknesses, all changin' an' movin' like magic! There's things 'at's sa grand an' yet sa awsome 'at mony a strong man shivers wi' fear, when there's naught to be feared on. Ah don't believe 'at there's ony such sight i' the world as them ice mountains o' Greenland, wi' their sharp white spires all glitterin' up inta t' dark sky. An' as for icebergs, why I've seen one myself eleven miles long, all broken an'

* Chief harpooner.

glitterin' wi' blue an' green like bits o' fallen stars. There was once Ah was watchin' one—it were a cur'ous shape at the top, all pinnacles an' arches an' towers, just like some o' them big foreign churches—an' while Ah was leukin' at it, it began to bend slowly ower in a sort o' graceful waäy, just like something human, an' then doon it came, faster an' faster, an' doon, an' doon, an' doon, until it crashed reet inta t' sea wiv a great crash like loud thunder. 'Twas awful, honey. T' sea boiled, an' roared an' hissed as if a thousand cannon balls had been fired inta the middle on't.'

This was too impressive for comment. Dorigen's face was intent; and the old man's memory stirred to its deepest recesses.

'Ay, an' there was straänge things i' the heavens above, as well as i' the sea beneath,' the ancient mariner went on. 'Great arches an' circles i' the sky, white an' rose-red an' flame-coloured, wi' stars shining behind 'em. Once I remember our captain comin' doon fra the crow's-nest—that's a kind o' watch-box up at the top-gallant masthead; it were a foggy daäy, an' he told me 'at he'd seen the splendidest fog-bow 'at iver he'd seen iv his life. It were o' all colours—far bonnier nor a rainbow, an' it seemed te go doon under his feet, by t' side o' t' ship. Up above t' fog t' sun were shining as bright as bright; an' there, right i' t'

middle o' t' fog-bow, there was our captain's shadow standin' up quite dark again' all them coloured rays.'

'Do sailors ever take their wives to Greenland?' asked the child, with an apparent irrelevancy.

'Noä, honey; I never heard o' ony man takin' his wife but one, an' he didn't bring her back. . . . But Ah's forgettin' again about the *Narwhal*. That *was* a blank time, an' it lasted a good bit an' all. Every man aboard had made up his mind 'at we should hev a clean ship te bring home. We were doon-hearted, but we little dreamt o' the end o' the tale, or mebbe we'd been more doon-hearted still. But that comes after. T' season was aboot ower'd, when one mornin' we heard a great shoutin' an' stampin' owerhead, an' guessin' 'at there was a fall,* we rushed on deck just as we were; some on us 'at had been i' wer births had naught on but wer shirts an' drawers. T' cold were awful; but we'd no time te feel it. We were on t' edge of a great sheet o' thin ice, an' there, right i' the middle, was a monster of a whale, blowin' away as hard as he could blow. Away we went, as close as we could

* According to Scoresby, from the Dutch *val*, implying 'to jump or drop,' and considered expressive of the movements of the sailors when manning the boats after a whale has been sighted.

get, wi' the boat; then we carried the harpoon, wi' the line ready fastened te 't, right across t' ice. T' fish was still there, an' our specksioneer struck sharp; but Ah seed for myself he hadn't struck far anuff forrad. The creatur' dived, away went t' line, an' another line, an' another, till there was no less than ten lines oot wi' that fish—a matter o' two thousand yards o' rope. Once we saw it crack some ice a foot thick wiv its crown, an' come up for a minute te breathe, an' then away it went again. At last it got into a kind o' basin, an' floated about there free o' ice, an' when we got a bit closer up we saw 'at t' harpoon was swingin' an' swayin' about, just ready to drop oot ony minute. Ah niver spoke a word, but went straight up te t' edge o' t' ice, pulled oot my knife, jumped on te t' brute's back, cut oot that harpoon, an' struck it in again proper, afore ony on 'em knew what Ah were meanin' te do. T' creatur' were movin' off again sharp, an' just as Ah was jumpin' back Ah got a knock wiv its tail 'at sent me spinning across t' ice like as if Ah'd been sent oot of a cannon's mouth. Ah thought Ah was smashed all te pieces—so Ah was; but we'd got thirty ton o' oil, an' Ah niver 'plained. My leg were t' worst mashed. Some on 'em said 'at oor doctor weren't none o' t' cleverest wi' broken bones; but Ah reckon he

did his best, an' he was a kind-hearted man. They were all on 'em kind anuff; but Ah never forgot the day when our ship's carpenter brought me a pair o' wooden crutches—ay, honey, crutches! T' sight o' them were a worse blow nor t' blow fra t' whale's tail. T' noise they made knap, knappin' up an' doon t' deck o' that ship rings i' my ears yet; it 'll ring i' my ears till my dyin' daäy.'

CHAPTER VII.

A PRICELESS GIFT, AND UNFORGOT.

'Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp—
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and unfilmed eyes
Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance
Lapping Sordello?'

ROBERT BROWNING: *Sordello.*

'AY, that sound were worse nor t' blow fra t' whale,' murmured the old man, as if to himself. Dorigen sat silent, gently stroking his lame knee. Judy was purring in the shadow of Miss Rountree's damask curtain.

Than's voice had changed. The fire had died out of the expression in his eyes. He was living again the last of the nights and days he had lived on board the *Narwhal*.

'We hadn't nut te saäy a bad passage home,'

he went on. 'We'd put into Shetland aboot one o'clock o' Sunday mornin', Ah recollect—that were t' twenty-seventh o' August; an' we sailed again atween seven an' eight that same night. We'd despert windy weather after that; shy, changeable sort o' winds 'at made us keep in shore for t' full tide; an' then ratch off te carry the tide outside for two an' a half hours longer. It were along o' that 'at we were catched sa close in when t' gale sprang up all of a sudden fra t' north-east—that were o' Wednesday, t' seventh o' September; an' we'd reckoned o' reachin' Hild's Haven for certain that same night. I'll never forget oor mate's words. It was aboot fowr o'clock i' t' afternoon, just when t' gale was beginnin' te rise, an' t' sea te make heavy. T' captain had sent t' royal yards doon; t' mate was blusterin' aboot despert; an' I heard him saäy wi' my oän ears: "Hell or Hild's Haven afore midnight, my lads!" An' he never reached Hild's Haven.

'Ah was a young man then, an' Ah's an aud man noo; but Ah'll remember that night when all else is forgot. An' mebbe in days to come, thee'll remember hearin' me tell on it, honey. There isn't another man livin' noo te tell the tale o' the wreck o' the *Narwhal*. As Ah said afore,' the old man continued, 'it was blowin' a heavy

gale. Aboot eight o'clock we took in two reefs i' the fore an' main topsails, an' one i' the mizzen topsail; an' while we were haulin' away at t' mainsail t' main topsail split inta ribbins. We were all hands on deck then—twenty-seven on us. T' wind was increasin' every minnit, an' so was t' sea; they were ragin' an' roarin' tegether till we could neither hear nothin' nor see nothin'. An' there Ah was, hoppin' aboot wi' my one crutch, haudin' on as best Ah could, an' drenched te the skin—as every man aboard was. T' water came flyin' up i' masses over the bows as if the *Narwhal* had been a cockboat. At last we couldn't keep it fra one another na longer—the ship was unmanageable. We'd stowed the topsail; the vessel were warrin' down afore wind an' sea inta broken water, an' we knew it was over'd then. At eleven o'clock—dead low tide—we struck upon Northscaur rocks, an' beat aboot among 'em till a hole was knocked right through the bottom o' the ship. One poor fellow went mad wiv his agony an' terror, an' jumped overboard. That was aboot midnight; an' soon after t' captain ordered t' main an' mizzen masts te be cut away, te prevent t' vessel fra turnin' over wiv her beam toward the sea; an' then, after the masts were cut away, we fired guns, an' flashed a blue light; an' we tried hard te hoist a lantern

on t' top o' the cabin funnel, but t' sea washed it doon as fast as we put it up. Efter tossin' aboot among them rocks a bit longer t' vessel slewed round wiv her stern te the shore. We'd no idee then what part o' the shore we were on; but we filled the cabin window wi' lights, an' then we went below, all hands on us, an' prayed; an' then we fastened t' middle deck doon, te prevent t' oil casks fra blowin' t' ship up. But it weren't no use; t' flood-tide began te make, the decks blew up, an' the ship was up tiv her deck-beams i' water i' no time. Ah was gettin' aboot baffoonded, nut bein', so te speak, an able-bodied man; an' some on 'em put me on te t' larboard quarter, abreast the companion, an' left me there when they went below again te pray a bit. When they came on deck they had te get as far aft as they could, t' tide was makin' that fast, an' t' sea was that awful 'at it was forcin' the casks oot o' the hatchways, an' sendin' 'em flyin' aboot among t' men i' all directions. We thought every moment somebody 'ud be killed, but the crew clung te one another, an' held on oot i' the way as best they could. Eh, but that were a fearsome time, honey!

'Aboot four o'clock i' the mornin' the ship beat doon upon her starboard side till it was driven in—t' sea had a free course then—an'

twisted her timbers in all directions. Most o' her crew got inta the quarter-boat as fast as they could; but they were i' danger fra the mainmast, an' me an' two others clung on te the quarter athwart the ship's davit; an' while we were hangin' there we thought we saw a boat or something comin', an' we shouted an' hollo'd, but naught answered. A bit efter that the vessel began te part amidships, an' it was just then 'at Ah saw t' captain for t' last time—ay, Ah niver clapped eyes on him efter Ah saw him stannin' aft without his hat, an' haudin' on by t' rail. Just then the foremast an' bow fell on the starboard side, an' her quarter toward port wi' t' crew upon it; an' we were all plunged inta that ragin', boilin' sea together. Never a soul but three on us reached the shore alive: never a soul but three out o' seven-an'-twenty. Our captain was within a few yards o' the land when a log o' timber struck him dead i' the water. One o' the men was washed ashore clingin' to part o' the stunsail boom; another on a bit o' spar; an' as for me, Ah was washed up haudin' on by that same davit 'at Ah'd clung to fra the first. Eh, but it were straänge te think o' me bein' saved—me 'at was sa lame, an' sa weak, an' sa wicked! An' t' cur'ousest part on it all was my crutch—that same crutch 'at stands aside my bedhead te

this daäy—it washed up all t' way alongside o' me, close te the davit. It was like a livin' thing 'at knew. . . . Ay, Ah've written it doon on paper 'at that crutch is to be buried wi' me—laid on my coffin, an' happed up wi' me i' my graäve.'

The old man did not feel the shiver that ran through the listener at his feet. He only felt that she crept closer to him and stroked his knee with a tenderer touch than before.

'Ay, but the town were in a despert commotion,' continued Than. 'They tell'd me 'at the widows an' fatherless bairns heard tell o' the wreck i' the streets, an' went weepin' an' wailin' home; an' their friends an' neighbours went weepin' an' wailin' wi' them. . . . Ah think folks doesn't do i' that way nowadays; they take it quieter.'

'Did you ever go in a whaling-ship any more?' asked Dorigen after a time of silence.

'Any more, honey! Ay, the very next spring 'at came. But a vast o' springs came an' went afore Ah got over that last voyage i' the *Narwhal*. Nay, I heven't got over it yet, nor never shall i' this world.'

'You mean being lame? That was why you were never a specksioneer, wasn't it?'

'Ay, honey: Ah were scarcely fit. But I've been out wi' the boats oft enough, an' sent mony

a good harpoon home. That one 'at hangs there by the clock has seen a few strange things, if it could tell on 'em.'

'Has it? How did you get it back? Did you always have a string to it when you threw it into the whale?'

'A *string*, honey!' laughed the old man. 'Why, the foreganger was a two-and-a-half-inch hawser! I'd like thee to see a harpoon spanned in. . . . See,' he went on, opening a cupboard-door beside him, and taking out a three-pronged steel fork, 'supposin' this were the harpoon, an' supposin' this' (taking a ball of worsted from Miss Rountree's basket) 'were the foreganger, we spanned 'em tegether i' this way, an' fastened the stock in at the same time, an' then it were ready for the line. We used te take two on 'em in each boat, and mebbe half-a-dozen lances. If t' whale kept still, we used to pull down upon it an' send t' harpoon into its back without a bit o' bother; but if t' creatur' made for divin', as it oftener did, t' specksioneer would ha' te keep his eye open for a chance of a throw. Mebbe when we were ten yards off, or more, he'd take his harpoon, raise it i' this way, and let go. . . .'

Ah! what had happened? What had the old man done in his excitement? Judy was shrieking and flying out at the door, Miss Rountree

shrieking and flying after her. Alas that old Than should have retained so much of his ancient skill! His last harpoon had gone 'home' somewhere near the cat's shoulder. Judy had darted, hissing and whining, up the apple-tree; the ball of worsted was 'paying out' of itself on the inner side of the threshold.

'What hev I done?—what hev I done?' the old man was crying in his distress and bewilderment.

'Little Peace' was distressed too; but she did not know it. She ran out, snapping the worsted as she went, and at the same time glancing up into the apple-tree. She could not climb it; but she was up at the top of the high stone wall close by without knowing how she came there. Judy was not to be coaxed—not to be soothed at a distance. She sat on her bough snarling and moaning by turns; Miss Rountree, down below, was moaning and entreating; old Than was mindful only of the child, who was so little mindful for herself. She had managed to get into the heart of the big old tree somehow, and before she quite knew what she meant to do Judy was in her lap, the 'harpoon' had fallen ringing to the ground, and expressions of grateful relief had come upward.

'But tell me if my poor Judy is alive?' im-

plored Miss Rountree, distressed afresh by Judy's silence.

'I don't think she's any worse,' replied Judy's deliverer from among the leaves. And a moment later Judy answered for herself by coming down from the tree rather slowly, yet with all her usual lithe and graceful movements. It was wonderful, everybody said; for everybody came to know of the matter; and they tell the tale in Salthouse Garth to this day, how old Than Rountree harpooned his cousin's cat with a three-pronged fork and a ball of worsted.

'An' how about thyself, honey?' said the old man with concern. 'Thee'll ha' to be carefuller comin' down than thee was o' goin' up. . . . Eh, but she's a brave little woman!'

'No, I'm not—not a bit brave. I'm frightened all over.'

'Is thee, honey? Thee'll be better when thee get's down.'

There was a moment of silence—emphatic silence.

'I don't think I'm coming down any more,' said the child presently. 'It's *so* good up here.'

She was sitting on a bough high up in the apple-tree. Far away beyond the houses the sun had set, and a rose-pink afterglow was

spreading over the sea, over the old town, over the masts of the ships in the harbour. 'Little Peace's' face was rose-pink too, her eyes were bright, and her voice was glad and free as a bird's. What had come to her? old Than wondered. Then his expression grew a shade sadder, as if he understood in a dim way what it was to the child to be up there—to feel the sense of newness, of adventure, of escape. Miss Rountree had gone indoors with Judy; the old man stayed his entreaties for awhile.

'Does thee like being up there?' he asked by-and-by sympathetically.

'Yes; it *is* beautiful,' said 'Little Peace.' There was much more behind, but she could not say it—she could hardly think it in any definite way. Her one idea was a wish to stay always up there, away from things noisy and ugly, from people who spoke harsh words, and used harsh manners, and who did not understand. 'Yes; it would be beautiful to be always up here,' she said aloud.

'But thee mun be comin' down, honey,' said Than. 'It'll be gettin' dark.'

'It'll be beautifuller than ever when it's dark! I see a star now.'

'Thee doesn't want to vex me, my bairn?'

'No; are you going to be vexed? That would

be like—like somebody else. . . . Don't be vexed, Uncle Than.'

Something in this speech seemed to act upon old Than's memory. He disappeared into the house for a moment or two, and then came back again to the foot of the tree.

'There—see there!' he said, holding out his two hands, in each of which there was a tiny book. 'See there! I bought 'em at old Crannick's stall o' Saturday, an' I'll gie thee them both for thy very own, honey, if thee'll come down. . . . They're full o' poythry—see!'

The last word was hardly spoken when a small foot stepped lightly on to Lord Nelson's newly-painted head; a small figure came flying into Than's outspread arms.

'Let me see them—the books!' she said breathlessly

Two quaint, precious, memorable little books were these. One—old Than had given fourpence for it—was a tiny square volume, bound in frayed watered-silk of a dark claret colour, and entitled simply, 'Sacred Poems.' Her mother would let her keep that. The other, even outside of it, looked more worldly. The gay cloth cover of amber and green would be certain to arouse suspicion. It was a little larger than the watered-silk volume, it had cost more money, and it was

an ecstasy only to look inside it. The type, the margin, the paper, the border lines—these things were good; but the titles of the poems, the look of them on the page, and the names at the end of them were more than good.

'Did you mean it, Uncle Than? . . . They are to be my very own?' she asked with timid, tremulous credence.

'Ay, honey. Is thee pleased?'

There was no reply, save a little sob, as if the night wind were beginning to sigh through the branches of the tree. A minute later the old man was alone there, and his big brown hand was warm with the touch of passionate, grateful kisses.

* * * * *

The child was allowed to keep her treasures: that came to pass without much difficulty.

Her father, silently observant, as usual, was sitting by the fireside when she went in; her mother was knitting in the twilight. The time being peaceful, was naturally favourable too.

When the candle was lit Mrs. Gower took up the little brown silk book. The names of George Herbert, of Bishop Heber, of Dean Milman were not familiar to her, but they were not unknown. She read the Burial Anthem, wiped away a quiet tear or two, and then took up the other volume.

Her eye happening to fall upon a poem by Mrs. Hemans, she sought no farther for evidence of innocuousness.

'Pearls from the Poets' was the somewhat sentimental title of this newer volume, a title that told of the fashion of the day, and yet was not misleading. The pearls were small, but they were true pearls, and perfect, as Dorigen remembered, or rather perceived, many a long day afterward. A keen instinct had gone to the making of the selection. Hardly a name of real note was missing, though some were there who were even then ceasing to be of note, and some who were but just rising into it—who have risen since, never to set in obscurity again.

So—in this narrowest of narrow ways—Dorigen made acquaintance with the names of the men who were to be her masters, names that she was never to see or hear again without a quick stirring of the intellectual life-blood within her. The small books became part of her small life in a way that was wonderful to look back upon in after years. The very places where she had read them had a sunny sacredness in her memory always, being connected by such fine ties with her soul's conscious expansion, with the corresponding expansion of the orbit in which her soul moved. Though to all outward seeming she

remained a mere child, limited and constrained by all childish oversights and incapacities, warped out of reason by intangible terror, rapt beyond sense by intangible beauty, she was yet learning the things that make in the end for development. For such as she life has, from the beginning, a special way of emphasizing its truths and meanings.

Nothing came to her, no sound, or sight, or event, but had its hidden intention. Sometimes now she was allowed to go down to the sands when the tide was out, to walk for a while over the wide grey beach that stretches across the bay to the north of Hild's Haven. It is strewn here and there with wrack-fringed stones; crossed by the becks that run down from the moor; flanked by grass-grown cliffs of broken outline. In those days it was solitary and silent, save for the haunting sea-mew and the ceaseless musical stirring of wind and wave.

It is ever musical: and the music is for ever changing. You shall live within sound of it for a whole long lifetime, and it shall never sing you twice the same song; or soothe you twice with the same sense of the nearness of the Spirit that broods upon the face of the waters; or strike your whole soul through twice with the same imperious inspiration.

Later, the girl came somehow upon a few fragments of a translation of the 'Odyssey;' as was natural, they were only half-intelligible, but they were wholly and strikingly attractive. For a long time forward, if she wandered far from the pier at Hild's Haven, she was sure to find herself wandering with Ulysses, and sorrowing at least as much for Penelope as Ulysses himself would seem to have sorrowed. Far away over the reaches of sand and foam there was a cave in the rocks, russet, and green, and gold; the water dropped in crystal drops from the roof; the sea-flowers clung to the walls; the pools between the stones of the floor were full of floating fronds of crimson and emerald; and the clinging rose-red sea-anemone lay stirless among the wrack. But a very few strokes of imagination were needed to transform the place into Calypso's grotto.

'The cavern 'mid the tall green rocks,
Where dwelt the goddess with the lovely locks.
* * * * *
And she within sat spinning all the while,
And sang a low sweet song that made him hark and smile.'

Dorigen would listen; but she could never be quite sure that she heard the singing. Other voices she might hear, calling from the wind and from the wave, but they sang no song; and she knew not what it was that they seemed to

require. The silence that followed was full of heart-ache; full of a strong sense of pain, and need, and unfathomable yearning.

The sea and the shore were from that time no more lonely. Nausicaa came there with her maidens to wash the linen for the royal household. Æolus wandered there, binding all winds save Zephyr only; and the Palace of Circe was up among the trees in the Forest of Skerne Dun. Dorigen had no doubt whatever about Circe, because she could tie a 'sailor's knot' herself—old Than had taught her—and it was, of course, the same knot that Homer's enchantress had taught to Homer's hero.

Many a time, too, Proteus would come up from the sea, disguised usually as an ancient fisherman of Hild's Haven, and oft at twilight the sound of the swelling horns of the sea-gods came up out of the mist Old Than had suggested that these might be the fog-horns, blown by the seamen to prevent collision; but this was very unlikely.

Down on the sea-washed shore, or above on the wind-loved cliff-top, it was still the same. The voices that whispered among the rocks and caves called more imperatively from the vast aisles and arches of the ruined Abbey of St. Hild, from the height where Cædmon himself had

walked, and listened, and re-uttered what he had heard. True, she might not understand the call; she might only know that her soul was stirred by some longing to which she could give no name; but by-and-by, with wider knowledge came content that it should be so. With a reverent humility, with an unconscious faith, she kept silence even in her own soul, wondering what these things might mean, wondering if the future would unfold the meaning.

So the prelude was played out. The key-note had been struck, quaint melodies woven together, with here and there a moving cadence that time might prove to have been prophetic. Whether this might or might not be, it was a haunting piece of music, this overture to a human life.

CHAPTER VIII.

'HATH NOT A JEW EYES?'

'But the wise gods say, No, we have better things for thee. By humiliations, by defeats, by loss of sympathy, by gulfs of disparity, learn a wider truth and humanity than that of a fine gentleman . . . Take the shame, the poverty, and the penal solitude that belong to truth-speaking.'

OLD Josef Jacobi, the Jew jet-buyer, was no Shylock. He had a wily Israelitish face, he spoke indifferent English with a fluent tongue, and he drove a close bargain. But since Mrs. Gower conceded that there were worse folks than old Josef, it may be inferred that he was no fair representative of the typical Jew of literature.

One August day—it was the Feast of St. Hild—Than Rountree had gone down to the house by Wiggoner's Wharf to see what had become of 'Little Peace.' She was Little Peace no longer now, but a tall, straight girl of twelve; pale,

large-eyed, simple and quiet of manner, and with a character of her own even then—a character that had won respect even where it was least understood.

Old Than could not realize the fact that the girl was passing rapidly from childhood to womanhood. He did not wish to realize it; this she saw, and often yielded to his desires for very kindness. To-day she yielded; she would go with him to the fair in the Abbey Plain, because she had gone with him always, and not because the wax-work show or the painted mountebanks had any attraction for her. Nay, she dreaded the clamour; she had dreaded it for years past. Yet she would go since Than wished it so keenly.

The nearest way was up through Ikin's Yard, and across Monk's Close. John Gower's jet-shop was quite near to the Close. The windows were all wide open; the wheels were whirling and whirring swiftly. Some of the boys were singing 'Sweet Dublin Bay.'

Dorigen could not pass without looking in. There was a little place boarded off near the door, which her father used as an office; and beyond it, another little place where two women sat stringing necklaces and bracelets. It was all dusty with red rougy dust; it was all noisy; it

was all untidy; somehow it looked even more untidy than usual to-day.

Her father was there; and Josef Jacobi was there; the old man had apparently just entered full of some news, some event that was surely important to him! Was it important to John Gower also? Dorigen saw at once the unusual look on her father's face; the pain, the tension, the determination.

'Did I not tell you, then? Did I not warn you?' old Josef was asking excitedly. 'Did I not sit down in the coffee-room where all the noise was and write this letter to you: "*Do not trust this man, this Aaron Gilderoy, any more*"? Yet you will trust him, you will let him have goods—a thousand pounds in goods, they tell me; and you will lend him moneys—a thousand pounds, they tell me again. And now he is one bankrupt. He says, "Take shillings for your pounds," and you take them; yes, you take them.'

'No, I don't take the shillings,' said John, holding out his hand to his daughter. He saw that she had heard, and that she understood. He drew her nearer to him with a touch and a pressure of the hand that reassured her.

'So! It is Miss Gower, then!' said the old Hebrew, with a little start of surprise, and a

polite bow. 'I did not hear her come. We were talking of business; it is not agreeable for ladies—no. We will talk of it no more.'

'There is no need to change the subject on her account,' said John Gower. 'She will know all about it sooner or later.'

'So! But that is a pity; yes, it is a pity. Yet, doubtless, if you do not tell her, others will. For it is everywhere, this that we were saying; all the trade talks of it. They know so well this Mr. Gilderoy; he was so bad, so untrue. And the men are sorry; but they blame you—yes, they blame you. You are so wrong, so very wrong; and you will never see. I do try to make you see these twenty years.'

The wheels in the outer shop went flying faster and faster; the heavy grindstones shook the walls; the voices sang hoarsely, out of tune—

> 'And the ship went down with her gallant crew,
> As we lay in sweet Dublin Bay.'

Long afterward it all came back again; the hot sunshine burning through the dusty windows in the roof, the smell of oil and rouge, the deafening noise, the half-prophetic song, the first strange touch of sorrow. She would not have known it for sorrow, save for the look on her

father's face and the strained clasping of his hands.

She remembered old Than presently. He had gone out from the doorway, having heard much more than he wished to hear. He was sitting on some little grass-grown steps in the steep hillside, above the jet-shop, leaning his head on his hand, trying in his consternation to make out what the ill-news would mean for his 'Little Peace.'

'I think I mustn't go to-day,' Dorigen said, putting her two hands into his, as if entreating him not to be disappointed.

'No, honey, no,' said the old man tenderly. 'I'll go by mysel', an' get thee a fairin'. Ah mun forced to get thee a little fairin'.

'But only a very little one,' pleaded Dorigen, remembering Miss Rountree's accusations of extravagance. What was extravagance? she wondered. Why did people always seem to do wrong and get blamed when they had any money?—to get more blamed still if they hadn't any? She could not understand. Did anybody understand?

When Dorigen went back, the rough deal tables were all covered with finished ornaments of jet; black, glittering things that looked all the blacker and brighter for the soft blue-white paper in which they lay. Old Jacobi was examining them, expressing qualified admiration of the

goods, expressing his usual unqualified astonishment at the price of them.

'These bracelets with the carving, the leafs of poppy, of clover, of thistle—they are good; yes, they are good; but they are too costly—they are very much too costly. Why will you make such work as this alone? One cannot sell it—no, one cannot sell it anywhere. The people will not give so much moneys. In all my trade I have only two men who will give so much moneys.'

John Gower was only half-listening. He had heard it all before, and he had other things to listen to just now. Dorigen kept sympathetic silence. The old man went on:

'Why will you not do as the others do? There is Medwin, now; he has sixty hands, while you have only seven. But he will do any work that I wish, that anyone wishes. I tell him my price, and he makes the goods for me. . . . There! See! That is a sample; a bracelet he will make for me. I have ordered thirty gross to-day. How much do I pay him then, think you?'

John Gower took the bracelet, and turned it in his hand. He had seen many such; crude and lifeless in design, coarse and hasty in workmanship; the material common, full of spar and other flaws. Even in that moment he felt pride

in the thought that no such piece of meretricious meanness had ever left his hands.

Here was the secret of all his early struggles—a certain originality the man had; a certain integrity, a certain artistic enjoyment in his own handiwork; and these things, as was natural, cost him dear.

'You cannot get feeling by paying for it,' writes a thinker of our own day. 'Money will not buy life.'

True to the letter. But how many offer what of life they have to offer, and find that there is none to buy! You shall stand with your life and your truth of feeling in the market-place, and watch the buyers give their money gladly for lies and shams and lifeless mechanisms.

John Gower was not beset by any misgivings as to his art—if such it could be called. It had never occurred to him that it was in itself ignoble, in its end narrow, in its use frivolous, and, therefore, he could put his life into it without hesitation. This he did; not carelessly, but with his heart and whole strength in the certain strokes of his chisel, in the skilful and intelligent movement of his knife.

Once he had carved in relief a small head of Dante. He had caught the sad, far-seeing expression; the stamp of the power of endurance,

the worn ascetic line, and it had pleased him well. Old Josef, happening to come in, had given him a commission on the spot for half-a-gross of brooches, each to have a head of Dante in the centre. . . . John Gower smiled. 'I couldn't cut another if you would give me a hundred pounds,' he said.

No, he could do nothing but the thing he was moved to do; and this no one about him but his daughter could understand. Buyers said he was crotchety and uncertain, as well as exorbitant in his prices. For years past old Josef and one other man had taken all that John Gower produced. It was this other man who had failed.

'And what will you do now?' Jacobi asked, after he had bought all that he cared to buy to-day. 'I know what it is that you will do. You will go on all the same. I shall buy a little; no one else will buy at all; and you will go down, down. Then I shall die; and you will come quite to the bottom. So! That is it, Miss Gower. I do tell your father for his good, but he does not hear—these twenty years he does not hear what I say.

Presently Josef Jacobi went away; and Dorigen began silently to fold the paper parcels, silently to put them away into boxes and drawers, making the small service seem like an

act of sympathetic ministration. This done, she closed the door, and sat down quietly beside her father, feeling instinctively that noise and obtrusiveness would jar upon the sorrowing man as upon the sick.

Yet let no one misunderstand him. He was bearing his sorrow with that true bravery which often precludes outward show of bravery. He knew of old that bearing is not ignoring, nor yet forgetting. Already his thought was as much of the future as of the present or the past; and no touch of resentment toward any man or fate lent a sting to his self-consolations.

Among Professor Ruskin's words are these:

'And in order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art and joy of humble life—this at present of all arts or sciences being the one most needing study. Humble life, that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance; not excluding the idea of foresight, but wholly of fore-sorrow; and taking no troublous thoughts for coming days; so also, not excluding the idea of providence, or provision; but wholly of accumulation—the life of domestic affection, and domestic peace; full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind pleasure; therefore chiefly to the loveliness of the natural world.'

Had John Gower ever come across these words he would have felt on the instant that his highest earthly ideals were here comprehended and expressed.

'Proposing to itself no future exaltation!'

This was the very core of his manhood. To work his day's work while it was yet day; to rest in content, in freedom from anxiety when the evening came: this was the pure limit of his desire.

The fulfilment of this natural wish was suddenly imperilled, and other dangers loomed ahead. 'Only a sweet continuance,' writes the Master. John Gower knew that continuance was possible, and probable; but some at least of the sweetness must turn to bitter in his mouth.

'Shall we be very poor, father?' the girl asked at last.

John Gower smiled, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

'What do you know about poverty?' he asked. 'All that Wordsworth can teach you, I suppose?'

Dorigen smiled in return. She had been arranging family life in one room, with a brick floor, a deal table—unpainted, and without a cover—and one chair, that stood with uncertain leaning toward the fireside corner. The picture had no terror; there was even an element of poetry in it; and a probable chance of heroic days.

'It will make no very important difference to you at present, little woman,' John Gower went on. 'The change will be *here*. I shall have to pay the men off, and manage to do with the two

apprentices. Having less capital, I can do less business—that is, until I get turned round again. *There* will be the question—whether I can get turned round or no. It's happened at a bad time, this loss.'

'But you don't mind it very much, father, do you? It's only money.'

Again the patient lines about John Gower's mouth relaxed into a smile.

'It's only money, little girl. There are worse things than the loss of money, I am aware. And I am not afraid of poverty; no man ever is who has known want. If I am afraid at all, it is not for my own future.' Then he paused a moment, adding with the air of a man making a sad, forced confession. 'The money that I lent was money that I had put away for you.'

'For me! Then please don't care for it any more, father. Do you think I shall not be able to work for myself? Wait and see.' Then she kissed the hand that she held in hers, and added, 'I will work for you too, when I am older.'

These were childish words, and betrayed, perhaps, childish thoughts, but they were not powerless for comfort and soothing. The silent, bent head of a lily beside you may breathe a sympathy from its chalice that shall have power to strengthen and to calm.

'What particular work do you think of doing?' John Gower asked, with a touch of kindly satire in his tone that the girl felt to be very precious at that moment.

She made no instant answer, but a sudden and striking change passed over her face; the thoughtful blue-black eyes were filled with a deeper thoughtfulness; the new expression betrayed an old perplexity.

'That is what I do not know: and it troubles me,' she said calmly, adding with a certain reverence, 'But I know that I shall know. I am waiting.'

Something in her face prevented the reply that rose to her father's lips, and, half unconsciously, he took up his work again—the cutting of a briar-leaf from a spray that he had placed in water before him. But presently, and sadly, he put his knife down—the creative power within him was deadened for that day.

And all the while the wheels in the outer shop were whirring, the men and boys still singing:

> 'And the ship went down with her gallant crew,
> As we lay in sweet Dublin Bay.'

Dorigen, going homeward, heard them till she reached the street. Long after that they went on singing, swiftly turning the wheels, and thoughtlessly singing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WAY OF LIFE AT HILD'S HAVEN.

'Still doth he boast in his heart no evil to find hereafter,
While that the gods send health, and brace his knees in the battle;
But when the blessed gods bind fast their burden upon him,
Then doth he bitterly bow to the yoke of a hard compulsion.'

WORSLEY'S *Odyssey*.

HILD'S HAVEN still went on its quaint way, but nobody knew that it was quaint in those days. The people did not talk about it, nor tell you in loudly cheerful tones that they considered it a duty to keep up 'the good old customs.' Keep them up! The very phrase prepares you for hollowness, and effort, and final failure. No; things had a momentum of their own, and there would have been difficulty in attempting to stop their ancient movement. Can any put his finger on the date when change began slowly, but surely, to make itself apparent?

There was no monotony. A year was like a picture with all its fair colours in their proper places, the high lights sparkling, the shadows deep and broad. No year passed in Hild's Haven but the storm-clouds sweeping up from the sea brought dark shadows upon the land—shadows that no after sunlight might break through or dispel.

Like other ills, it was not all ill. The sense of dread, of fateful and stressful event that entered into the hearts of the people, bound them together with strong silent ties of sympathy even where there was no other tie. If you met in the street the widow of the man who had been drowned by the upsetting of the lifeboat, you had quite other emotions than if you met the widow of one who had died in his bed with unheroic circumstance; and the fatherless children by her side saw something in your face that no other children saw there. No dweller in Hild's Haven could wholly disconnect himself from the wild, wide influence of the ever-imminent sea. It was wild, yet it was very sweet—sweet as the influence of the seven daughters of Pleione, for whose appearance the sailors of ancient Greece would seem to have had leisure to watch and to wait. The Hild's Haven sailor would wait too; but not for the sorrowing

Merope, nor for her happier sisters, but for the passing of some day marked in his calendar as 'unlucky' for evermore.

Chiefest among days of dark omen was Innocents' Day, better known among those who dreaded its influence as 'Childermas.' A voyage begun on Childermas Day could only end in disaster; and this probability of calamitous event impressed itself on well-nigh every hour, and wrought in the shaping of the smallest circumstance. You might not even turn a loaf of bread downward as it left your hand, but so certainly a ship went down somewhere in the wild world of waters. In these matters, as in others, there was no sharp dividing-line between the seafaring population of the place and those who worked for their bread on the sea's very margin. Life everywhere was full of ordinance and interdiction, and the blameless service of the Fates required a long and careful education.

Dorigen's training in this direction was not neglected. Mrs. Gower was unsurpassed in the quick recognition of ominous coincidence, and the close connection of the things that were seen with the things that were unseen was inferred from evidence the most remote.

When John Gower carefully broke the news of the loss of money to his wife, she received it

with all the composure he had expected. The quiet, sudden, complete sinking of heart was precisely what he had looked for, precisely what he had most dreaded. She sat quite silently for a time.

The clock was ticking slowly, heavily; the silver-eyed man in the brazen moon at the top of the dial-plate looked down unsympathetically.

'Mebbe I ought to be glad it's no worse,' Mrs. Gower said presently, but in tones more consonant with the extreme depth of her despondency than with any sense of relief. 'I knew something would happen afore the year was out. You remember what I said when I'd refused to let Nan Skaife sing when she came wi' the Vessel Cups?* She was the first to come, an' I ought to ha' let her sing; but I couldn't, knowin' the sort o' woman she was. An' I'll never forget her word. "You'll repent afore next Kessenmas, missis," she said. An' now it seems there's anuff for repentance. All the year it's been on my heart like a weight, that trouble would come. An' I don't feel yet as if I'd touched the bottom of it. It's borne in upon me strongly 'at there's more behind.'

As the weeks grew into months Mrs. Gower's

* Wassail Cups.

assurance on this head gathered strength. There was no improvement in the trade of Hild's Haven; and by-and-by a severe winter set in. The snow came sweeping and whirling from the north, drifting up the harbour in horizontal clouds; the quaint, irregular outlines of the old town stood out in white relief; the wide, snow-covered moor beyond looked sullen under the heavy skies; and life in the streets was as noiseless as life in a busy town could be. The shipwrights went silently up and down, with breakfast-cans and bundles of firewood; the crews of the vessels in the crowded harbour walked to and fro with short, quick steps about the bridge, walking the length of a ship's deck, and turning back again, as if stopped by some invisible barrier. Here and there, too, there were little groups of disconsolate-looking jet-workers standing about, ill-clad for the most part, and pinched, and shivering. They also went silently about the streets, silently walking through the snow, silently suffering.

The winter passed away, as the worst winter will, but there was no improvement in their fickle trade. The wholesale dealers had their warehouses full of stock, so that they only bought sparingly, and at ruinous prices. The master-workers who could keep back their goods

kept them, only offering them for sale when pressed for money to pay wages or to buy rough jet for the work of the hour.

This depression, following closely upon the most disastrous bankruptcy ever known in the trade, compelled many of the smaller manufacturers to close their workshops altogether. Some turned awkwardly to other trades; some reluctantly left the place; some simply sank below the surface—none seeming to know what bottom they touched, none seeming to care.

The bright spring weather brought no change —that is, none that was helpful. Some, driven by hunger and children's tears, went out in the fishing-yawls, and brought home fish, if they brought little beside. Others wandered aimlessly into the woods and fields, walking, sick at heart, between the primrose banks, and listening to the songs of hopeful birds with feelings of dull despair.

John Gower had said that the question would be whether he could get 'turned round' or not. Almost inevitably it had come to pass that, instead of turning round, he had done what the prophetic Hebrew had said that he would do—he had gone down, steadily down, and with some swiftness.

We have most of us laughed at the German

student who 'did not understand himself;' perhaps some of us laughed sympathetically. John Gower would have forborne to smile, knowing from experience how sad a thing it might be for a man to lose the key to his own powers. He could not speak of this strange thing that had come upon him. He saw, in a dim way, that it had followed upon the bitter humiliations and defeats that he had had to undergo. Yet still the matter was not clear to him.

For days, nay, for weeks together, he had gone to his work; he had taken his knife in one hand, his material in the other, only to find that something within him refused to second his most determined will, his most agonizing desire. He would have been relieved if he could have thought himself ill, glad if he could have believed himself to be over-worked, satisfied if he could have found any cause for the incapacity that tortured him like a sin or a shame.

One spring day Josef Jacobi came upon him thus, powerless and bewildered. The old man's eyes were keen, but he made no sign.

'I have not come to buy,' he said; 'no, I cannot buy one smallest thing, Mr. Gower. The trade is dead. I do only come to Hild's Haven because it is my time to come. And you? You are doing well? Yes; you are doing well?'

John Gower looked into the dark, wily face of the Israelite. It was not an unkind face, there was no triumph upon it; but there was an unpitying curiosity that did not invite confidence.

'It is better with you than with some,' the old man went on. 'They do close their shops; they do fail, while you go on—yes, you go on. But the beautiful carvings—you make them no longer now; no. You engrave, you cut with the wheel instead of the knife? You make the goods that will sell? Yes? It is wise, it is wise. When I come again I will look at the goods that are not so much moneys. It may be I will buy; yes, it may be.'

So he went out. Doubtless his well-meant words were wasted, as always before; doubtless the man to whom he had spoken was mad; yes, he was mad. And even now he was suffering; perhaps others were suffering too. There was the pale girl with the dark eyes, perhaps she too was suffering.

Was she suffering in any definite way? Had not the trouble that was in the house its compensation? Mrs. Gower had less mind now for the ceaseless watchings, the ceaseless restraints which had so saddened and narrowed the girl's earliest years; and already she was permitted to see

a little more of the world than could be seen from Wiggoner's Wharf. She was old enough now to go out into the surrounding fields and lanes on summer evenings after school. And when Mrs. Gower saw the pink tinge of colour remaining on her cheek, and marked the quicker vitality of gait and movement, she laid less and less restriction upon the girl's coming and going. It might be that she had found that such restriction was not, strictly speaking, necessary.

Dorigen made no friends, and she had but one companion beside her father—a tiny lame child, some five or six years old, named Margery Laverock, a child who could sit by the Abbey walls for an hour at a time without speaking. It almost seemed as if silence were the bond of union, so little speech passed between them. Dorigen was too shy, too sensitive for the companionship of such girls of her own age as she might have associated with. Her ways were not as their ways; and she accepted the consciousness with a touchingly sad humility. But this and many other things had to be kept in the strictest silence. The two people with whom communication was possible being her father and old Than, it was natural that only a limited number of topics were open for discussion.

Of late her father had slipped into a way of making her his confidante in matters that might have been supposed to be slightly beyond her comprehension. Perhaps it amused him to watch her conscientious effort to enter into his thought; or it might be that he found some ease and relief for himself in setting his perplexities in the order of speech. Be this as it may, Dorigen was the first to know of the change he had resolved upon within the hour after old Josef Jacobi's last visit to the jet-shop. John Gower had put his carver's knife aside, to take it up no more in the old way; but it was not possible to him to set his hand to the mechanical wheel that day. He wanted a breathing-time in which to reconcile himself, to look into the face of things, and see them as they now were. A walk by the Abbey would suffice for a dividing-line between the old and the new.

It did not surprise him to find his daughter there, sitting alone within the broken wall by the western front. The surprise was hers: it was so rarely that her father left his work in the middle of the day. But she asked no question, as he sat down on the edge of the low wall near her. She looked up with a slow smile of pleasure, that was perhaps meant to express more than it

actually did express. Childlike, she expected always to be fully understood. Thought-reading is taken for granted till we find, with painful surprise, the limit of human capacity in that direction.

'And what have you been thinking about, little woman?' the father asked, making a great effort to put his own trouble aside.

The usual blank look met him, and amused him for a moment. Which of us, not being closely occupied, can say what our thought has touched during the last hour or so? Is not a consecutive chain of meditation a rarer thing than we believe?

'I have been thinking of many things,' the girl said slowly. 'Once—more than once—I thought of you.'

'What exactly did you think of me?'

'It was about your being troubled, and about your work. I cannot understand. It is so strange that everyone says that it would be better for you to do cheap and common work than good and beautiful work!'

'It is strange, and it has troubled me. But it will trouble me no longer; I am going to do the cheap and common work; I am going to do it from to-day.'

The girl looked up with a quick, inquiring flash

of light in her eyes; the colour came to her pale face.

'You say that it will not trouble you?' she asked quietly.

There was a pause.

'No,' her father replied in a low musing tone. 'No, it will not trouble me—not in the same way.'

'But you will never forget?'

'No, I shall not forget,' the man replied. 'But I shall try not to think at all of what is past—only of the future.'

This was not said despairingly, hardly sorrowfully. John Gower, as we have seen, had had an ideal future, and his ideal had been manly, unworldly, reasonable—so reasonable it had seemed that he had counted upon it with the quiet sense of security that precludes all doubt or misgiving.

Through all the recent days of strife, humiliation, defeat, he had never for an hour parted wholly with his ideal. He had at times been stricken almost to the dust by despondency; but behind all there had been belief in such eventual victory as would suffice for the fulfilment of his modest hope for the future.

And even now, even after he had consented, at his own solicitation, to surrender his life to the uses of a lower level, he was not feeling that

fate was tampering with final results. He had a fine patience; and if his hope was not quick nor vivid, it was tenacious to the last limit.

Dorigen was musing over his reply, 'I shall think only of the future.' How was the future appearing to him? she wondered. Presently she asked the question.

'It looks dark enough just now,' he answered. 'But I've gone through dark days before, and come out of them. I trust it will be the same again.'

'And if it is not?'

'If it is not I shall go to sea.'

There was another pause, another silence more terrible than any silence that had ever passed between these two before. The child's sole comfort lay in the remoteness of the contingency which had been presented for her contemplation.

Yet the idea had been planted, and firmly. Her father's words were never idle words, never unpremeditated, never uttered for any mere effect. Dorigen knew this certainly, and even then it seemed to her that she knew something more. Her eyes were drawn, as if against her will, to the grey mist-shadowed sea, that seemed so fitting a shrine for the 'secrets inviolate,' of which it goes on murmuring for ever, without once

revealing a word. Even there by the Abbey she heard its dull reverberation as it struck the foot of the cliff with its solemn, rhythmical beating. Did she fancy a new meaning in its tone? Was the low sigh that came on the breeze from the waters in any way prophetic?

CHAPTER X.

MICHAEL SALVAIN.

'Looking up I saw
. . . . . the forward-leaning face
Intently fixed and glowing, but methought
More serious than it ought to be so young.
From time to time
Thenceforth I felt, although I met them not,
The visitation of those serious eyes,
The ardours of that face toward me turned.'
SIR H. TAYLOR : *The Eve of the Conquest.*

ABOUT half-way down Kirkgate, a little below Alder's Waste Ghaut, there is a dark narrow yard leading down to a coal wharf by the harbour-side. Wharram's Coal Wharf was the name by which it was known in days gone by.

The prevailing characteristic of Wharram's Yard is dampness. The dirt is damp, the smoke is damp, the darkness is damp. Dampness is known to be depressing; therefore it is presum-

ably safe to say that no one ever went down into the depths of Wharram's Yard without feeling some loss of buoyancy.

There are houses all the way down, houses in which people live and work—work very hard, and live to be very old, and then die without having once been heard to complain of depression of spirits. A neighbour may tell you that another neighbour has 'getten his 'liverance at last,' and perhaps something may be inferred from this; but that something is not obtruded.

The coal wharf is quite at the bottom of the yard; and it is entered by an archway that discloses a glimpse of the harbour. The old coal-porters stand leaning against the wall under the arch, each with his empty coal-sack over his arm; each with his ancient sou'-wester crushed as far down upon his bent shoulders as the weight of many tons of coal can crush it. If a stranger goes down the old men bestir themselves with pathetic alertness; but if the stranger goes up the office stair, the old men droop back under the wall again. People who order coal at the office order it by tons at a time; and the much-to-be-envied porters who have carts get the benefit of such orders as these.

One biting winter's day there was a more than ordinarily brisk stir among the poor old men. A

gentleman of striking appearance and impressive bearing was seen to enter the small tunnel at the top of the yard. When he reached comparative daylight the old porters fell patiently back into their places.

'It's t' Alum Maister fra Thorsgrif,' said the man nearest to the office entrance in a deferential whisper. He touched his sou'-wester as the gentleman turned to go up the stair.

'If t' last cargo o' coal 'at went te Thorsgrif were as bad as t' last 'at com here, Ah reckon 'at he'll hev summat to saäy tiv aud Nendick,' remarked one of the ancient porters.

'Ay! An' mickle *he'll* care, nobbut he gets hodden t' brass.'

'An' what odds mun t' brass mak tiv him?' asked a small withered old man, who apparently, to use a saying of the place, had 'neither brass nor benediction.' 'What mun he be sa keen o' t' munny for? He's nobbut a clerk.'

'Clerk here, or clerk there,' said the first speaker, 'aud Nendick hes mair te deä wi' Wharram's Wharf nor takkin 'his addlins.* He wad niver dar turn upon foälks i' the waäy he dis, as if they were muck under his feet, unless he was summat mair nor a sarvant.'

'No,' said the withered little man, with a keen

* Addlings = earnings.

twinkle in his eyes; 'no, an' he wadn't deä 't if he warn't summat less nor a maister. I've know'd Mr. Wharram this fotty year; an' I've niver know'd him snap an' snarl like yon yeth-worrum.'*

Wharram's office was quite the sort of place you would expect an office to be that was situated at the bottom of Wharram's Yard. It was a wide, square room with a low, smoke-blackened ceiling; the one window was also low and smoke-blackened, so that you could only just discern that it looked upon the heaving, rippling water of the harbour, and the anchored ships. A long counter covered with parcels ran across the room; there were more parcels on the shelves near the desk; more in the open cupboard behind Mr. Nendick's head. A stranger who might have wondered to see so many neat little parcels in a coal office would have ceased to wonder on its being explained to him that Mr. Nendick was permitted to do a little business on his own account; and that he preferred dealing in wrought jet to dealing in the affinitive mineral that lay heaped on the wharf below. It might be suspected, but it was not generally known, that the more ornamental part of the business

* Yethworm = earthworm.

transacted in Wharram's office was transacted solely in the interest of Mr. Ephraim Nendick.

He was an elderly man, with a long thick growth of iron-grey hair standing out resolutely below his hat. He never removed his hat; and he never changed the pattern of his neckerchief; His neck was always decorated with vivid green, and the vivid green was always decorated with large white lozenge-shaped spots. A change of necktie would certainly have been looked upon as indicative of a change of character.

He was behind the counter as usual this dull wintry afternoon; his hat was in its usual place; his hands, as usual, were occupied in the dusting and polishing of jet ornaments with a piece of an old silk neckerchief, the exact counterpart of the one he wore. He never looked up, he never stopped rubbing, he seldom spoke. He might be listening to what the customer on the other side of the counter was saying, or he might not. The customer himself considered it an open question.

This customer had paid for a cargo of coal, a cargo that had been conveyed to the Thorsgrif Alum Works by a small schooner; he had spoken a few emphatic words concerning the quality, and he had ordered another cargo to be delivered to him with such speed as wind and wave might permit.

'I suppose if the vessel doesn't arrive in time I can have a few tons if I send the waggons over?' the gentleman asked, speaking in a voice that was quiet and musical, and was yet as striking as the powerful head and calm grave face that he turned toward the light.

Mr. Nendick went on rubbing at a jet watch-chain, looking into it carefully. His interlocutor was watching him with the keen interest of a student of humanity.

'That'll depend,' said Mr. Nendick presently, his voice seeming as if it had only been able to free itself from the green neckerchief at that moment.

'Upon what will it depend?' asked the gentleman.

Before Mr. Nendick had had time to deal with this question in his usual deliberate manner, there was a gentle knock at the office door. It had to be twice repeated before Mr. Nendick could make up his mind to ejaculate the usual invitation to 'Come in.'

The invitation was accepted by a tall slight girl, who entered the place with evident trepidation, yet not without a certain quiet, unconscious dignity that was in itself sufficient to attract attention there. She crossed over to the counter, and laid a small parcel on it in silence. Then she

clasped her hands simply before her, and stood as if accustomed to wait Mr. Nendick's pleasure.

She stood quite still, not even for a moment lifting the wan face that seemed pale with the paleness of sorrow, or of some strong negation rather than of frail health. Her heavy white eyelids were fringed with long black lashes; her curved red mouth was firmly closed above the deeply-cleft chin.

Mr. Nendick did not look up: he went on rubbing the watch-chain during several minutes in silence. The silence seemed to strike upon the girl's absent mood at last. She turned her head slightly, and looked into the face of the gentleman who was standing not far from her. It was a look of wonder and sadness, and keen spiritual pain; and it awoke pain, a nameless pain and trouble, in the soul of the man who had been watching her longer than she knew, and who was impressed as he might have been impressed if some tall white flower growing in the moonlight had turned and looked upon him with a wistful human face.

He was not what the world in general would have termed a poetical man; yet there glanced across his memory the wonderfully poetic words that Dante wrote when the divine Beatrice passed him silently in the Florentine street:

'I seemed then to behold the utmost limit of beatitude .... as one inebriated I departed from the people.'

As it happened in the street of Florence over five hundred years ago, so it happened but the other year in a dingy coal office on a Hild's Haven wharf.

This stranger had transacted his business, and he knew that it might be expected of him that he should retire. Still, he did not go; nor did he require of himself a reason for remaining.

Ephraim Nendick completed the polishing of the watch-chain; then he laid down his duster, held the chain up to the light, folded it carefully in soft white paper, numbered the parcel, and put it away with deliberateness on a shelf behind him. This done, he drew toward him with an ungracious snatch the parcel that the girl had brought. She was watching his proceedings; and the stranger watching her saw that her mouth quivered pathetically, and that a faint tinge of colour rose to her cheek as if forced there by pain.

There were three dozens of jet brooches in the packet, things of conventional design, fluted and cut in a commonplace way, but exquisitely finished, and perfect of their kind. Not even

the keenly critical sight of Ephraim Nendick could discover a flaw in them.

'What's he want for 'em?' asked Mr. Nendick of the girl at last.

'Two pounds,' she replied, with lips that were still quivering.

'Two curses!' ejaculated Mr. Nendick, beginning to roll up the parcel with swift carelessness. Suddenly he stopped, arrested by sheer astonishment. The stranger had stepped in front of the girl, and was standing unpleasantly close to the counter.

'I would prefer that you should not speak in that manner in this child's presence again,' said the gentleman from Thorsgrif, the fire flashing from under his stern brows. 'If you do, I think you will repent of it.'

'Wheä'll mak ma repent?'

'I will.'

There was a meaning and an emphasis in the stranger's tones to which Mr. Nendick was evidently unaccustomed. He finished folding the parcel, still apparently rapt in astonishment; then he threw it across the counter.

'Hoo lang d'ya reckon yer fayther's spent ower that lot?' he asked, in a tone of unmitigated contempt.

The girl had to try to recollect, which she did

conscientiously. 'I think about four days,' she said, speaking as if she were confessing some shameful thing.

'Fower days!' repeated Mr. Nendick, 'an' there's prentice lads i' t' toon 'at wad be kicked oot o' their shops if they couldn't mak 'em i' fower-an'-twenty hours . . . Tell yer faythe r 'at Ah said he was te stick te repairs if he disn't want te see hissel', an' all belanging tiv him, i' t' workhouse.'

'Have you finished speaking, Mr. Nendick?' asked the gentleman, again stepping forward with a decisive step.

Mr. Nendick vouchsafed no reply, and the girl, with a look of gratitude in her soft dark eyes, turned to go. The stranger opened the door of the office for her, and when he had closed it again he took his hat, and moved to depart also. Before leaving he turned for a moment to the clerk.

'Perhaps I was hardly justified in speaking to you as I spoke just now,' he said; 'that is to say, in using threatening words toward a man so much older than myself as you are. I regret it. But remember the provocation, and don't repeat it. It will be to your advantage not to repeat it.'

Meantime the girl was walking slowly up the

damp, dingy yard; her head was bent, her thin, shabby cloak drawn round her. She was not startled by the footstep behind her, nor by the spoken word.

But yesterday we were told of a beautiful human prophecy that fell from George Eliot's lips while she was yet living. 'What I look to,' she said, 'is a time when the impulse to help our fellows shall be as immediate and as irresistible as that which I feel to grasp something firm if I am falling.' These are the words which should be writ large on her gravestone—these, and these only. So far as George Eliot herself was concerned, the prophecy must have fulfilled itself within her before she could give it such pregnant outer shape. There are others in whom it is even now fulfilled, others to whom life is one wide yearning to save and help, or to offer the sympathy that is often more helpful than help.

This strong, stern man, strong for the battle of life and stern for all endurance, was touched with a sense of shame which included all manhood as he thought of this child, who, for the moment, included all womanhood—of her gentleness, her courage, her apparent unprotectedness. Help he must, or at any rate try to help, though there was no time to consider how he might do so with any tact, any gracefulness. Probably he would

have failed to consider these things if the time had been longer.

'I beg your pardon,' he said, raising his hat as the girl turned toward him, 'I would like to know if I can be of use to you. . . . I could not help hearing what passed just now. Mr. Nendick was out of temper; perhaps I had put him out. But I have some influence over him, or rather means of acquiring influence. If you will let me take your parcel back to him I think I can settle the matter for you.'

A thick grey cloud was parting into ragged drifts overhead, a pale light broke down into Wharram's Yard, seeming to the child as if it gathered about this noble-looking man, revealing a calm, forceful face, full of energy, touched with melancholy, softened by clear, dark grey eyes that seemed yearning with an infinite tenderness.

She hesitated a moment, the colour trembled on her cheeks. Her first impulse was to obey this voice, let it say what it might. But her experience had already been such as to teach her to think when she was acting for another.

'Thank you,' she said, with a thoughtful, troubled look on her face. 'Thank you, but I must take the parcel home. I think my father would like me to take it back to him.'

The words betrayed nothing—nothing of the

cruel anxiety, the disappointment, the sorrow that was oppressing the child. There seemed to be a certain inaccessibleness about her, but it was of a kind to deepen rather than repel a sincere human interest.

'Of course you must do what your father would wish you to do,' the stranger said. Then, with a more courteous deference, he added, 'May I ask his name?'

'It is John Gower . . . Mine is Dorigen Gower.'

'And mine is Michael Salvain. I live at Thorsgrif, at the Alum Works.'

Suddenly and simply the girl asked a question; it had evidently been pressing on her mind.

'Are you thinking that my father should have come to the office himself?' she said.

'I have been thinking so, yes. . . . I suppose there is a sufficient reason, with which I, of course, have nothing to do. Don't think me curious or impertinent.'

'No, I don't think that,' she replied. 'And I will tell you about it. . . . The reason why I come to this office, and go sometimes to other shops and offices, is because it saves my father so much time. I used not to do it, and my father says I shall not have to do it much longer.'

'I am glad of that,' said Mr. Salvain. 'I should be glad if I knew that you need never do it again. . . . It could be arranged, I think. Will you let me try to arrange it? Will you ask your father if I may call and see him?'

Dorigen hesitated, and a look of trouble grew about her eyes and forehead.

'I would rather go on doing it so long as it is necessary,' she said in her quiet way. 'My father has had some troubles, and I think it is a little comfort to him when I try to help him. And he does not know that—that things are not pleasant sometimes. I never tell him what people say, so that it does not pain him.'

Michael Salvain smiled.

'It was of you that I was thinking,' he said.

'But it does not hurt me; besides, it happens so seldom. No one in all the town has spoken to me as Mr. Nendick spoke to-day. Some of the people are so kind that I like going.'

There was a moment's silence, some intransferable thing stirring in the heart of the man, some equally intransferable thing lying still in the heart of the girl.

'You will not let me have the pleasure of helping you in any way, then?' he asked at last.

There was a pause, another faint blush, another slight effort.

'I should like you to help me,' the girl said, with an innocent earnestness.

'In what way?'

'I don't know . . . . I was not thinking of any way. I was only wishing. . . .'

'What were you wishing? Tell me just as you wished it. I shall understand.'

'I was wishing that you would be kind to me,' she said, looking up without any touch of confusion, and speaking with a simplicity all her own.

Michael Salvain held out his hand.

'Good-day,' he said abruptly. Then with a peculiar change in his voice, he added, 'I will find some way of being kind to you, my child, God willing.'

CHAPTER XI.

'THE PAST HE CALMLY HATH REVIEWED.'

'Roses in the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy-branch for me,
Grown old before my time.'

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

'THERE exists in all human experience something unseen, some fact beyond our consciousness, so that the seeming of our life is not the truth of it.'

So wrote one who went to his rest not so long ago, leaving behind him words of truth and insight and consolation. The insight of the words quoted here we all of us feel instantly. The seeming of our life is never the truth of it.

We are tempted to think at times that if the truth could be made plain, to others as well as to ourselves, the burden would be lightened. If those who judge us, condemn us, mistake us and

our life generally, could be made to see the yawning contradiction between the ideal we started with, and the actual we have arrived at, then assuredly we should feel new elements in the atmosphere about us. Blame would die softly into compassion. The silent reverence due to a great sorrow would supersede the thoughtless, critical word.

It might have been imagined that a man who lived a life so secluded as that lived by Michael Salvain at Thorsgrif would have escaped criticism; but experience makes for the suspicion that the greater the seclusion the greater the amount of unsympathetic curiosity provoked. It was everywhere believed among the people of his own standing in the neighbourhood that some touch of mystery hung about his life; and this belief had arisen mainly out of the fact that he was what was termed 'an unsociable man;' declining all invitations, offering hospitality only to his poorer neighbours, and being generally invisible at times and places when it might naturally have been expected of him that he would have taken a prominent position. If he were aware of this feeling, the knowledge was little likely to disturb him. He would not willingly or wilfully have incurred disapproval; but, on the other hand, he would not have swerved from his ordinary

course of life to deprecate unknowing and unreasoning blame.

There was nothing mysterious about his antecedents. The Salvains were an ancient and honourable North Yorkshire family; and local historians told how the knights of the name had been of such importance in the fifteenth century that they had ventured to leave testamentary directions as to their burial before the great altar in the Abbey. But the slow progress of the centuries had wrought manifold changes in the fortunes of the family. There was a half-ruined house still standing in the vale of the Esk, which was said to have been the 'country seat' of later Salvains; but this had passed into other hands long before Michael Salvain's day, and the place had been turned into an ordinary farmstead. There was nothing left to tell of the ancient eminence save a few deeds and charters, and the brief mention of the family in the 'History of Hild's Haven.'

Michael's father, Christopher Salvain, had never even in thought rebelled against the circumstances which had compelled him to live his life in no more distinguished position than that commanded by a skilful and highly-respected country doctor. He had been a power in the neighbourhood of Hild's Haven in his own day; and that

day was not so far gone by as to have been forgotten by the older people of the place. That Mr. Salvain, of Thorsgrif Alum Works, was the son of Dr. Salvain of Hild's Haven would have been counted sufficient recommendation if any had been needed.

Dr. Salvain had married very early in life, and he had married somewhat in haste. If he repented at leisure he certainly kept the secret of his repentance inviolate ; and it is quite conceivable that he never repented at all. It was said that he had married Mercy Waynman for her beauty; and since she retained that beauty so long as she retained her life, he had little valid reason for regret on that head.

Her beauty was not her sole dower. She had had a little money, a little good taste, a little refinement, and a very considerable amount of unthinking easy-going amiability—all these she still had, greatly to her son's comfort. If aught in her nature or character made for his discomfort, he tried dutifully to ignore it. Being unmarried, he was able to appreciate the goodness of a Providence that spared his mother in health and strength to sit smiling by his fire and make his home homelike. There was a sister's presence also. These, with one woman-servant, completed the Alum-Master's household. There had

been no change since his father's death, which had taken place ten years before that winter's day when Michael Salvain met Dorigen Gower in the coal-merchant's office in Wharram's Yard.

He had time enough to think silently over that meeting as he drove in his rather shabby gig over the bleak hilly road that went winding onward and upward from Hild's Haven to Thorsgrif. The distance was said to be some seven miles; but the steep hillsides had to be overpassed so slowly that it often seemed to be twice seven. This January afternoon, however, the road seemed shorter to the Alum-Master than usual. Afterward he could not recollect the passing of certain noticeable points in his journey. Such absorption was not new to him; but the time when he had felt its influence was so far back in his life as to give the mood all the power and effect of novelty.

For years past now he had been accustomed to think of himself as a man who had lived his life This may seem absurd when it is admitted that his years numbered no more than thirty-six; but if you look around you shall see that it is not always a man's age by the register that determines the point of life he has arrived at. One man approaching forty shall retain a boyishness that promises exceedingly well for a green old

age ; while another of thirty shall be so burdened with his experience that it would be impossible to connect the idea of youthfulness with any thought of him. A man's life tells on his aspect promptly ; and it is not only the outer life that tells. In this case of Michael Salvain excess of gravity had not come of his connection with the producing of alum ; nor could any right-thinking person attribute his sadness of look and mien to the working of the Pope's curse. His nature had been weighted hereditarily to begin with ; and, as is usual when such is the case, experience had duly added to the burden.

No man looking into his countenance with any eyes to see could suppose that his life at Thorsgrif was the life that he would have chosen of his own free will. In spite of the sternness, it might almost be said the ruggedness of his face, there was visible the kind of refinement that only comes of the working of intellectual forces within a man. And though these same intellectual forces be subjected to the constant adversity of negative action, they shall not be wholly destroyed where the will is against destruction. Nay, if the adverseness be borne as an unforgotten and unforgettable sorrow, it may rather add to than diminish that aspect of spiritual capacity and elevation.

We all of us know what it is to be moved by some simple and sudden thing to turn and glance backward over the years that are dead, yet all unburied. It was a very simple thing that moved Michael Salvain to a retrospective mood; but retrospection did not yield him much consolation. When does it? Are the Mr. Bounderbys of the world really so satisfied as they seem?

If there was anything in Mr. Salvain's life upon which he could congratulate himself, it was his obedience to his father. But since this obedience had involved the renunciation of all he had most cared for in life, it was not now an unmitigated satisfaction to him.

Looking back over twenty years, he saw himself as he had been then, and the sight was not without its capacity for pain. There, in those dead years, stood a boy of sixteen, dreamy, yet energetic; strong, yet tender; unsuccessful as a scholar, yet cherishing a passionate ambition. His dream of life was a sculptor's dream; and it haunted him night and day as such dreams will. There had been no obscurity about his call. He had heard it, and understood it from the first moment of his entrance to the studio of a London sculptor, Sir Francis Thornthwaite, who was a Yorkshireman by birth, and knew perhaps more

of the history of the Salvains than they themselves knew. It had so happened that the sculptor's son had become Michael's principal school friend, and had been asked more than once to spend his holidays at Hild's Haven. By-and-by the invitation was returned; and Michael Salvain went on his first visit to London, and entered for the first time within the mysterious precincts of creative art. Boy as he was, he knew quickly that his fate was decided; and Sir Francis, perceiving how it was with the lad, furthered his desire to the uttermost. A very short time proved to the sculptor that young Salvain had not mistaken the bent of his powers; and more than one of the boy's first efforts drew congratulations from the connoisseurs who frequented the studio. One piece of modelling, a girl's head, done from memory, was especially commended. It was, as a matter of course, full of faults, and marred by all technical imperfections; but nevertheless the promise was there, and enshrined in most noteworthy performance.

'I congratulate you on bearing the name of Michael,' said one unthinking nobleman to whom the thing was shown. 'It may be that England will congratulate herself on having given birth to a Michael Angelo of her own before many more years are over.'

Here was oil enough and to spare for the flame which had begun to burn with such fierceness unaided. From that day forth ambition was so mingled with the artist fervour in the lad's soul that the two things could never again be severed. If one should be slain, it was certain that the other would not survive its destruction.

And almost from the beginning his dreams were harassed by forebodings. The boy knew his father's nature; he knew also that his father's plans for his own future life were widely different from these new plans which he was making for himself. He prepared himself for strife, for mockery, for resistance. He would endure all, so he might in the end find victory.

He had instinct enough to keep his own counsel; and he induced Sir Francis Thornthwaite to keep his secret till some fitting hour should arrive when it might be made known. Meantime he went back to school with such energy in his heart and brain as had never been his before; and his progress there was eminently satisfactory to Dr. Salvain. The boy was waking up at last.

It was not till Michael's school-days were ended that the question of his future life came up with any force. It had been an understood thing with the father that his son was to follow in his

footsteps. He had contemplated no particular reluctance. He knew something of Michael's curious fancy for spending all his available time in 'messing with wet clay;' but it had never disturbed him: on the contrary, he had even taken interest in it, since he had discerned that it had so much to do with his son's severe and thorough study of anatomy. 'The lad will be a better anatomist than ever I have been,' he said to himself one day, handling as he spoke an arm in clay which he had just found on a shelf in his son's room. 'That deltoid is capital,' he continued. 'Just enough depression in the middle to show that the arm is a feminine one; and there is the necessary touch of difference, too, in the articulation of the outward end of the clavicle. . . . . Go on and prosper, my boy.'

But a marked change came over the doctor's spirit of appreciation when the full meaning of his son's devotion to anatomy was made plain to him. It was done in much trepidation, and after considerable thought. The time was evening; the place the doctor's own study.

There was not much light in the room, but enough for Michael to see the change on his father's face, the sudden look of incredulous amazement.

'It is not only my own opinion,' the youth

continued. He was between eighteen and nineteen years of age now, tall and well-formed for his years, and he had a not unimpressive bearing. His father had wondered over the latter, as fathers will over any sign of individuality in their children. 'It is not only my own opinion,' Michael was saying. 'I have a letter which I asked Sir Francis Thornthwaite to write to you. He knows all. . . . . And I have this, a head that I did over three years ago when I was staying at Chelsea.'

The look of amazement passed from the old man's face; he grew pale, and rigid, and stern. The letter was lying on the table beside him; the fire was burning hollow and dead. His son stood opposite to him, white and tremulous—the lad's heart sank with every moment.

'You will read the letter, father!' Michael said at last. It was unwise of him to break that pregnant silence. His father turned in sudden rage, started to his feet, and flung the sculptor's letter into the fire unread. A moment later he had seized his geological hammer and shattered the clay bust into a thousand pieces.

'There!' the old man said, his lips quivering with the strong passion that was upon him. 'There! That is my answer! Tell that to Sir Francis Thornthwaite. And mention the matter

to me again at your peril! . . . Leave the room at once, sir!'

'A sculptor!' he ejaculated with withering scorn, before the boy had closed the door. Then pacing up and down the room he went on saying to himself, 'A sculptor! Fool that I have been not to see it all before it came to this! A son of mine, my only son, a stone-cutter! Has he not sense enough to know that popularity and knighthood are the rewards of one in ten thousand? Why should he be the one?'

Why should he not?

That was the question that tortured Michael Salvain; or rather, it was one of the questions. It seemed to him that life had resolved itself into torture altogether. From that evening his father did with him as he would. The principle of obedience, of reverence for authority, was strong within the lad, as strong as his instinct toward rebellion in this one momentous instance; and the two things strove within him through many a long night when the world was sleeping.

It is terrible to have a living power within you fighting for its own life with yours. To have spent the best of your youth in a strife like that is to have had no youth at all.

Michael Salvain never touched the plaster again. His tools and his studies were buried

out of sight. There should be nothing to tempt him.

He stayed at home—reading, studying with his father, assisting him in various ways for a time; and at length it was decided that he was to go to Edinburgh in the following spring. But before spring came the old man was stricken by disease, and all thought had to be centred upon him. He knew himself that he would no more go in and out among the people of Hild's Haven.

Dr. Salvain had never been supposed to be a rich man; investigation proved him to have been poorer far than his son had imagined. Poverty began to stare the little household in the face in a most unexpected manner. Mrs. Salvain's small income was nearly all that was left to be depended upon.

It was just in this crisis that the post of Alum-Master at Thorsgrif became vacant. Michael thought of it for himself at once. He had a good knowledge of general chemistry, and knew that any particular technical knowledge he might need would soon be acquired. The salary was not large; but there was a capital old house at the top of the ravine, at a little distance from the works. It would be a healthier place for his father than the house they were living in at Hild's Haven. To live in the country had been

his mother's desire for years; and there were especial reasons why change would be beneficial to his sister. Already the weight of the household rested upon Michael.

The only drawback was his youth. He was not more than two-and-twenty. But this fault was condoned by the trustees of the Thorsgrif estates: they were not sorry to have the son of a man so respected and honoured as Dr. Salvain had always been. The fact that the previous Alum-Master had disappeared suddenly, leaving his accounts in unintelligible confusion, was more in Michael Salvain's favour than he knew. His application was successful; the old home was given up, the new home entered upon with more of gratitude than of gladness, so far as Michael was concerned. But gratitude is not a bad substitute, and has been known to stand the test of time and the wear and tear of experience with less deterioration than feelings more elate in the beginning.

That was fourteen years ago. Michael Salvain was Alum-Master at Thorsgrif still—that is to say, he did the work he had always done as Alum-Master; but time had wrought such changes in the trade, and events had so happened, that he had lately been able to take over the concern to himself, taking the works on a

long lease, and on terms that seemed favourable enough to him at the time when the new arrangements were made. It did not seem likely that he would ever be a rich man; but then he had no desire to be rich. What good could riches do to one whose youth was gone, and whose hope of youth had been utterly denied? It was dead within him now, and he knew it; and it seemed to him that even regret for it was dead. But its brief life had coloured his life. He was not the man he might have been.

And yet another painful experience had been his. Weighted though his life had been from boyhood, it was hardly likely that one of his artistic nature, and strong, warm human sympathies, should pass from youth to manhood not knowing the meaning and value of human love. As was almost inevitable, he had come to know it in its most passionate form, and for a time it seemed to him that fate was offering him full compensation for having thwarted him in his desire for a great career. Perhaps even Michael Angelo's fame might have been bought too dearly if the price paid for it was that long, lonely, pathetic life, the history of which moves the reader with the force of tragic poetry rather than of biographical reality.

There had been times when the loneliness had

seemed to be but a fitting and seemly thing for a figure so heroic; a condition to be accepted unhesitatingly by any who might wish to follow but ever so far behind. Michael Angelo himself, with Andrea del Sarto's Lucrezia for housemistress, had failed somewhat of his grand and isolated eminence.

Now, however, change of belief broke radiantly upon young Salvain's changed prospects. The glance of a certain rare pale Margaret undid the bands of hardness that were tightening about his heart, and set him free to hope, to believe, to anticipate his life once more. It was given him to understand that his love was returned, and the understanding infused a vigour into the days that made life worth living beyond all question.

'Work grew play; adversity a winning fight,'

and he saw before him in the future the certain solution of all present doubts and difficulties. It was true that there would be some waiting to be done; but waiting is an easy thing, and happy, when you are all the while working toward final achievement. If Margaret Terrynton could wait and hope, Michael could wait and work; and since neither had attained the age of three-and-twenty, there seemed little unreason on the side of circumstance. Those days were

the happiest days that Michael Salvain had known.

Since an end had to be put to them, it were better that it should be put suddenly. The suddenness might seem like an added cruelty, but that idea was not likely to deter an ambitious, clever woman. Margaret Terrynton was very clever, very decided, very quick to perceive. When a richer man than Michael Salvain was ever likely to be came forward, she did not hesitate. She simply sat down one evening and wrote a decisive letter putting an end for ever to the engagement which had existed between them. She wrote politely, wishing Mr. Salvain happiness in the choice of a companion for life suited to his nature, and also to his peculiar position as head of an already established household. She had had doubts of her own fitness from the beginning.

So came the second great sorrow that had fallen across his life. He bore it as a strong soul does bear such a sorrow, silently, dumbly, while the pain goes deeper for the silence that must be kept, and is more ceaseless for the seeming indifference that has to be put on and ceaselessly worn. His nature was not embittered, but it had lost its spring, and the strong desire for sympathy which always underlies the artistic

nature in man or woman had been negatived till human intercourse was little more than pain. He was, or believed himself to be, utterly incapable of responding to any feeling save such as turned upon some righteous contempt or indignation. If aught else remained, it was pity; he believed certainly that it was compassion alone that drew all his thoughts to the scarce-seen child who had said so simply that she would be glad for his kindness. Not for years past had any voice moved him as that quiet voice was moving him now. God helping him, he would be very kind.

That same evening, sitting with his mother by the fire, he told all his tale, excepting only the strong and sudden emotion which he did not reduce to thought, even for his own enlightening. He spoke openly of his regret for the child, his suspicion of even greater poverty than she had betrayed.

'And it may be so difficult to do anything,' he said. 'If the parents are as over-sensitive as the child, it may be impossible. Anyhow, I shall want your help, mother, especially in the beginning. You can call upon them more easily than I can.'

'But I am so shy, Michael. Think of my

going all the way down Kirkgate by myself to call upon people I've never seen!'

'I will go with you to the door.'

'If you would go in with me, now?'

'Not the first time, my mother. Your going alone would be nothing. I mean you would not alarm anybody. . . . Will you go to-morrow if it is fine?'

'To-morrow, Michael? To-morrow is baking-day, and Rizpah always expects me to do the bedrooms. Besides, I don't think Joanna will be well enough to be left to-morrow.'

'Isn't she well to-day?

'It has been one of her bad days. A ship passed close in this morning, and she fancied it was like the *Abbot of Streonshalh*. She has been in one of her sad moods ever since.'

'Poor Nanna! But you will go soon, mother,' Michael said, rising to leave the room, and stopping to look into his mother's face as he passed her with a look that was not easy for her to comprehend. 'You will go soon,' he said. 'I want you to be good, very good, to that sad-eyed child.'

CHAPTER XII.

FAIR LAUGHS THE MORN.

'But now you talk things senseless, like a child;
Good sooth! Have *we* then never broken bread
In strange men's houses, and found love grow wild
In far-off lands, ere hitherward we sped?'

WORSLEY'S *Odyssey*.

MICHAEL'S support and encouragement notwithstanding, it was really a difficult matter for Mrs. Salvain to knock at an unknown door and introduce herself to unknown people. The handsome, timid old lady blushed like a girl when the door was opened, and a tall, stout, slatternly-looking woman asked gruffly what her will might be.

'This is where Mrs. Gower lives, is it not? I beg pardon, are you Mrs. Gower?'

A loud, coarse laugh interrupted Mrs. Salvain's inquiries.

'Mah neäme's Bell Boartas, if ya want te

knaw. Misthris Gower's i' bed, poor soul. T' bairn's a fortnit oäd. But cum in if ya want owt. You're changin' thracks, mebbe?'

'No, I have no tracts with me,' replied Mrs. Salvain, accepting the woman's invitation to enter. Her feminine eye was attracted by the beautiful, well-kept old furniture at the first glance. Her second glance fell upon a tall pale girl, who stood near the window with nervously clasped hands and dark sad eyes, sadder for the traces of weeping.

'Oh, you are the—you are Miss Gower?' said Mrs. Salvain, smiling kindly, and holding out her hand. 'I was going to say, you are the little girl my son has spoken of. I shall tell Michael how absurd it was of him to call you a little girl. You remember him, my dear? He saw you the other week at—well, at Wharram's, you know. He's been talking about you ever since; that is, he has talked about you many times. But I couldn't come sooner. My daughter has not been well. And *you* don't look well, my dear. You've been fretting. Is your mother ill?'

'Yes; she is ill,' Dorigen replied, lifting her eyes to the stranger's face, and speaking in her usual quiet way.

'She's doin' as nicely as need be,' broke in

Mrs. Boartas. 'But she's doon-sperrited, poor thing ; an' neä wunder, considering t' awk'ard waäy 'at things hes gone lately ; i' business, Ah mean. But you'll know nought aboot sike things as that ; an' Ah'll just pop up an' tell her 'at you're here. You'll ha' te see t' bairn, ya know, an' hev a bit o' caäke an' a drop o' wahne . . . Yis, yis; ya'll be forced, or else ya'll tak t' luck awaäy wi' ya, an' that wad niver deä.'

Mrs. Salvain was not sorry to be left alone with the wan, weary-looking girl, whose very look seemed to plead for sympathy. They sat down, Dorigen by the little table where the jet bracelets which she had been stringing were all spread out ready for her father when he should come in to finish and pack them; Mrs. Salvain sat in a chair quite near. She was roused to compassion herself now; not that it was a difficult thing at any time to awaken her compassionate feelings. The instinct of motherliness was strong within her. She had almost forgotten that she was but obeying her son's behests.

'We could not get any flowers to bring you,' Mrs. Salvain began apologetically. 'Michael went over to see if he could get a few at the lodge; but there was nothing there. So I just brought you this little geranium; it was the

only one that would go into my reticule . . . No, don't thank me, honey. It isn't worth thanks. You shall have some better things than this. And now let me tell you at once that an idea has come into my head just now, since I heard about your mother, and I *should* like to carry it out. It would please Michael beyond anything I could do . . . . Will you go back with me to-day, my dear, just for a week or two till your mother's better? It's a cold time of year, but there's often a few fine days in February. And we could take care of you. What do you think mother would say? I *should* like to have you. And you would like it, honey, wouldn't you? Thorsgrif isn't a pretty place, but it's curious. I think you'd like to come.'

For a moment there was no reply. Dorigen sat quite still: her breathing came slowly and heavily; her colour rose hotly to her cheek; the large dark eyes were lifted with a look that was full of quick gladness that could yet not subdue the pain that was behind.

'If *only* I might go!' she said at last, with almost breathless earnestness. Not even this simple invitation could come to her but it must be received with an intensity and depth of emotion that might have befitted some cataclysm of fortune. This, then, was the fulfilment of

all her dreams; this was the compensation for the drear silent days which had passed since that word spoken in Wharram's Yard had filled her life with expectancy. She had had no doubt, no fear. The word had carried its own assurance with it; an assurance that some lower, lonelier life had been left behind, that fuller and wider life was dawning at last. If the days had been lengthened out to thrice their number she would still have waited in hope. It was impossible that he who had so spoken should fail or forget. She had only to be patient; and patience was not difficult to her . . . . Now it might be that all waiting was at an end.

Mrs. Salvain was loquacious and persuasive, but she lacked something of pertinacity, and it may be that if circumstances had not favoured her she would have failed of her new desire. But Mrs. Gower was not slow to perceive that a week or two of change and country air might be a good thing for a girl who was growing too fast, and who had no appetite. The poor woman was perplexed by the suddenness of it all, and by the idea of Dorigen going to stay with strangers; though of course the name of Salvain was not new to Mrs. Gower. The old doctor had been a familiar figure in her father's house, and John Gower had been able to add consider-

ably to his daughter's knowledge of her new found friend.

'It's very kind of you, ma'am,' Mrs. Gower said feebly. 'And it's not as if you were quite strangers after all.' She was lying propped against the pillows in her best bedroom; her thin face looked almost pretty under the pink tinge of colour that was upon it, and the pale red rippling hair looked all the better for being a little astray under the lace border of her cap. She lifted the tiny new baby into Mrs. Salvain's arms with a sigh.

'It's not a pretty baby,' she said sadly; 'not as pretty as Dorigen was, or little Elsie. John wants to have this one called Elsie, and I've given way, to please him; but I don't like callin' a livin' child after a dead one; it's never lucky. But he seems to have set his mind upon it. He's a man 'at thinks a deal of his children, though folks don't know it. An' I'll have to send an' ask him about Dorigen goin' to Thorsgrif. Mebbe you won't be startin' just yet awhile?'

'Oh no; not for two or three hours yet; and I *am* glad you have decided to let her go,' replied Mrs. Salvain, evidently feeling all the satisfaction she displayed. 'I have some shopping to do, and I've promised to go and have a cup of tea with an old friend who lives on St.

Hild's Mount; and then I'll get Michael to bring the gig down here so that her things can be put in without any trouble. But don't worry about anything—now please don't worry. The shabbiest frock she has will do as well as the best for Thorsgrif.'

'I am afraid she hasn't anything else but shabby frocks,' sighed Mrs. Gower. The confession was one that would not have been made to anybody; but Mrs. Salvain's kind manner and homely ways were irresistible to a woman whose life of late had been one long sorrow. And there was yet no promise of better things. Behind Mrs. Gower's concession there was an almost humiliating acknowledgment that it might be good for Dorigen to make to herself friends, who, if they did not receive her into their houses, would yet see that the child did not go shelterless.

That day was to Dorigen like a page out of somebody else's story. When she went into the workshop her father saw at a glance that something had happened, some good thing. Her face had a glad look, yet it was almost tense in its gladness, as if the girl were exercising all the restraint she knew how to use. How could she be so heartless as to be happy when no one else was going to be happy? That was the question

that was before her now. Her father saw it in part, and he grieved for the thing he saw. It brought before him the utter joylessness of the child's life as he had not seen it, and his own insight smote him with the force of a hundred spoken reproaches.

Her news was told and her request made with a quietness that would have been unnatural in most girls of her age. Her father was seated before a block in the middle of the shop, 'chopping out' with a small chisel; a couple of grindstones were thundering and whirring, the brown-red dust was flying. John Gower made no reply for a moment, but the elevation at the outer corners of his eyes betokened the astonishment he was in.

'I don't want to go if you wish me not to, father,' Dorigen said presently. Her voice quivered as she spoke.

And there was an answering quiver in the father's tone. 'I'm very glad for you to go,' he said. 'What o'clock is it to be?'

'Not till four. Shall I ask Mrs. Salvain to wait till you come to your tea?'

'On no account. I don't want to see Mrs. Salvain. I don't want to see you again.'

"Not to say 'good-bye'?"

"Not to say 'good-bye.' You can say it now."

CHAPTER XIII.

'BUSY DREAMS AND FANCIES WILD.'

'O weary Lady Geraldine,
I pray you drink this cordial wine;
It is a wine of wondrous powers,
My mother made it of wild flowers.'

COLERIDGE: *Christabel.*

IT was fortunate that Michael Salvain's gig was what was termed in the neighbourhood a 'sizeable' one. It held three people quite comfortably. Dorigen, indeed, sitting wrapped in shawls between Mr. Salvain and his mother, would have found the word 'comfortable' pitifully inadequate to express her sensations. Delight, happiness, luxury, felicity of almost every kind was being enjoyed within that small space; but, as usual, the enjoyment was of the most silent. No exclamation of pleasure or satisfaction broke from the girl's lips.

Long ago the sun had set, but there was light enough in the intensely clear sky to throw into dark relief the picturesque lines of Danesbecke Nab. Looking seaward from the village at the foot of the cliff, you could discern the rugged point stretching out into the ocean. Beyond it ships were passing with twinkling lights visible. There were more lights in the cottage windows of Danesbecke Wyke, and in the tiny shops which looked so dim and quaint and still. Everywhere in the twilight there was this same ineffable, half-spiritualized stillness. The leafless trees that were by the steep hillside, as they went up to Oswaldthorpe, seemed to droop in a sombre gracefulness. The old church on the hill-top stood out in solemn blackness against the band of dusky daffodil-yellow that was just above the horizon. That was a long way from the village. All the way up Oswaldthorpe Bank, nearly a mile of steep climbing, Michael walked by the side of the gig; and Dorigen would have been glad to walk too, but she had not the courage to say so. It was always a difficult matter to her to break a long silence, and now it was more than ever difficult, since the silence was so strange and new and sweet.

The village of Oswaldthorpe stands some five

hundred feet above the sea-level. Dorigen saw but little of it, though the moon was rising out of the eastern sea and the stars were beginning to shine in the clear æther. She could only discern the dark chimneys and gables of the cottages that struck against the fading yellow with that peculiar and poetic mysticity which gives an impression that no picture can ever convey quite truthfully. There is nothing like it. No other effect of nature produces the same half-sad, half-yearning emotion which is awakened by the commonest object in the distance, or mid-distance, when it stands between you and a sky from which the sun has but lately gone, leaving only a faint lingering light that touches you like a pathetic reminiscence. It is an effect that has no monotony. Year by year it shall move you to the same emotion ; and yet you shall never weary, nor wish that it could change.

When the village was passed, Mr. Salvain, who had taken his seat in the gig again, turned his horse's head seaward into a narrow lane.

'We shall soon be home now, my dear,' Mrs. Salvain said. 'You're not cold, are you ? No ? That's right. The next village is Threiplands, and then it's only a very little way to Thorsgrif. I hope you'll like Thorsgrif, and I hope you

won't be tired, not *too* tired. I like to feel a little bit wearied myself; it makes rest so delightful. I often think there's nothing nicer than rest when one is really weary. And I hope you like being out of doors; it's so good for you. But I don't think you'll get to church on Sunday. We have to come to Oswaldthorpe, and it will be too far for you, I'm afraid. What do you think, Michael?'

'I think we'll wait till Sunday comes, mother. Then we shall see what kind of weather it is.'

'Yes, so we shall,' she said, reclining comfortably against the cushions her son had placed for her. She was a happy-natured woman, and she was even happier than usual to-night. The tone of Michael's voice was reward for all she had done, if reward had been needed. She was not quite sure that she was going to get on very easily with this silent, reserved girl, who had awakened both Michael's interest and her own, reserve and silence notwithstanding; but she would do her best. She had a curious feeling of being drawn as to a child who was fatherless and motherless.

They still went on; the moon was rising higher, the shadows of the hedgerows fell across the misty light that was in the lane. Here and there a bird stirred and fluttered past. At

Threiplands there was the sound of a violin in a cottage by the roadside. The sparks were flying at the forge; the village lads were gathered in a knot about the blazing light. What made the ecstasy, the mystery, of all these common sights and sounds? How came the sense of sweet expansion, of soft harmony? What awoke the underlying fear of any touch of change, even the change of coming nearer to the end of the journey? Something that was almost a sob escaped the girl's lips with the passionate desire that that journey might never end. She imagined it, as she sat there, the driving on and on, always in darkness, in silence, always through quiet cliff-top villages, always with the silver moon behind sparkling upon the sea, always with Mrs. Salvain on one side, and this strong, tender, protecting figure on the other. The power, the gentleness, the gravity of this man's ways seemed curiously mingled in the child's mind with the solemn beauty of the night. His meaningful silence was blent with the silence that was upon the land; and for her there was something in his nature that answered strangely to the yearning awakened by the half-hidden, incomprehensible distances into which the low moonlight fell faintly and dimly, but partly revealing the softened outlines of the

farmsteads and the isolated groups of trees. It was as if a spell had been cast over her, leaving her only enough of her normal faculties for the entertainment of dread lest the spell should break. If it did break, would she find herself in the old, sad environment of Wiggoner's Wharf?

'There! This is Thorsgrif, my dear,' broke in Mrs. Salvain, as her son turned the horse's head seaward once more. They had been winding round by devious ways, sometimes almost turning their backs upon the rugged coast-line, and facing the sloping waste of land which lay between the sea-edge and the moor. Now the great glittering expanse of water was at their feet again, and they were nearer to it than they had been before.

The village of Thorsgrif was smaller than either of the other villages they had passed through. A few tiny, low-roofed cottages stood perched irregularly on the very edge of the stern dark rock. Down at the foot of the cliff there appeared to be more cottages nestling on a ledge that was barely out of the reach of the white lapping waves, the sound of which was near enough now to enter as a fresh element into the charm that was working so strongly upon the girl's mind. It may be supposed that

this was not a new sound, but the supposition cannot be readily granted. The sea has its separate tone for the base of every cliff, the angle of every rock, the sweep of every bay; and a sea-lover shall not confuse them or mistake them. This fresh, swift, rushing ripple heard in the night at the foot of Thorsgrif Ness was not the ripple that broke up the sands at Hild's Haven; it was new, and in relation with all the other new things that were making such deep impression, and the scent of the sea-wrack, as it came mingled with the strong sulphurous odour of burning alum shale, became at once a part and parcel of the new life which had been entered upon so suddenly, and with such deep unspoken gladness. Afterward it seemed to Dorigen that her very soul had grown in that brief journey from Hild's Haven to Thorsgrif Ness.

Mrs. Salvain kept up her smooth little comments on the things which might have been visible, but were not.

'You can't see much of the works, my dear—only just the tops of the sheds, and the smoke from the mine. A heap of burnt shale is called *mine*, you know; but you shall go down to-morrow and see it all, and Michael will tell you everything. And some of the men live down

there; in those cottages beside the works there are seven or eight families. I shouldn't like to live down there myself; I've said so to Michael many a time. The cliff looks frightfully dangerous when you look up from below; indeed, it *is* dangerous. You must never sit down under it, my dear. Once—it was in the year 1808—two young Staithes girls, sisters they were, sat down on the scaur—I'll show you the exact spot when we go down—and while they were sitting there talking quietly together, and looking out over the sea, a sharp splinter of rock fell from the top of the cliff, spinning round and round as it fell, and it struck one of the sisters on the back of her neck, so that it took her head quite off. The other sister saw it rolling away over the scaur to a great distance before it stopped. Think of that, my dear, whenever you are tempted to sit down under the cliffs. It is quite true, and what has happened once may always happen again.'

'All the same I should recommend Miss Gower *not* to think of it; and I should hardly have told the story to her to-night, my mother,' Michael said, carefully rounding a corner of the lane just beyond the village. The moon was sailing in a nest of cloud now; every cloud-

edge was tipped with pale gold, and shaded below with various pearl tints, whilst a darker bank of vapour was gathering far away in the distance where Hild's Haven was. Dorigen half turned, and a pathetic yearning for the home fireside and her father's face came over her all at once and unexpectedly, breaking in upon the new spell like the pain that comes in dreams; and she could not put it quite away that night, nor any night. She had not known till now the strong tie that bound her to that homely home in the 'Haven toune in the farthest part of Yorkeshire.'

While she was still in the grasp of that yearning, Mr. Salvain got down from the gig again, and opened a gate that barred the descent into what appeared to be a wood in a rocky hollow between two tall points of the dark sea-cliff. One white road led almost straight downward, but the road they took was a winding one to the right, and kept them still facing seaward. There were dark holly trees on either hand, glistening where the light fell; the tops of the young pine-trees shot upward from below; some tall Scotch firs swayed gloomily in the breeze; a twisted leafless alder-tree stood out across the stream of misty light. Just then the moon quite suddenly swept herself free from the clouds, and disclosed

a tall irregular stone house, massively built, and of more considerable size than strangers usually expected to find it. Picturesque gables and clusters of chimneys stood out in fantastic line against the gold and grey of the sky; the numerous small windows were half hidden in the clustering ivy. The road up to the front of the house led over a kind of terrace with a low stone balustrade that overhung the hollow, which was filled by the tangled wood. The terrace was grass-grown; the wheels went over it almost silently. The glittering, rippling sea was so near—it was just over the edge of the terrace—that for a moment Dorigen had a sense of fear that they might go too far in an unthinking moment. But the horse seemed to stop of his own goodwill by the broad stone steps under the porch; and when the door was opened Mr. Salvain came to the side of the gig, and with mindful gentleness lifted Dorigen across into the dimly-lighted hall.

'Take care of her, Joanna,' he said to a tall thin woman with dark unsmiling eyes, who came out from one of the rooms on the left. 'Take care of her, and have some of mother's elder wine made hot and sweet.'

Long, long years afterward that voice came back to her, and the simple words that the voice

had said that night, 'Take care of her, Joanna!' It was not till these after days came with their burden of experience that she understood clearly why a strong man's voice should have had in it vibrations of such womanly tenderness. But even at the time when they were uttered, she awoke to the new strange grace that words might have when spoken in new ways; and all night in the room with the oriel window there came mingled with the impressions of the old china and the dark oak, and the quaintly-patterned blue chintz, a kind of beautiful and gently tyrannous excitement, which seemed at times as if it were about to grow too keen and quiver into pain. . . . Michael Salvain's voice and footstep on the stair in the early morning seemed to crystallize these vague elements of emotion, and to give a point for the concentration of any experience that might arise out of the days that were to be spent in the house at Thorsgrif Ness.

CHAPTER XIV.

'HATH HE MEDDLED WITH ALAM, OUR HOLY FATHER'S MARCHANDISE?'

'Is it too late, then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire, and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow-mortals, nought beside?'

ROBERT BROWNING: *Evelyn Hope.*

THE morning was bright and sunny as any real spring morning could have been. The doors and windows were all wide open to let the sunshine in; the breeze from the sea came with it, and the fresh free sound of the rushing wavelets at the foot of the cliff. The holly-trees were sparkling, the red boles of the Scotch firs showed in fine contrast to the dull blue-green of the foliage; and there

was bird-music in the air, the sound that seems always the natural accompaniment of sunshine. The scream of the sea-gulls came softened by distance; they had forsaken the ledges that were all about the mouth of the ravine.

Dorigen was standing at the end of the terrace, leaning upon the ivy-grown balustrade, when Mr. Salvain came back from the beach at breakfast-time.

She had been looking into the wide tangled hollow below. The young fir-trees grew almost down to the sands on this side, and on that there was a great slope of blue-grey shale, with a rugged fractured piece of rock standing out at a sharp angle above. The white wavelets were leaping right up into the little stone-strewn creek, meeting the narrow stream of brown peaty water that ran surging and gurgling all the way down from the moor. Every sound was a soothing sound, and made for that perfect dreamful peace which is usually as unattainable as it is desirable.

Dorigen turned when she heard footsteps on the grass-grown terrace. A quiet pink flush rose to her pale face, a light came into her dreamy eyes; her lips half parted as if to smile or speak, but she waited for the brief undemonstrative greeting that came, and replied with a

brevity which was certainly 'the next thing to silence.' Her reticence was pleasing to Michael Salvain, and congenial. He knew that she could speak on occasion.

'It gave me a moment's uneasiness to find that you were not indoors,' he said, speaking in his usual quiet, considerate way. 'I was afraid the fine morning might have tempted you farther afield, and I didn't want you to tire yourself before breakfast. . . . Will you come with me this morning to see the works?'

The girl looked up with a flash of gladness in her eyes; a soft colour came swiftly over her face.

'Yes, I should like . . . I should like to see the alum works.'

'What were you going to say?'

'I was going to say that I should like to go with you.'

'And what made you change your answer for a less pleasant one?'

Ah, what was it? What was it that was filling the hours with strange, sweet meanings that were all the sweeter for being intangible and incomprehensible? It was like some new and beautiful dream; and often it happens in dreams that one is perplexed, and cannot give quite the answer one longs to give. And then one awakens,

and it has not mattered that no answer has been given of any kind.

Michael Salvain had no touch of cruelty in his nature, but he half smiled to see the large wondering eyes lifted to his in genuine perplexity. He kept silence for a moment, having an artist's eye for the picture that was before him. The blue sea that was the background repeated itself in the dreamy blue eyes that were looking into his; the small pale face looked paler for the abundance of the heavy black hair that lay about it. 'It is not a face that others would call beautiful,' he said to himself; 'not yet; and it is a face that will come to its own slowly, if ever at all. . . . I shall like to watch its coming.'

Presently there was the sound of a window opening behind them; a dark, sweet, smiling old face leaned forward. 'Come in, my dear, come in,' said Mrs. Salvain. 'Breakfast is ready at last! And I'm ever so much obliged to you for being here, for Michael is always cross when he has to wait for his meals, and I'm sure he isn't cross this morning. Come in.'

Mr. Salvain smiled a little under the accusation. He was given to admit that punctuality was one of his small vices; and, truth to say, if it were a virtue in him, its rewards were of dubi-

ous value. Dorigen came to discern clearly that he had not inherited it from his mother.

The breakfast was set out in an old brown room which opened upon a kind of courtyard at the back of the house. There was a high wall with patches of ivy straggling up it here and there. A flagged pathway went round the square a few feet from the wall; there was a covered well, with steps that led down into its dark depths. Here and there a rough wooden garden-chair was standing upon the bright green turf. The sun was slanting into the place now, making the ivy glisten, and catching the dew-drops that were upon the grass. Beyond the top of the wall the furzy common that was between the house and the village rose with a sudden swell. There was nothing else. The dark whin-bushes stood against the sunny blue of the sky; some fowls were pecking about over the rugged hillocks, geese were cackling in high aggressive disdain; and the homeliest of these sounds made harmony for ears accustomed only to the clatter of the shipbuilders' hammers and the 'Ho! heave ho!' of the sailors in the harbour at Hild's Haven.

There was no one but Mr. Salvain and his mother in the quiet quaint room. The old-fashioned furniture was such as Dorigen was

used to at home, but it was less well-kept; and later she missed the order and preciseness to which she had always been accustomed. The abundant breakfast-table had an air of something that was almost untidiness, and more than once the fancy crossed Dorigen's mind that Mr. Salvain was noting things with a silent sadness that betrayed long and useless remonstrance. If only she might have served him herself! With all the loftiness of nature which she believed him to have, he seemed to be a man who might have even an undue appreciation of snowy table-linen, bright silver, and exact arrangement. She was not considering the opposite of these things through her own eyes, but through his; and the girl might have been a little sorry if Mrs. Salvain had left her time for such idle sorrow. But the kind old lady went on smiling sweetly, and chattering freely and easily, as was her wont at all times. She was a woman of few reservations.

'My daughter will be down presently,' she said to Dorigen, speaking to the child with a certain courtesy that it was in her nature to give. 'You did not see much of her last night. It is seldom, indeed, that she will see strangers at all; but she will take to you, my dear. I can tell from something that she said at bedtime that she

will take to you. And I shall be glad, I shall be very glad, because it does her good to be with anyone who is patient and companionable.'

Dorigen could only look perplexed and sigh faintly; she did not comprehend. A change had come over Mrs. Salvain's face as she spoke; the still beautiful brown eyes had drooped heavily, and pathos had been visible in the curves of the handsome sensitive mouth. Mrs. Salvain sighed; then she spoke again.

'I will tell you all about it, my dear, some time,' she said. 'You are only a child, but you are not like other children; you will understand, and you will be sorry. Everyone was sorry for my Joanna, and though the story has been written and printed, it was not her story; that was only known to the people about here. It was Captain Marsingaile's story that people made such a fuss about. Perhaps you have heard of it or read of it. He was captain of a whaler, the *Abbot of Streonshalh*, and he went out to the Greenland seas and never came back again. I dare say you have heard how it all happened?'

'Did he take his wife with him?' Dorigen asked.

'Yes, honey, he did. Then you have heard about it?'

'No, but my godfather knows, and once he promised to tell me ; perhaps he forgot.'

'He might forget to tell you ; he could never forget the story. No one could forget that, it was too terrible,' replied Mrs. Salvain. 'But terrible as it was, there have been times when I have felt that he deserved it all—Henry Marsingaile, I mean. It was he who spoilt my child's life ; I cannot but remember that. I cannot but remember it with her before my eyes every day, moving about like the ghost of her murdered self. Oh, my dear, if you had known what a bright, bonny girl my Nanna was, you would not wonder that I speak so! But hush! She is coming. Don't say a word of this unless she speaks of it to you herself—please, not a word, my dear.'

A fuller stream of sunshine came into the room with the opening of the door. A tall black figure entered, with impressive step and movement, bending gracefully to kiss the anxious, watchful mother. Then Mr. Salvain placed a chair for his sister, who laid her hand gently and silently on Dorigen's head for a moment as she passed, but did not speak. She was not given to much speaking ; that could almost be seen on the thin, wan face. Yet it was an eloquent face ; in the darkest hours it was eloquent.

But little more was said; and half an hour later Dorigen and Michael Salvain were walking over the furzy cliff-top common to Thorsgrif. The wind came up from the sea, bringing always the free fresh sound of the rushing water. A steamship was gliding northwards; down at the foot of the cliffs a few children were playing on the green sandy slope. Beyond there was Thorsgrif Ness; it ran out to the sea like a wide black wall of rock, broad enough on the top of it, where it was nearest to the cliff, for sheds, and buildings, and heaps of brushwood to be scattered over it everywhere, while the great cisterns for steeping the burnt shale were ranged on the wide plateau that was a little above the level of the workmen's cottages.

Already it was a busy scene. The diggers were at work in the shale, others of the men and boys were gathered about the tramways over which the small waggons were moving to and fro. There were men at the pumps, men at the cisterns, men at the fires. The white smoke came curling up out of the cliffside hollows, smelling strongly of sulphur. Was it possible to live down there always in that smoky, stifling atmosphere? Dorigen wondered, as they began to descend the steep pathway that led from the village on the cliff-top to the hamlet which was so

perilously near the bottom. She did not ask the question, but the wonder was in her eyes, mingled there with a certain look of quiet, glad delight.

'It is as if a load had been lifted from the child's life already,' Michael Salvain said to himself, taking pleasure in the knowledge that he had lifted it. Surely this was a pleasure he might take? This at least could hold no danger.

Was he taking this small pleasure more eagerly than he knew? Having done his pleasureless duty so long and so sternly, was it at all possible that the first touch of change might find him unprepared, and not rightly watchful?

He was not watching himself to-day, but another. All his life he had been a student of humanity, capable of noting and following an unobvious human motive from its source to its last outcome in the shape of human action. This alone, it seemed to him, had kept his soul alive with any worthy living. Men, the worst of them—and he rather preferred to consider the worst—were so much better than the world deemed them, so much more worth one's care and pains, so much more deserving of one's pity and sympathy; and as for forgiveness, every year of his life made forgiveness easier. We pardon all that we comprehend. It is com-

prehension that is difficult, and it is here that the student of humanity has the advantage of the man who has made no study of his kind at all. The latter is in the position of a judge who has only the plaintiff's accusation by way of evidence, and who declines to hear what the defendant has to say for himself. It was the habit of Michael Salvain's mind to put himself in the place of the defendant for a while.

It was natural to his position that much of his thought should be occupied with decisions for and against; and it had so happened that of late he had been a little weary of the ways of men, a little sickened by contact closer than usual with lowness and dulness, darkness and meanness. Now as he went down among his men he felt his old sympathy reviving; his smile and his word of greeting went out with the old freedom, and he knew that it was not the sunshine or the blue breezy morning. It was something newer than these, newer and more precious.

They went round by the great cisterns that were open to the sky. Some of them were forty feet in length, and had as many waggon-loads of the calcined mineral soaking there in the water.

'I don't expect all this to interest you now,' Mr. Salvain said; 'but if you live to be old you

may some day like to tell of it. There will be no alum works on this coast by that time, perhaps none anywhere.'

'Why do you think that?'

'Because already other things are being used in place of alum for many purposes. . . . You know how it first came to be made in this neighbourhood?'

'No, I do not know anything.'

'Ah, that is a pity. But I am not sure that I shall enlighten you.'

'Why?' asked Dorigen, after pausing a little.

'I might be forming a nucleus round which information would go on gathering.'

'But that would be good. I should like that more than anything.'

'Probably; but all the same it would be a mistake,' replied Mr. Salvain, half-smiling, yet hardly knowing himself whether he spoke in jest or in earnest. The child's very ignorance had a charm for him, simple ignorance being a quality which lends itself easily to a certain kind of attractiveness when it is untainted by affectation; and there are natures which can be touched by conscious want of knowledge to sympathy of the same sort awakened by other wants. Dorigen Gower's need of knowledge, her hunger for it, her consequent receptiveness, seemed to be under-

stood of Michael Salvain without words of explanation. It was written on her face and in her eager, changeful, wistful eyes, which seemed for ever looking for something that had not yet discovered itself, or promised discovery in any facile way. The expression was touching, whether you comprehended it or not; but a certain amount of comprehension had come to Michael Salvain quickly; it was growing rapidly, and with it was growing that sense of nearness which usually comes only after long intercourse. Before that first day was over it seemed to him that the girl's mind and his moved each to the other with the instant and perfect accord which seldom comes except by learning and that unconscious study which we all of us apply in human intercourse of every kind. The successful students are accredited with tact, which is but a briefer name for fineness of perception.

But as yet the day was only in its beginning. They were still wandering about among pits and cisterns, among heaps of brushwood and coal, piles of casks, mountains of shale, and 'doggers' of limestone, put aside for the makers of cement. All these things needed explanation; and, notwithstanding Michael Salvain's dread of 'the touch of change,' a lesson in elementary geology was given then and there, the great fractured

cliff, with its four or five distinctly visible lines of strata, serving for a text. The story of the beginnings of alum-making on the Yorkshire coast followed inevitably.

'It was in Queen Elizabeth's reign,' Mr. Salvain said. 'It is believed that alum was not made in England at all before that date. We imported it from Italy, and history says that the Pope had a monopoly of its manufacture. But a certain enterprising Yorkshireman, one Sir Thomas Challoner, happening to be "upon his travels," was moved to speculation, some say by noting certain peculiarities in the colour of the foliage in the regions where the Pope's alum shale was found, and remembering identical peculiarities in the colour of the foliage about his own estate at Guisborough. Others say—and this seems more probable to me—that he was struck by the resemblance of the rocks to those in his own neighbourhood. Anyhow, he was aroused to effort, and, being aware that open action would lead to undesirable consequences, he stooped to strategy. It is said that he bribed some of the Pope's alum-makers to come with him to England, and had them conveyed on board a ship concealed in casks. On his return he began making alum at once. The Pope got to know of it, and immediately constructed that very appalling

curse, which you may have shivered over. One of the historians of Hild's Haven mildly calls it "a shocking document." Have you seen it?'

'No; but I have heard of it. Isn't it rather like that in the "Jackdaw of Rheims"?'

'Very much like it, only completer.'

'But "nobody seemed one penny the worse" for the cursing in the "Jackdaw."'

'Are you wondering if the Pope's curse is likely to fall on me?' Mr. Salvain asked, taking Dorigen's hand to help her over a pile of wood that was lying in the way to the sheds. 'I believe it included everything and everybody connected with alum-making in England.'

'Are you afraid of it?' she asked quite gravely,

'Well, not exactly afraid; but I have wondered sometimes if it had anything to do with my prematurely grey hairs. Part of the curse was especially directed that way. "May they be cursed in the hair of their head, and in their brain, in the crown of their head, and in their temples, in their forehead, in their ears, and in their eyebrows." It was very circumstantial, you see.'

Dorigen was silent. The wind was driving a cloud of white smoke across their path; some men with wheelbarrows were passing noisily; the sound of the waves among the stones in the

angle of the rock seemed to be growing louder; the gulls were swooping and screaming by. It was difficult to think out the idea of such a thorough malediction in all its bearings just now.

'I don't think I should like to be an alum-maker,' she said at last.

'No? But I hope you don't object to having an alum-maker for your friend?'

Once more the child kept silence for a moment. Then she lifted her face again with the wistful look upon it, but there was a tinge of colour breaking through her natural paleness.

'Will you be my friend always?' she asked with simple earnestness.

'Always, if it may be,' Michael Salvain said, growing grave as he spoke.

It was but natural that his mind should project itself into that 'always.' What would it mean for this child, whose sixteenth summer was not yet quite begun? What for him, whose years were reckoned by more than thrice ten winters? He hardly knew from whence or from what he had derived the feeling that the life of this timid, fragile girl at his side would not be the common, beautiful woman's life, of home-making and motherhood, and sweet, needful household cares; but the feeling was there with

him, drawing him to watch, to wonder with ever-increasing interest. It might be that his own unfulfilled life quickened his perception. A man whose dream has been broken, whose strength has been turned aside from the working out of his own vein, will start sooner to note the signs by which he discerns that another human being within his ken has had, or will have, some special call to some special part in the world's work. No word that had passed the girl's lips had betrayed that she had yet awakened to consciousness. In truth, he saw that she had not awakened. The yearnings were there, the wonderings, the sadnesses, the isolation; but as yet these things had no meaning, and Michael knew that not he himself, nor another, might help in the revelation.

CHAPTER XV.

JOANNA.

'O wedding guest! This soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea;
So lonely 'twas that God Himself
Scarce seemed there to be.'

COLERIDGE.

THE drawing-room in the Alum-Master's house was like all the other rooms, low and wide, and somewhat dim in the far corners of it. It was over the room Mr. Salvain used as an office, and had two narrow windows looking down into the ravine. Just beyond the dark angle of rock a strip of the grey North Sea was visible—enough of it for stormy weather, Mrs. Salvain was wont to say.

The room was comfortable, and a few slight changes would have made it consistently picturesque. The old oak chairs, with finely-carved

wheat-ears growing up the backs and spreading out fanwise at the top, would have been priceless in the eyes of a connoisseur; and there was a bookcase to match, and a tall bridewain that perhaps should have had no place in a drawing-room; but since it was a handsome piece of furniture Mrs. Salvain liked to have it there. The old china—which consisted mainly of incomplete tea-services, with other odds and ends of things that had originally been for use rather than for ornament—was put carefully away in dark cupboards. A teapot was not, to Mrs. Salvain's taste, a thing to decorate a table with, and the idea of hanging bread-and-butter plates on the wall was yet undeveloped. On the whole, the room had very few ornaments for its size, and these, sad to say, were commonplace and incongruous. It is the ornamentation of a room rather than its furniture which provides the test of your æsthetic standpoint.

The one thing that arrested instant attention was a large picture—an oil-painting. A professional artist would have perceived it to be a most ambitious piece of amateur work, and yet he might have been as much surprised at the success of the attempt as at its daring.

It was a full-length figure, and represented a tall, beautiful girl in white raiment, with floating

ribbons of palest blue, and decked with wild flowers, from the wreath of blue hare-bells and white convolvulus on her head to the bunches of green, graceful fern and creamy meadow-sweet on the skirt of her dress. Her hands were full of heather, late honeysuckle, and rose-red campion. It was evident that the picture had been painted when the year was

> 'Growing ancient—
> Not yet in summer's death, nor in the birth
> Of trembling winter.'

The first time Dorigen entered the room she stopped instantly before the picture. For her it was a new revelation, and almost overpowering by reason of its vividness and the nearness of its great beauty. She drew back a little shyly, as if not liking to stare too intently into such a living, breathing face as that before her.

Its exceeding loveliness was its most evident attribute, but not its only one. The rest perplexed you. There was talent, that the original might flash upon you suddenly; there was subtilty, that might dawn upon you slowly. Altogether it was a wonderful picture to come upon in the Alum-Master's house at Thorsgrif.

The Alum-Master was there, and his mother.

'Ah! you like the picture, I see,' Mrs. Salvain said, in pleasant tones. 'It is my niece, Ermen-

garde Vyse, or rather Ermengarde Fairfax, now. She is the daughter of my poor sister Alice, who died when Ermine was born. I brought her up; she lived with us till she was seventeen, but I never saw how beautiful she was till Mr. Fairfax came and painted that picture. He is a clergyman, but I always say he has mistaken his vocation. He should have been a painter. But I suppose he knows best.'

'Was she dressed like that when she was painted?' Dorigen asked, not knowing rightly how to put the question that was in her mind.

'Yes, dear,' Mrs. Salvain replied. 'She was supposed to be representing a character from one of Shakespeare's plays. Which is it, Michael? Perdita?'

'Yes, mother. And I dare say Dorigen knows all about Perdita.'

'She is in the *Winter's Tale*,' Dorigen said, blushing with a hotter crimson blush than usual to hear Mr. Salvain use her name so softly and kindly. 'I like her because she is so fond of flowers.'

'What does she say about flowers?' asked Michael, in an absent tone, being busied with searching for a book.

'Oh, don't you remember? She wishes so much for spring flowers:

'"O Proserpina!"
For the flowers now that, frighted, thou lett'st fall
From Dis's waggon!—daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath."'

Michael Salvain was listening to the timid, fervid, eager tones, in which natural affright seemed to be struggling with poetic enthusiasm. He had seldom heard so many words from Dorigen's lips at once; and unbidden there came to him, as it were, a reply from the same play—

'When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever.'

Already she was speaking again.

'What a pretty name it is—Ermengarde!' she was saying as she stood, still entranced, before the picture.

'Yes, it is pretty,' Mrs. Salvain replied. 'And it suits her too, being rather stately. My sister chose it just before she died. Alice used to think a good deal about names, and she used to say that in some way or other a person's name always influenced both his own character and men's estimate of him. . . . By the way, yours is an unusual name, my dear. It is a family name, I think. I fancy I have seen it in the churchyard.'

'Yes,' said Dorigen. 'It is on my aunt's gravestone, and the name is just the same—Dorigen Gower. My grandfather chose her Christian name. He had seen it in one of Chaucer's poems; I think it is the "Frankleine's Tale." I have not read it, but my father says it is the name of a lady who was very good and very true, and had much sorrow.'

'It was odd to give a child the name of a person who had had much sorrow,' Mrs. Salvain replied musingly. Then she turned away, and went to see what Joanna was doing. The mother never forgot the daughter who had lived on and on, but always with a broken heart. Mrs. Salvain only half understood that it was broken-heartedness. She gave no name to the malady that turned all things, if not to 'favour and to prettiness,' at least to pathos and to quietness; she left that to be done by the ruthless tongue of rumour.

Mr. Salvain had found the book he had been looking for, but he was not reading it as he sat there between the windows, with his head a little on one side, and resting upon his hand in a certain peculiar way he had had from boyhood. Something in his mother's comment had awakened again his curious and premature fear for the future of the child who was sitting at a

distance from the Perdita, and still looking into the face of it with an admiration that was almost reverence. The expression added a new grace, a new fineness, to her own countenance.

'Tell me exactly of what you are thinking,' Mr. Salvain said, with that abruptness he often used. Yet the tones were kind, and the voice musically low.

Dorigen turned, blushing and confused.

'I was thinking that I should like to see that lady. Did Mrs. Salvain say that she was still living?'

'Yes; she is living near London, and, if I remember rightly, she will not be more than twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. Her husband is a curate, and since they never stay long in one place, it is not impossible that you may see her. She does not come here now, but perhaps you will not always remain at Hild's Haven. . . . Tell me about your plans for your future life. It is unwise to make plans, but I know you have made some.'

The blush deepened on the shy, susceptible face. The accusation was true, but at sixteen one's plans are seldom suited for revelation. Besides, already circumstances were threatening to stand in the way of any fulfilment of Dorigen's one definite idea.

'I shall have to do some work,' she said, with a visible shadow coming upon her face as she remembered the struggles that had been of late in the house by Wiggoner's Wharf. 'I shall have to learn to do some kind of work so that I can earn money.'

'And that is not what you would like best? I can believe it. But supposing that that was not needful—supposing that you could arrange circumstances very much after your own mind, how would you arrange them? For instance, how would you occupy your time?'

'If I could do exactly as I liked,' the girl replied hesitatingly, 'I would have a small house, a very small one, and full of books. And I would live quite alone, so that I might read always.'

'That is your ideal life at present?'

'Yes.'

'And you think it will last?'

'Yes. I think I can never wish so much for anything as for that.'

What a childish vision it was! and, even for a child, how marvellously straitened! But Michael Salvain had no doubt that this was the one thing she saw at that time. It agreed with his idea of her. Always he perceived in her the need for perfect simplicity of living, for freedom from all manner of complications; and he saw

also that the instinct of humanity in her was as if it did not exist. She would live alone. He believed it. And the life of thought would be all-sufficing. He believed that also; divining that the intellectual life would grow in her, whether checked or not checked, until it became a passion. If he were desiring prevision of her happiness only, this should have satisfied him, for he was aware that, from the days of the ancient Greeks till now, philosophers have held that the highest happiness attainable by man lies always in the exercise of the higher mental faculties. But all the same he was not satisfied, foreseeing that the lines of her lot were not laid, nor likely to be laid, parallel to the lines of her desire, and that out of fateful deviations enough of suffering might arise. But here his sight was not altogether dimmed.

'Whoso suffers most has most to give,'

he said to himself, knowing that the end of human training is that a soul shall learn to perceive, according to its measure, the goodness that lies in full and free giving. 'For this cause came I unto this hour.'

He sat a little longer, indulging the speculative mood that was upon him, and then he went out, going down the path between the firs and the

holly-trees to the very marge of the ebbing tide; and Dorigen watched him till Mrs. Salvain came back, and her daughter with her. The twilight was beginning to fall by that time, and presently Joanna sat down to the piano, and Dorigen sat listening, dreaming, wondering, always with the feeling that Thorsgrif was a place that lent itself easily to your saddest moments. In after days those twilights were remembered with a special distinctiveness, as if they had held some affinity with the days to be.

But those Thorsgrif days were by no means all twilight. They passed on quickly—fine days, dull days, sunny days, rainy days; and all of them alike in being days of new, sweet, troublous pleasure. And there was nothing to account for it all, nothing but a young girl's heart, learning, wondering, yielding, trembling on the verge of betrayal; nothing but a strong man's love, indulged to-day because it was so safe, and good, and brotherly, repressed to-morrow because it was discerned to be a thing so near to peril and to pain. From the beginning it had been half a pain, but neither the pain of it nor the pleasure of it was rightly comprehended as yet, and therefore it was not appraised at its full value.

For Dorigen the hours of Michael Salvain's

absence were the only hours that dragged in any way; but not being an impatient spirit, the waiting and the watching of the clock was only a subdued form of happiness. His step, his voice, the touch of his hand upon her head, was reward enough; and it was well, perhaps, that he did not perceive the half of the joy his mere coming gave. No alarm for her touched him. Her simplicity was her safeguard, and the word 'love' a sign for a poetical idea to which she could attach no actual meaning. She should learn no meaning from him.

So the days went on, growing fuller of deep, silent joy, fuller of something that was strangely akin to sadness. In all her life there were never any more days quite like these.

No suspicion crossed the mind of the dear, gossiping, unthinking old lady, who sat and watched with beautiful kind eyes that saw nothing.

'The way Michael has taken to that child is wonderful; don't you think so, Nanna?' she said one day. Mr. Salvain and Dorigen had just set out to walk by the sands to Hunswyke; and it was new that he should leave the works in the middle of the afternoon without special reason.

'Yes, it is rather wonderful; but she is

a nice quiet little thing,' Joanna said. She was lying on a sofa near the open window. A volume of Coleridge's poems was in her hand, open at the 'Ancient Mariner;' her brown eyes had the far-seeing outlook they had had for so many years. Perhaps it was difficult for Joanna to come back all at once from the ice mast-high and the snowy cliffs to the discussion of her brother's fondness for a girl who had only yesterday been a stranger. Nothing in Joanna's life was of yesterday. She was older than her brother; but you could not easily guess what age she might be, because her face was not worn in any way, and her figure was slight and willowy as it had always been. To those who knew her and her story, it seemed that life had stood still with her for many years, so that she was yet but a girl in that experience which counts for so much in reckoning a woman's age.

Her story had been told to Dorigen. Mrs. Salvain had told it one day when they were sitting together at the seaward end of the terrace. There was a large three-masted ship with nearly all her sails set passing far out at sea.

'Will my Nanna see that, I wonder,' the mother said a little anxiously, as if speaking to herself. 'I hope she will not. I am always glad

that so many of the ships that pass now are steamships; they awaken no recollections for her. But that is a little like the *Abbot of Streonshalh*. Do you see it, my dear? At this distance it is just what the whaling ships used to be. Your father will remember about the whaling-days. It seems to me only like yesterday that the whalers used to come in with all their tons upon tons of oil and whalebone; and all the town so glad to see the poor crews back again, and the men so glad to come back with their hard-earned gains and their wonderful stories. It is, indeed, but like yesterday. The *Abbot of Streonshalh* was one of the very last to go out of Hild's Haven to the Greenland seas.'

'Was that the ship that never came back again?'

'Yes, honey. We were speaking of it the other day, you know, and I told you that the captain's name was Marsingaile—Henry Marsingaile. I hardly know what has made me think so much of him lately, and of the way he used to come to our house when Nanna was quite a little girl. The doctor saw it all coming before I did, and he was not so very well pleased to see it either; but he made no ado when Henry Marsingaile asked if Nanna might

be his wife. She was only seventeen, not much older than you are now, my dear; and her father said that, though he made no objection to the engagement, he should not consent to their being married till Nanna was twenty-one. Henry didn't like the idea of waiting so long, I could see that; but he yielded pleasantly enough when he saw that the doctor was not likely to change his mind, and all went as smoothly as could be for two years. Our house was like a home to him when he came off his voyages, and Nanna was as happy as happy could be. I don't know how it is that I have thought so much of that time during the past week or two. Perhaps it is having you in the house, dear. A house is always brighter for having a young face in it, and I do think you're happy.'

'In all my life I have never been so happy,' the girl replied with grave earnestness, and a little sigh broke in to attest the happiness.

'That is right, honey,' said Mrs. Salvain, hearing only the words. 'I hope you'll come to Thorsgrif often, if only you can be spared, now there's a baby at home. . . . But I was telling you about Henry Marsingaile, and how, just when my poor Nanna had passed her nineteenth birthday, she was struck down by a blow that seemed almost as if it had killed her as it

fell. Henry had gone to Market-Studley to see his friends, and when he had been gone just a month there came a letter to say he was married. Think of that, my dear; and my Nanna with all her beautiful embroidered things cut out and half-made, and everybody knowing all about it! Not that that was the worst; it was Henry himself that she cared for, and the news was like death to her. For months she lay half-unconscious, and I never thought that she would be herself any more, not even so much like herself as she is now; and I ought to be grateful. But oh! it is hard when I think it all over again.'

'Don't tell me if it pains you,' Dorigen said. She was listening with new sympathies, new insight; and the sad attention in her eyes and on her face told Mrs. Salvain that she had effectively awakened the girl's interest and compassion.

'I can tell you the rest now, honey,' she replied, 'and then when Nanna talks to you you will know what she means, or at any rate what it is that she is thinking about. You see, it was the suddenness that hurt her so, and injured her health. Henry Marsingaile had written the most loving of love-letters after he left Hild's Haven. Then he went to a grand

party and saw a very beautiful girl, and fell in love with her, and she with him; and they were married that day fortnight. And they were so passionately attached to each other that when the time came for him to sail they couldn't make up their minds to be separated. And she went with him—think of it, a bride of a few weeks in a rough whaling vessel like the *Abbot of Streonshalh*, and bound for the Greenland seas! It did make a talk hereabouts, I can tell you.'

'And were those the people who never came back?'

'Yes, my dear. They sailed away, Captain Marsingaile and his wife and a large crew—I forget how many altogether; over thirty, I believe—and so far as I know they were never once heard of again while they were living. You may think how it is when a ship goes like that; how folks wait and hope and fear and despair, and yet never give up thinking that the one they cared for most may be miraculously preserved, and come back alive, though all the others be lost for certain. There have been such strange returns at Hild's Haven; men coming back alive and well after twenty years of absence and silence. But none of the crew of the *Abbot of Streonshalh* ever came back, nor

will they. If certainty be as satisfactory as people say it is, the friends of those men should be amply satisfied. It was as if Providence went out of its way to clear up that mystery.'

'Was it really cleared up?' Dorigen asked.

'Yes, my dear. That was how it came to be printed and put into the papers. I am not sure if I can tell it all rightly, just as it was written, because it is mixed up in my memory with the things that were said; but I will tell you as well as I can, though my poor husband used to say that I was never a good hand at telling a story.

'This is not exactly a story, however; for I remember so much about it myself, and as I was saying, it only seems like yesterday that it all happened. And it was rather strange that the thing I dreaded most of all was the return of the *Abbot of Streonshalh.* For Nanna was getting a little better, and I thought that if Henry Marsingaile were to come back to Hild's Haven, and bring his wife with him, and Nanna should see them, it might undo all that time and care and her father's skill had done. But my dread was idle. And I am afraid that when people began to look grave and to shake their heads sorrowfully, I was hardly so grieved as I ought to have been. Perhaps I was sorrier

when I knew that everybody had given up hoping. And the years passed on, one hardly knows how; but they did pass, and it seemed as if the name of the *Abbot of Streonshalh* was about forgotten in Hild's Haven, when one day news came that brought all the old feeling back again, with new horrors in it. The tale was told to us in this very house, for we had left Hild's Haven by that time. And my Nanna was listening, and I hadn't the presence of mind to stop the man who spoke. I was too much overcome with the news myself; even Ermine was horror-struck. But it was worse for poor Nanna, who had never rightly recovered. That one hour did more for her hurt than all the years of silence had done for her healing. I did blame myself afterwards.

'It was one of the crew of the *Neptune* who came to tell us about it. Captain Fox had sent him, having heard how we were likely to be interested in knowing all that might be known of Henry Marsingaile.

'The *Neptune* was not a Hild's Haven ship; but she was a whaler; and she had just returned from the Greenland seas, having had a voyage which had been eventful in many ways. The man—he was one of the specksioneers, and his name was Elias Ford—said that he had never

had such a time in his experience, and hoped never to have such another.

'There was something very impressive in his manner as he began his tale. Sailors are very superstitious, you know; and this man was no exception to the rule. He said that from the very beginning of the voyage he had had a feeling that something unusual would happen before the end of it. The feeling had gone on growing; and one evening in August, when the *Neptune* was suddenly becalmed in the middle of a vast number of icebergs, the idea occurred to him that the time had come for which some unknown influence had been preparing him all the while. He said he believed that others on board the ship were impressed in much the same manner as himself, and he felt certain that Captain Fox was not without some touch of foreboding.

'Of course a feeling of that kind might in a measure arise out of their circumstances and surroundings. Elias Ford said that the strange stillness, the oppressiveness of the atmosphere, the nearness and vastness of the icebergs, all helped to heighten the feeling of unusualness. He described the scene from the side of the ship very graphically. He said that the icebergs were immense, and closely-wedged together;

and so arranged as to look like the peaks of snow-covered mountains rising one behind another away as far as anyone could see. It was evident that the ocean was blocked up so as to leave no passage; and it was also evident that it must have been so blocked for a long time. Captain Fox was not without fears for the ship's safety in such circumstances; but being becalmed, he could not move away. There was nothing to be done but to keep an extra strict look-out. They were safe enough unless the ice began to move.

'But sometime about midnight, and quite suddenly, a gale sprang up; with it a violent snow-storm set in; and then, to the dismay of the crew of the *Neptune*, they began to hear all too plainly the crashing, thundering, tearing sounds of the moving icebergs. They were struck by some of the smaller masses several times—indeed, the man said that every moment the vessel received some fresh shock; and escape seemed impossible, for the open water, if there was any, was not discernible through the thickly-falling snow. They spent the whole of the night in the midst of these known and unknown dangers; but to their great satisfaction the storm went down in the morning as suddenly as it had arisen; and, strange to say, the *Neptune* was

not much the worse for her night among the moving ice.

'Almost as a matter of course the daylight showed a change of scene; but Captain Fox was not prepared for the change he saw. The vast accumulation of icebergs, the accumulation of years, had separated, forming a long sea-lane that wound away between the ice mountains as far as the eye could see. There was still a little haze in the distance; but as the morning wore on it lifted, and the sun broke through; and there, about two miles up that wonderful opening, the Captain of the *Neptune* saw a strange ship moving slowly before the wind, with her sails set in a most unusual manner, and all her yards and rigging hanging in wild disarray. Then, while the Captain was still watching her, she ran aground upon the ice, and lay quite motionless. His curiosity, and that of his men, was excited to the uttermost; but when he ordered a boat out for the purpose of rowing up the mysterious canal between the ice, the men were not too ready to accompany him. They were curious, and they were courageous; but they were not undismayed.

'They went onward slowly and silently. Not a soul appeared on the snow-covered deck of the mystic ship. They hailed her; but no answer came.

'Again and again Captain Fox and his men called to the men of the stranded vessel, but they answered never a word.

'The men of the *Neptune* rowed round the ship before stepping on board; and an open port-hole near the main chains caught the Captain's eye. Into this port-hole he looked; and within he saw a man leaning back in a chair, with writing materials on a table before him. . . . Captain Fox spoke; but the man did not move, or turn his head. He sat as one indifferent to intrusion.

'Captain Fox's men would have dissuaded him from his purpose now; but it seems he was not a man to be turned easily. He went on deck, two of his reluctant crew with him; and they removed the hatchway and went down into the cabin.

'The Captain acknowledged afterward that a tremor seized him as he entered. The man before the writing-table sat still as before. His pen was in his hand; the log-book lay open on the table before him, just where he had made the last entry.

'That last entry was dated, and the date showed that it had been written exactly thirteen years.

'It ran thus:

'"We have now been enclosed in the ice

seventeen days. The fire went out yesterday, and our master has been trying ever since to kindle it again without success. His wife died this morning. There is no relief."

'Captain Fox read this; then he turned silently and entered the master's cabin. There, half-reclining on a bed, was a beautiful girl, with her red lips parted as if to speak; and her still fair and freshly-tinted face looking outward as if deeply interested in what was happening. Her lovely pale gold hair was thrown back, and rippled downward over her white neck and arms: her hands were pretty, and dimpled like the hands of a baby. . . . Thirteen years that fair face had rested on the dimpled hands.

'Her husband—it was Henry Marsingaile—was kneeling on the floor not far away from her. He had a steel in one hand, and a flint in the other; and the tinder lay beside him for the lighting of the fire. . . . Thirteen years he had been kneeling beside the damp tinder.

'I cannot tell you much of the rest of the crew. There was a boy at the bottom of the gangway stairs; but the others were in their berths for the most part. . . . Thirteen years they had rested in their berths on board the *Abbot of Streonshalh.*

'That was the tale that Elias Ford told to us,

and my Nanna heard it. She sat quite still till the man had done; till he had told how the sailors of the *Neptune* had hurried their Captain away from the terrible ship, and how he had brought nothing with him save the log-book, then she fell fainting on the floor; and again for a long time we despaired of her life.

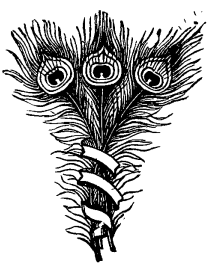
'We got to know afterward that Captain Fox had sent the log-book to the owners of the *Abbot of Streonshalh*, and that he had drawn up an account of all that he had seen in the opening between the Greenland icebergs. It was this account that was printed.

'You will not wonder now that my daughter is not as others are; that she has strange visions, and hears strange voices. There are people who will tell you that she is half-insane, but that is not true. Her mind is as sane as mine; but now and then it is withdrawn, so to speak, and passes into regions where mine may not follow; and it is not always easy to get her back again. That is the utmost that can be said. No woman ever had a better daughter than my Nanna, or one more good, and gentle, and loving. I would suffer anything rather than let her know that I had a headache.'

Dorigen was silent and pale, and involuntarily she shivered a little as Mrs. Salvain finished

speaking. The gentle murmur of the sea far out over the sands helped the impression of the moment; and the white sails on the extreme edge of the horizon were sufficiently suggestive of the reality of the picture presented in so few words. The very ship that was passing might have a dead faithless lover on board; and some one, somewhere, might be sad for his faithlessness. Was love always sad? This same sadness was not quite comprehensible. To love another, being a thing so sweet and beautiful, was surely also a sufficing thing? What did it matter if you cared for anyone, and they did not care for you again? You could go on loving; his presence could still be sweet to you; the sound of his voice still precious. Why not? Was love so poor a thing that it could not afford to give?

Ah, the generosity of that beautiful first love!



CHAPTER XVI.

'AH! WHAT A SWEET RECESS, THOUGHT I, IS HERE.'

'But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree you half-believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

THERE is one thing that we are surely all of us very slow to learn—the extent of our own powers of adaptability. It might seem as if half the sting of life would be taken away if we could trust ourselves to reconcile ourselves. But we choose the sting, and drive it home on every occasion.

We all of us know how much we have suffered from the troubles we went out to meet, going out vainly, or but just to see the arrows of outrageous fortune glance aside. Some of us

know how we have quivered to the last nerve in anticipation of some utterly overwhelming stroke, something it might be that would drive us forth from the gates of our own poor un-Edenlike little *pied-à-terre* to wander over the face of the earth till we could find another—another place to lay our head, but not another home. There could never be another home. Once scatter those half-shabby, uninteresting chairs and tables; once dislodge that handful of books on the shelf; once take down those worthless pictures from the wall, and the chief of life's satisfactions, the good of name and place, the sense of security, the idea of a rest and a peace with which no man might interfere, would be gone for ever. Never again could fate offer to us all that those four narrow walls enclosed.

The feeling is a good and right feeling, and underlies much virtue, but we exaggerate it. Now and then we find our exaggeration.

You shall leave your home for a little while; you shall travel; you shall even spend six weeks at a seaside lodging, and at the end of that time you shall not be able to resist the feeling that you could drift away from your old moorings without any great wrench or strain. Of course you are glad enough to go back, but all the same you are very much aware that the past

few weeks of your life have all but effaced the few years that preceded them. You could do very well at Schaffhausen or at Saltgate-on-the-Sea. It would be dreary, but it would not be heart-breaking.

By the time the daffodils were budding in the hollow below the Alum-Master's house, Dorigen had come to feel that she had lived at least half her life on the cliffside at Thorsgrif. She had forgotten nothing; her memory was too keen and vivid to permit of any forgetting. But her life had been divided, and the nearer half was inevitably in the forefront of her mind.

At the beginning of March a snowstorm had set in. The white flakes had drifted rapidly up the ravine, lying softly upon the strong, wide-spread arms of the spruce firs, whitening the boles of the barer trees, bringing out the tender curves of the branches. Snow at Thorsgrif was not the same thing as snow upon the red roofs of Hild's Haven, and a new appreciation of the beauty of winter awoke in the girl's mind. Awakening at a time when life was expanding so greatly and yet so softly and sweetly, she came to associate always in her mind the far-off upland whitening under the low indigo sky with a certain sense of the largeness of the peace that might be in a quiet uneventful life. These days

were to all seeming utterly uneventful, and the stillness that was in the house was often so great that Rizpah's loud voice and unconsidered movements broke upon the ear with some harshness, though there was nothing harsh about Rizpah herself. Her bright black eyes, rose-red cheeks, and unfailing alertness helped in the making of a personality that seemed to be a very indispensable part of the Alum Master's household. It was Rizpah who broke off the ice-sheath from the first snow-drop, and brought it indoors, wet and sparkling, while the snow was still a foot deep in the hollow.

'It'll please yon bairn,' she said to Joanna, who was in the kitchen looking after a tiny brood of chickens.

The finding of the chickens unexpectedly under an old wheel-barrow that was turned up in the snow had been one of the events of the week, and it was recorded in the *Hild's Haven Messenger*, much to the satisfaction of the people of Thorsgrif generally, and of Enoch Farah in particular, who, being the discoverer, had consequently the distinction of being mentioned by name—that was something for a man to tell to his grandchildren!

Enoch as yet lived a single life down among the alum pits, and was Mr. Salvain's man-of-all-

work, being groom, gardener, poultry-keeper, office-boy, and messenger. As a matter of course, it was asserted in the neighbourhood that Rizpah meant to take pity on his loneliness, but Rizpah had not at all made up her mind about that, and Enoch knew it, and was suitably mindful of his ways. When he discovered that it pleased Rizpah to find or to make any small thing that could be offered to the shy, quiet guest, who gave so little trouble, and who was so evidently made much of by the master, why then it pleased Enoch to do the same, so that quite a collection of shells, fir-cones, wonderful pieces of seaweed, sea-bird's eggs, feathers, and nests was being gathered in Dorigen's room to be taken to Wiggoner's Wharf. Already a certain tremulous fear was coming over the child as the days went on toward full spring-time, and every Saturday she awaited Mr. Salvain's return with more or less of apprehensiveness.

Something of the same feeling haunted Michael Salvain himself, and in no light degree, but there was wilfulness in his deliberate refusal to think of it definitely. 'Let it alone. What else had he so good? All that he had most cared for in life had been wrested from him before he had even tasted its full

sweetness. Here was a little solace purposely sent, and why need he, who had no ascetic leanings, choose to put it away? Let it alone,' he said in his heart, as if speaking to some warring spirit within him who would question his right to any good, any joy, any sweetness. That was all he asked. 'Let it alone; at any rate, for a little while let it alone!'

It was a satisfaction to him, and helped him in his unreason, that so far as the child herself was concerned, only good results of her stay at Thorsgrif were visible. Week by week, almost day by day, the wan, weary look was disappearing from her face, the pink colour staying more permanently on lip and cheek, and the deep dark blue of her eyes growing brighter and clearer. Her very hair seemed to rise, and curve, and flow with a new determination in its dusky beauty; and the small white hands grew rounder and less pathetic looking.

'If she might stay here altogether,' Michael said to his mother one evening, 'she would soon be as strong as the strongest.'

'I only wish she might stay,' Mrs. Salvain replied heartily. 'She's a deal more help than trouble, and she's never in the way. If there's nothing she can do she just buries herself in a book till she thinks she's wanted. I should be

very glad for her to stay at Thorsgrif if they'd let her.'

The following day being Saturday, Mrs. Salvain and her son went over to Hild's Haven, promising to call as usual at the house by Wiggoner's Wharf to see the baby, and bring back an extension of leave. It had been extended so many times that Dorigen's heart failed a little when the trap drove off; and Rizpah, seeing the tear that was brushed away, sat down to finish the framework for a certain alum-basket that she was preparing. It was made of wire, and the wire was wrapped unevenly with cotton, so as to give the finished basket the look of white coral. Dorigen was to go down to the works to see it put into the crystallizing liquor.

'I will go down with you to-day, if you like,' Joanna said. And Dorigen was glad, because she knew that Mrs. Salvain would have been glad if she had been at home. Joanna seldom went out of doors except just to the top of the hill at the back of the house, where she could see the great wide ocean stretching away from sky to sky. She would stay there for hours, when the wind was down, but the wind is very seldom down on the cliff top at Thorsgrif, and on the hottest days you feel the cool air rising from the restless waves.

It was by no means hot this March afternoon. The sun was shining, but a wild, boisterous easterly wind was coming over the green cliffs, over the dark whin-bushes, that were already in bud, and waiting till the blossom should be wanted for dyeing Easter eggs before they burst into flower. That was the favourite dye of the Thorsgrif children. The purple of logwood might be all very well for children who lived in the town, but for the country there was nothing like the full bright amber of the golden whin.

Joanna and Dorigen went on, fighting with the wind that blew so strongly in their faces that conversation was not easily possible. But Joanna was not silent. Was it the wind that was exciting her, the dancing of the bright blue sea, the quick rushing of the great white waves ?

'It was just such another day when the *Abbot of Streonshalh* sailed,' Joanna was saying, speaking audibly, but yet as if to herself. 'Just such another day as this. I heard the men's voices through the wind as they weighed the anchor; and I heard Henry's voice. . . . I shall hear it again ; I know I shall hear it again ; but it will be a long time first—a long, long time, though he knows that I am waiting to hear it ; it is strange to have to wait so long !'

So for a time Joanna went on talking, and the broken, half-intelligible sentences came like words of warning that the wind was bringing across the seas. Dorigen did not understand it all ; how should she ? And yet she was drawn to listen, to brood over the strange experience that was open to her so far. It was a relief, though mixed with fear and trembling, when she discerned Mr. Salvain and his mother as they turned a far-off corner of the road.

'Shall we wait here for them ?' Dorigen said ; and Joanna consented at once, showing always in the smallest things as in the greatest the yieldingness of one who has no motive left in life to make any going or any staying of the least importance. They stood awhile in silence, then, turning suddenly, Joanna saw the colour that was deepening and glowing in Dorigen's cheek.

'Why are you blushing so ?' she said in her quiet, impersonal-sounding tones. 'And why does Michael change colour when you come into the room, or meet him unexpectedly ? I never thought he could have blushed like that. It makes me feel sorry for him, strangely sorry. . . . And I am sorry for you ; it is as if you were in pain. It *is* pain, it means pain, to change colour so and be confused. . . . Do you love

him ? Do you love my brother ? He is very good, very kind, but try not to love him. . . . Love is pain. . . . All love is pain ; all love is sorrow ; all love is waiting, and suspense, and disappointment. And in the end it is lamentation, and mourning, and woe. . . . In the end it is always mourning and woe !'

The girl made no reply. Her face was burning, her eyes were hot with tears that might not fall. The sudden shame of a discovered love which had never been openly discovered to herself, but had been kept in the secret and silence of her own heart's deepest and most wordless recesses, was almost more than she could bear at that moment. She had no strength left, nor had she any art to cover her own confusion. She put her hand beseechingly on Joanna's arm.

'You will not speak of it,' she said ; and the words came from her lips quiveringly. 'You will not speak of it to him—to anyone ? Tell me that you will not.'

'No ; I will not speak of it to anyone but yourself,' Joanna said, taking the girl's trembling hand in hers caressingly. They were close to the village ; the gig was coming down the hill just opposite. Mr. Salvain, with his head a little on one side, was driving slowly in and out among crowing babies, quacking ducks, leisurely

fowls, and supine pigs. Mrs. Salvain was looking happy and comfortable, and all the handsomer for the wind-raised colour on her olive cheeks. Michael's face was not easy to read; the expression was not the expression that had been his to set out with.

'So you've come to meet us?' Mrs. Salvain said cheerfully as the gig stopped. She insisted upon getting down to walk over the common; and presently it was arranged that she and Joanna were to walk back together.

'And you'll go down with Michael, my dear,' Mrs. Salvain said. 'And he'll give your basket to Enoch; and he'll tell you about your father. I *am* sorry, though I make no doubt but that it will be for the best in the end. I said so to your mother. But there now; don't go white like that, honey: nobody's ill, or anything. It's only business and such like; but Michael will tell you.'

Mr. Salvain helped the girl into the gig silently; then, when the horse's head was safely turned downward, he looked very sorrowfully and tenderly into the white apprehensive face beside him. It even seemed to have grown thinner and older in the brief moments which had passed since his coming.

'You will take me home,' she said, in a voice

that betrayed the depth to which the few words had gone.

'Yes,' Michael said soothingly, and knowing that there was within him a greater longing to soothe and comfort the child than he might obey. 'Yes; I will take you home as soon as you wish to go, or, at any rate, as soon as ever it is needful. I have talked it all over with your mother.' Then Michael paused suddenly. as if there were something to be weighed before it was said. It came with effort at last. 'Your father is not going to sail for a month yet,' he went on in a lower tone. 'And I am not to take you back until the last week, unless you specially wish it.'

The horse went on, stepping cautiously downward; the wheels of the gig went on grinding over the stones; the sea at the foot of the cliff went on leaping and dashing, rolling and breaking. No words broke its grand and great rhythm.

It might seem as if it would have been a small thing to this child, whose home was at the very gate of the sea, that her father should go down to the sea in ships as so many others did; but it was in no sense small. She knew that the decision had only been arrived at after long and untold suffering; she comprehended the full force

of the compulsion, knowing that her father, who had been a voyage or two in his youth, had an unconquerable aversion to the life of an ordinary seafaring man. It was not its roughness, but its coarseness that he dreaded; and the fact that the personal habits of a lifetime would have to be given up, and others substituted less endurable to a man of his fastidious temperament. All this, and more, Dorigen comprehended. In a dim way she entered into the feeling of the neighbourhood, which decrees that the landsman who cannot live by the labour of his hands, and therefore 'has had to go to sea,' has lost in a certain sense the little caste he ever had. It is an understood thing that such a man, whatever his age, standing, or capability, must 'go before the mast,' a phrase that carries its meaning darkly for most of us, but may be presumed to cover a life of more or less continued hardship. These things, and others, underlying the pain of the idea of parting and separation, the dread of the countless sea perils and dangers, were enough to lesson the heartbeats of one so easily touched to apprehension as Dorigen Gower.

Thinking over these things in silence, cast suddenly down to a great depth of sad thought and emotion, it seemed as if then and there, on the side of the bold dark rock at Thorsgrif, there

awoke in her that keen sense of accountableness, of responsibility laid upon her, which never left her again. It struck her then imperatively, and for the first time, that she might never in this world stand alone in a little world of joys and sorrows of her own. The fact that this great grief had reached her across the miles that divided her from Wiggoner's Wharf was itself instructive and impressive. Here was another soul-lesson learnt in hardness and in pain.

Once, as she sat thinking, she had a wild strong impulse to beg Mr. Salvain to turn his horse's head and drive her back to Hild's Haven that very hour. But this she did not do ; she could not. Some contrary current of impulse met this, and stayed it. Nevertheless, it had its influence.

'Will you take me home next week ?' she asked at length, with the gentle wistfulness of sorrow in her tone and manner.

'Yes ; I will indeed, if you wish it,' Michael said, replying out of the extreme tenderness that was touching him more deeply than he knew. 'You shall go any day that you may wish to go.' Then because he needed to say some kind thing at that moment, he added, 'But we *shall* miss you ; we shall miss you terribly.'

Even as he uttered the words they struck him

with a pitiful sense of inadequacy. 'Miss her!' His very heart sank achingly as he thought of the emptiness there would be in the house, the chillness that would seem to be in his home-coming when these days were over. For Dorigen the words were as if she had not heard them. They had no meaning for her just then.

They had reached the works by this time, and Enoch had taken the horse, which was as much at home in his stable in the midst of the smoke of the shale as up on the edge of the ravine. The work of the day and of the week was almost over now, and Dorigen, with her wire basket in her hand, went on with Mr. Salvain to the sheds, going carefully round by the edge of the cisterns and through between the piles of burning mine. There was still alum in one form or another on every side of them when they entered the long low red-tiled buildings; some of it was evaporating and crystallizing in the big leaden pans. It was in one of these sheds that the basket was left, to be dipped again and again, until the crystals formed upon the wire framework.

'You shall have it next week,' Mr. Salvain said, 'and you shall come and see it put in if you like.' But he easily divined that the idea of the toy had lost its charm. Your finest ornament shall not soothe your lowest sorrow.

And it is in the deeper moments of existence that we find the narrow limit of the highest art.

In the next shed two of the men were knocking off the hoops from a cask of the pure white crystal; and as Mr. Salvain and Dorigen entered the place the men were just breaking up the hard, dull, unattractive-looking mass. It was a surprise to the girl to see the wonderful display of fantastic and exquisite forms that was disclosed; the tall glittering castles, and campaniles, and minarets—some were quite imposingly suggestive. There were rocky arches that might have been entrances to the sea-caverns of the Nereides, and crystal pillars that might have supported the roof of the enchanted Castle of Carbonek. Mr. Salvain selected a few of the more beautiful fragments—one had taken the form of a Maltese cross.

'There!' he said, putting them carefully into Dorigen's hand, as they turned away. 'You can keep those to remind you of Thorsgrif until you come again. . . . You will come again, will you not?' Then he paused a little, and added in tones that were perhaps unconsciously lower and more tender than he had used before, 'I should like to feel that we had made you happy.'

Michael Salvain had not spoken lightly, but he was not prepared for the change which came over the girl's face as he turned to look into it; the sudden rush of hot colour, the strange confusion, betrayed an emotion that surprised him. Till this moment she had forgotten Joanna's words on the top of the cliff, and all that they had meant to her; or if she had not forgotten, she had only been conscious as of a dull, secondary pain, or rather uneasiness connected with another set of experiences. Now that moment came back with all its weight of shame and dread. If Joanna had seen, then Mr. Salvain might have seen too; and all her life would be shamed in his sight and in her own. She forgot to give any answer, she forgot his question; she forgot all save this new burning sense of exposure and betrayal. What had she done? How might she have left it undone? And what could she now do or say to save herself? The moment was overwhelming; the very silence seemed full of humiliating embarrassment; and her tremulousness was like that which comes with some sudden attack of illness. Years afterwards the quivering of a bonnet-string brought back the silencing force of that strange hour.

Michael Salvain had no clue to guide him to

the truth; and curiously enough he missed it altogether. This new emotion was connected with the old, with the thought of home, of her father's troubled life. His entreaty that she would come again to Thorsgrif had projected her mind into the future; and just now that future was doubtless seeming very dark to her vivid imagination. He would be more mindful of his words for the time to come. He would learn from her a finer mindfulness.

They were out in the daylight, or rather the twilight, again now, sauntering on over the dark waste of rock toward some steps that were cut in the northern face of it. The wild, wide bay was before them, curving some three miles away to the fishing village of Hunswyke. Great wrack-grown boulders were strewn upon the beach; they were especially large and picturesque about the mouth of the ravine, at the top of which the Alum-Master's house stood.

'We will go home that way, if you would like it,' Michael said, grasping at the idea as promising a little distraction to the girl's over-anxious mind. 'The wind is going down, and the "dyer's neäf" is over there in the north, but the rain will not fall yet awhile. . . . Come with me; I will show you where the daffodils grow.'

'Are there some daffodils?' she asked, brightening, and looking delighted in spite of all her troubles. 'I have never seen daffodils growing.'

'There will be some in a few days,' Michael replied. 'I noticed yesterday that the buds were turning over. They grow a little way up the gill, farther up than the house; and the finest ones are by the beckside. I will show you where they are now, and then you can watch them unfolding. They will be out beautifully by the middle of next week. . . . You are not too tired to go round that way?'

'I am never tired,' said the girl, leaping lightly from one slippery stone to another, and it seemed easy to believe her.

CHAPTER XVII.

DAFFODILS.

'I rose anon, and thought I would goen
Into the wood, to hear the birdis sing,
When that the misty vapour was agone,
And cleare and faire was the morrowing.'

CHAUCER.

THAT little dark cloud like a man's hand which Elijah saw from the top of Mount Carmel is still a recognised forerunner of wet weather on this wild northern seaboard. When Michael Salvain spoke of it as the 'dyer's neäf,' he was but using the language of the district.

On this occasion, as on that when the prophet prayed, the small cloud spread rapidly: the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.

For some days the rain poured down almost without intermission: so that there was no

going out to watch the daffodils unfolding, or to see the alum basket covered with crystals. But yet they were not empty days, nor altogether filled with the coming sorrows—Mr. Salvain took care of that.

One day there was the room that served him as office and study to be turned out and then set in order again. Dark old cupboards full of dark old books were thrown open, long-closed drawers were emptied out upon the floor, cabinets disclosed ancient secrets which had been locked up in diaries and letters, written in faded brown and grey ink on yellow paper. They were very pathetic, these little troubles, mysteries and perplexities of a hundred years ago, and yielded much for the wonder and enlightenment of an ignorant child.

Another day there were the garrets to be explored, real old-fashioned garrets filled in the real old-fashioned way with treasures of ancient furniture — broken, dusty, disused, but still treasures if you could see them rightly. In one corner there were three spinning-wheels in various stages of decay, in another a wonderful clock with heavy brazen elephants that had long refused to walk in procession, trampling upon the hours as they went. There were toys that dead children had played with, dolls that

dead little hands had dressed. There were book-boxes filled with antiquated medical and botanical lore, shabby portfolios full of old engravings, odds and ends of quaintly embroidered garments, drawers with snuff-boxes and shoe-buckles in them, trays full of shells and coins. It was like going back to live for a day in the dead years, with the dead gracious-mannered people who had worn wigs, as sundry very bad portraits testified, and who had carried canes, and offered each other snuff with a politeness that was carried to a science. Whilst so many other things are being revived, why do we not revive this science of fine manners? Are we too careless, too much troubled about many things, too busy making our graven images and setting them up to be worshipped? Yet believe it,

> 'Manners are not idle, but the fruit
> Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

The rain still came down sadly, ceaselessly, and the sweet, soft ripple of the little beck was swollen to a roar that seemed to echo and thunder to the very heart of the rocks on either hand. The sea was shrouded in the mist of the grey rain; the gulls went sailing by on grey ghostly wing; the top of the opposite cliff was lost in the greyness. There was no break anywhere; the rain went on

dropping from the trees to the quivering undergrowth below ; the sodden earth would no more of it, so that streams gathered where the dry land had been, and ran downward to the foaming beck that was rushing with mad turbulence to the swollen sea.

A continuance of such weather has always more or less of oppressiveness in it, and disposes you to sympathy with the sadder side of life, its failures, its griefs, its disappointments. Michael Salvain, going to and fro from his own house to the works as usual, seemed to himself to be feeling afresh all the weightier negations of his life. Existence is only tolerable to some men when there is a distinct idea of some good to be attained in the future, some desirable point to be reached ; but Michael had not considered himself to be one of these. He had brought himself to face the idea that for him there could be no future good in this life, and to face it without much flinching. As was inevitable, any new thought of it saddened him, but for a long time past it had not dismayed him. Was he dismayed now? Was he dissatisfied? Was he awakening in the middle of the day to find that it was not yet night, nor near it, but that for him there could be no golden afternoon?

He would rather not have been awakened,

The awakening was only pain to him; but he might not turn aside and sleep again at will. He must wait. It might be that things would slip back into their old groove unawares. 'It might be,' he said, crossing the furzy common in the rain and the wind. 'It might *not* be,' he said, sitting over his own study fire in the twilight with Dorigen beside him, lost in the book on her knee, but every now and then lifting a keenly interested face to ask some question for her own better enlightenment. Her utter ignorance of things she should have known, her possession of knowledge that no one who did not know her intimately would have dreamed of requiring from her, was amusing to Michael Salvain. She knew nothing that was not hers by natural assimilation. There had been no guidance, no influence, no pressure, and Michael knew that the opportunity was his of studying a very wild-flower of humanity. Day by day the study had grown more deeply interesting, hour by hour the dread was growing within him of the moment when this delight would end. 'I can never part with you, my little wood-anemone,' he said to himself as he sat in the silence, watching the dark bent head near the window that just caught a ray of light from the parting clouds.

'It is going to be fine,' the girl said, lifting her eyes from the page of 'Ossian' that she was reading. 'It is Selina's song coming true.

'"The wind and the rain are past; calm is the noon of day. The clouds are divided in heaven. Over the green hills flies the inconstant sun. Red through the stony vale comes down the stream of the hill. Sweet are thy murmurs, O stream!"'

Dorigen stopped, listening to the sound of the water. Here, in Mr. Salvain's study, it came softened a little. The rain had ceased, there were only the droppings from the trees to glitter in the ray of light that slanted downward into the hollow.

Something in the light, in the moment, in the child's face and voice, seemed to create a new sudden sweetness in the room, a something intangible as the scent of a white violet, yet precious enough to awaken fear and yearning, and that tremulous discontent of the soul which lies always at the very gate of happiness. It is something to have stood by that gate, something to have looked even across the borderlands of bliss. What you have seen with your soul's eyes you shall never again disbelieve.

It was not possible that Dorigen should escape the influence of the moment. Seeing Michael Salvain's face turned to hers, meeting his eyes

filled with the sadness of an unwise tenderness, the dread that was half a joy awoke in her again, troubled her for awhile, and then ceased to trouble her, being overpowered by the sense of nearness and happiness, and that strange exaltation which admits of no lower cares. There was no questioning, Does he love me? Does he not love? There was not even need of question. The spell of the hour was enough for the hour, and the kindness of the grey, deep-set eyes that met hers in that still, sweet silence enough for all life beyond. How should there be any question?

Only a few days ago the girl had said that her heart's desire was that she might live alone: now if she had been asked the same question, and had answered truly, she would have said:

'I would live with you; I would live my life with you in this dim brown room, in this house of yours on the bleak cliff-side. I would be your servant, I would wait upon you. I would be always here when you needed me: I should see when you did not need me; and I would never trouble you. I want nothing but that—to be near you, to be helpful. If you should love anyone else better, I would still be near you, if I might. I would never trouble you.'

That was the mood she was in, simple, pure, unselfish, and as nearly happy as the moods of

earlier love may ever be. This was another hour to be laid in the memory for a life's keeping.

It was curious, and a proof of affinity, that Michael Salvain should break the silence with the question—

'Tell me, which has been the happiest day of your life?'

She looked into his face, blushing, speaking almost in a whisper, answering quite truthfully:

'I think it was the day when you spoke to me in Wharram's Yard.'

Michael Salvain did not smile, but a look as of inward light spread over his face softly and swiftly.

'You remember that day?' he asked.

'I shall always remember it,' she said. 'I think I did not know till then that I could be happy—not very happy.'

She spoke simply and without confusion; but the crimson colour deepened on her cheeks, and the sudden drooping of the long black lashes over her eyes betrayed some inner perturbation. Michael Salvain watched, wondered, reproached himself; then quite suddenly he got up, and went out into the grey damp evening. What was happening to him? What was it that was

dominating him? What voices called him back to the fireside with such forceful, beseeching sweetness? They went on calling all the way as he went up the ravine in the deepening twilight. The rain-drops fell upon him in a shower as he brushed his way hastily under the trees; a startled thrush went twittering across his path; the clouds went on breaking, drifting, melting away from the dark starry blueness that was above the sodden moor. He would walk there till he was weary; till his weariness silenced those voices within him. The old sad, dead peace was better than this strange unrest.

No day had yet been fixed for Dorigen's return to Hild's Haven. Her father had not wished that she should return immediately. He believed more than Mrs. Salvain had told him of his child's happiness and well-being; and but for the dread of interfering with it he would have gone over to Thorsgrif more than once that he might have had the satisfaction of seeing it with his own eyes; but he restrained himself. Being so used to restraint, it had come to be as a first instinct, and it seldom happened that he had need to repent of the leadings of a mental habit he had acquired so hardly.

The rain had ceased to drop from the trees when the morning broke again, and the sun

struggled bravely through the warm white mist it was creating all about the steaming earth.

'Eh, but you'll *see* things grow this morning, missy,' Rizpah said, helping Dorigen to put on the quaint black beaver bonnet that she wore, and the woollen cloak of black-and-white check. 'There'll be flooers of all kinds oot doon i' t' wood in a daäy or two.'

'But don't go too far this morning, honey,' Mrs. Salvain added. 'Michael will be back from Hunswyke before dinner-time, and he'll go up the gill with you.'

'I will not go far,' Dorigen promised unthinkingly, going out with her basket swinging on her arm. It was like stepping into a new world. The trees were all budding. There was a crisp greenness upon the brown hawthorn hedges; the beck was tumbling and dashing with a roar down below, and almost drowning the song of the lark that was overhead, singing somewhere in a clear blue world of her own above the mist.

The child stepped lightly along, over the terrace where were the swallow-wort creeping out from the grass, and daisies with their pink petals only half unclosed. There was no real flower-garden. A white rose-bush grew at the end of the house, but it was hardly yet in leaf. By-and-by a few

wallflowers would unfold, and a pansy or two ; but these made no answer, yet, to the call of the spring. Till this morning she had called so faintly.

Now she was calling louder ; every day her voice would have new tones in it. This morning's freshest note was the cry of the new-yeaned lambs on the common, and on the sloping upland above. A few days more, Mrs. Salvain had said, and the cuckoo would be there with her message ; and Dorigen's eyes had sparkled as Mrs. Salvain spoke, for she had never heard the cuckoo. All she knew about it was that poets had written of it, and her father had always loved it ; and whenever he was glad for anything and forgetful in his gladness, then he sang in an odd tuneless thrilling way Bruce's poem, 'To the Cuckoo.' He had made a tune for it somehow, a tune with echoes compounded of 'Auld Lang Syne' and Zion Chapel in it; and terrible as it might have been to better-trained ears, Dorigen liked it better than any tune she knew, and as she went springing downward to where the daffodils grew she found herself singing it with all the voice she had, to the great surprise of Enoch Farah, who was standing near the bottom of the ravine, preparing to cut down an ancient white-stemmed holly-tree that was going to

decay. Enoch stopped a moment to listen; the words came quite distinctly,

> 'What time the daisy decks the green
> Thy certain voice we hear;
> Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
> Or mark the rolling year?'

'That'll be a hymn 'at Ah deänt knaw,' Enoch said, going on with his work again. 'But it's varry bonny, an' missy can sing a bit! Ah sudn't ha' thowt it. She leuks mair like a bairn 'at had been shut up wiv a lot o' Quaäkers.'

Dorigen went on singing, though Enoch could not hear her as she went up the tangled path by the side of the noisy swollen streamlet. The sun was piercing through more brightly every moment now, glittering on the ivy that was all about the trunks of trees; on the purple briar-sprays that curved over into the beck, and were swept by the rushing water. And, ah! there were the daffodils; some with bent, budding, lemon-tinted heads, some uprising, some just bursting, and showing hearts of deep, rich, rosy amber—hearts, rather than cups, for they were double daffodils. But these open ones were all on the other side, and the little wooden bridge, a single narrow plank, with the slenderest, rudest handrail, did not look inviting as it hung but

just out of reach of the foaming, eddying water. This was tantalizing in the extreme. The girl was no coward at any time; and this was neither the time nor the place to induce cowardice, but she recollected that she would be very sorry to make Mrs. Salvain angry. She was already on the bridge when this thought occurred to her; but she drew back. She would go a little farther up the gill; there might be daffodils to be had without crossing the beck.

She had not gone far when the sight of a large cluster of crisp blue-green leaves with bright amber chalices dancing above them gladdened her eyes. They were quite out of reach of the beck, upon the edge of a little overhanging peak. The long slender boughs of the willows closed overhead, with the yellow catkins slowly opening to the sun; above that again the larches towered, and the blue-grey Scotch firs. There was hardly a peep of the sky to be seen down there at the bottom of the hollow.

Dorigen was not thinking of the sky as she stood, or rather knelt, in half-reverent admiration by the daffodils. Her basket was beside her; her bonnet was slipping backward. . . . Was something else slipping? . . . Were the trees falling? . . . Something was falling, tearing, rending. The child clutched at the tangled

roots that were being torn apart. They had been at her feet; now, in one instant they were over her head. That was the last conscious thing she did, to clutch at the roots as she went down into the fiercely rushing stream with the wet point of earth which had given way beneath her.

She had not fallen far; but there was a big brown boulder, round which the water was foaming and eddying, and her forehead had struck the stone as she fell.

She felt the blow as she went down into the water; but it did not seem to hurt her much. She uttered no cry; and the words that came to her, '*I am killed*,' came quite peacefully. There was no horror in them, no dismay.

Perhaps it was well that she knew no more.

The sun went on shining down into the wooded hollow between the rocks; the water went on rushing, dashing, foaming, sweeping the undergrowth on either side as it went. In one place a robin sat chirping on the edge of a great moss-grown stone; and he never stirred nor ceased his song for the white upturned face that was borne swiftly past him to the sea.

A moment later the face disappeared; and the black floating hair that was about it was

borne down also. Still the bright-eyed robin went on chirping his spring welcome out; and up above the lark's song was no less glad than before.

The little wooden bridge was there: a lifted hand might have grasped it; but no hand was raised from the dark water that was dashing onward below it, always onward to the sea.

A little lower down Enoch Farah's attention was arrested. He had seen many things swept by with the foam that morning: gate-posts, drowned fowls, a skeil,* and a milking-stool; now the thing he saw was a small basket, tossing like a cork on the eddying water.

'As Ah live that's oor missus's!' he exclaimed, jumping from the place where he stood by the holly-tree to a lower level, and holding out his axe at arm's length to try to stop the basket. 'It'll be missy 'at's lost it inta t' wather, Ah reckon. Ah sall . . .'

Enoch's very thought stood still there. Two small feet were in the whirling water just above him. The next moment they were whirled out of sight, and a white face with dark floating hair was cast within his reach.

The man never knew whether he had plunged

* Skeil, an old-fashioned milk-pail, with an upright handle in place of a bow.

into the water, or whether he had lost his balance in trying to reach the thing he saw, and fallen in. He only remembered afterward that he had found himself being dashed from stone to stone with irresistible violence, clinging to the body of his master's guest with all the strength he had, and knowing that no effort answered to his.

He raised a great cry as he went onward, and again another. And the sea-gulls stooped and swept by with a low derisive chuckle. That was the sole response that came.

The man's strength began to fail. His life was going, not for another life—he could almost have borne that thought; but the thought that troubled him made death seem wasteful. Was there no escape? he asked, trying to raise his head from the water that seemed to stun him with its furious roaring, and almost as he asked the question, he struck with his burden against a boulder that he knew to be one of the large ones at the very mouth of the ravine. He knew but little beside. Did he free himself? or did the force of that furious water free him? Escape was difficult to him even when he found himself relieved from his burden; yet it was possible. And utterly exhausted he lay upon the small driftwood which had gathered upon

the sands. . . . He hid his face that he might not see.

One moment the thing that he had tried so bravely to save remained there; poised, so to speak, across the narrow end of the stone; then a turn in the eddying mass of water changed the balance, and again the white face with the black hair about it went downward, always downward to the sea.

Its tossing and buffeting was almost done. But a very few feet were between it and the white waves that were breaking upon the sands in the spring sunshine; but a very few more of the great green and brown wrack-covered stones impeded the course of Thorsgrif Beck as it went on its mad way.

The world is more than ever incredulous of miracles, though the daily newspapers teem with them; and the commonest miracle of all comes in the form of narrow escape from death. I, who write, have had my hairbreadth escape; and you, who read, can doubtless remember the time when you stood very close upon the boundaries of the Silent Land, looking across, perhaps, with more or less of dismay because of the suddenness, and utter unpreparedness for what might come after. Life is seldom quite the same after one such moment of conscious nearness to death,

and though you know it not, that moment still has its influence.

Dorigen Gower was saved from all dismay; for her it was as if the borderland had been already passed.

That another huge stone was lying in the bed of the stream, that she struck against it, and rested there, was nothing to her. The water was shallower here, having room to spread itself, and a vigorous effort might have wrought deliverance; but no effort was made. The precious moment went by with its chance unheeded.

She took no note of the fact that the tide was rising; that the white foam of the waves was mingling with the creamy foam of the beck but just below where she lay.

It was of no importance that a tall dark figure was hurrying over the sands from Hunswyke Bay, with all possible speed because of the rising tide. The risk the man was running was so great that he might have been pardoned for noting nothing save the things that might make for his own safety; and in truth it was as if by an accident that Michael Salvain turned his head at that moment.

The next moment would have been too late. The light figure was again swerving round, the head was downward to the sea, the white face

upturned to the sky, the hands lying placidly on either side. Michael saw it all in that one instant; the next, the child was in his arms, lying lifeless there to all appearance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO VOICES.

'Then how grace a rose? I know a way,
Leave it rather.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE unconsciousness of a human being, complete, prolonged unconsciousness, is one of the great mysteries of life.

Which of us has not considered the strange problem that a restoration to life after hours of unconsciousness from drowning presents? Six, seven, even eight hours of persistent effort to restore vitality has been rewarded. Where then has the soul been? Supposing no effort to have been made, at what moment would the spark have gone out, changing the apparent death to real death? Does the soul leave its house more slowly and reluctantly than we suppose?

It was more than an hour before Michael Salvain came back from Oswaldthorpe, bringing

the doctor. Enoch Farah was in the kitchen, looking shattered and ill; and the poor bruised, fragile little figure Michael had left lying on the sofa in the dining-room was lying there still, with closed eyes, pallid face, and barely discernible breathing. The lips seemed to quiver once or twice; the water was still dropping from the dark heavy hair which hung over the pillows; now and then a tremor stirred the long eyelashes.

'She does breathe?' Mrs. Salvain said half inquiringly to Dr. Duncan; the doctor replied that she was breathing satisfactorily, and Michael Salvain hearing this went away. There were willing hands enough without his; and he needed sorely to be alone at that moment.

He went into his study and shut the door, and for awhile he walked up and down trying to calm the strong agitation that beset him. He could blind himself no longer now; he would not try to blind himself.

All day since his waking in the morning there had been with him a feeling of pressure, a something impelling him to think, to look forward; preparing him, as it were, for the crisis which had notwithstanding come upon him with suddenness. All the way as he had walked to and from Hunswyke, the one small white wistful

face had come before him as he had seen it in his own room on the previous evening. It had seemed to haunt him, flitting between him and the great wide waste of waters, gliding by his side, looking into his face with dark sad eyes that troubled him and questioned him ; and he could make no answer.

Then had come that terrible sight, that shock which was no vision, no unreal thing, but an appalling reality. Truly if miracles were yet possible, one had been wrought in the moment when he had dashed into Thorsgrif Beck, and come out on the other side with that fragile figure safe in his arms. Then he had made answer readily enough.

'My darling ! my darling ! you must live, for I love you, I love you passionately,' he had said, stooping to kiss the bruised forehead. And now his words came back to him, and he repeated them. 'My child, my darling, I love you ; beyond all doubt I love you ;' and the mere sound of the words spoken audibly by his own lips passed over him like a shock, leaving him powerless.

Strong man though he might be, he trembled as he stood there looking out upon the afternoon sunshine that was streaming down the ravine, lighting up the grey and purple-brown

mysteries of the background of leafless trees, touching with gold the green and russet-red of the mingled undergrowth. The peacefulness of the scene seemed to mock him.

The strength of all the past dead years of negation, of comparative lifelessness, of voluntary renunciation of all that men call pleasure and delight, was in the present moment lending an intensity to his emotion that surprised him even as it overpowered him.

'Be our joys three parts pain!'

prays the master singer of our day. For Michael Salvain at this moment the three parts of pain were all that he was conscious of. If the joy was there he did not dare to look upon it as joy.

It could not be but that he should look beyond the mere fact of his love. He looked tremulously; for a few moments he even dared to look as if hope had been his, as if he had been a man who might have set himself to win a return of his affection.

'She is a child now,' he said, still speaking audibly. 'But she is a grave and quiet child, and in two years, or three at most, she will be a grave and quiet woman. On the face of it the sole disparity will be that of a few years.'

But within him, lying deeper than his spoken

word, there was knowledge that this difference of years was the least of the impediments that stood in his way. He had been conscious of these from the beginning, and his consciousness had underlain his wilful blindness. Now that he might shut his eyes no longer he would drag all to the light of day, and look upon it clearly. There should be no excuse for future mistakes.

There was a battle to be fought; this he could not but discern plainly. He would fight it now.

This very hour he would conquer—so he said; and the word was like the blow that a man strikes at his own heart with his own hand.

He would take time to do it. It should not be a rude and hasty attempt to trample down the thing that might have made all his life so new and strong and sweet. No, he would reason with himself, and himself should make answer. So he would have something to go upon in that future that loomed before him like one dense, chilling cloud. It was a future which had seemed low-toned enough before; now it was dark with a darkness that could be felt.

The strongest plea that his opposing spirit had to put forward was put first.

'Think of her, of her common welfare,' said the lower voice. 'You can raise her from absolute poverty to comparative wealth. You

can at least secure that she shall know but little of life's worst hardships. You can be to her as the firm ground whereon she may stand to live her life ; you can be as a defence, so that she shall be untossed by the tempests that shatter the existence of unprotected women everywhere.'

And the higher self, with its clearer insight, made answer :

'I grant all that you say ; but already I perceive in her that which argues ill for contentment with the ordinary routine of ordinary feminine life. The prospect of existence being made "comfortable" would have but little charm for her even now. In a few years it will be hateful. Her horizon will never be bounded by a prettily-furnished house and a sufficiency of smart clothing. And as for the storms of life, they are in her destiny. It is written on her forehead that she shall not escape. If I obey the impulse that is upon me, these storms will come in the shape of mad rebellion against the narrow bounds of such a life as I could offer to her here in the cleft between the rocks of Thorsgrif. She would come to reproach me, and with reason, for having taken advantage of her youth, her ignorance, her inexperience. And what answer could I make ? The best that would be possible to either of us would be a

heavy silence, broken only by jarring and discord.'

'Why discord?' asked the lower voice. 'Without vanity, without self-delusion, you can hardly help but be aware that you have awakened that within the child that will never sleep again . . . . Surely to love, to be loved in return, is sufficient to human happiness!'

The voices paused here, long enough for a vision to pass through the man's brain of all that his love in its fullest perfection might mean to him. Deliberately he lingered there, drinking deep draughts of the passionate sweetness that life, even in imagination, offered to him, if he would but yield. The trees were stirring outside as the light breeze swept fitfully from the sea; there were voices in the hall. Dr. Duncan was saying, 'There is no danger now—none whatever,' and Mrs. Salvain was telling him, in timid, tearful tones, how glad she was, and how thankful. Michael was thankful too, and the current of his thought was turned by his deep thankfulness. He would dream no more; he would go on sternly with his fighting. He would make answer to that last temptation; but it seemed none the easier now that he knew certainly that the child had revived —had come back, as it were, to life again. A new sense of her nearness to him took possession

of his soul. It was as if she had entered into the controversy, joining her plea to the lower voice that spoke rather than to the higher. It was to her that he made answer rather than to that other part of himself.

'You love me, little one—you think you love me? And I, who might have been so glad, can only be sorrowful, very sorrowful.

> '"We have met late, it is too late to meet,
> O friend, not more than friend."

That is how it must be; I will give you, for your love, a friendship so strong, and warm, and watchful that you shall miss nothing now, and hereafter you shall thank me; with all your passionate heart and head you shall thank me .... And I? I must set myself to grow, so that your thanks shall satisfy me, or so that I can live my life and work my work unsatisfied.'

'And this is final?' said the lower voice.

And the higher made firm answer, 'It is final.'

There was another silence in the man's heart—a silence of a painful parting, the parting between the living and the dead. The deed was done. All was over.

To have struck yourself such a blow, to have once in your lifetime deliberately renounced a true and tender human love for the good of the

one beloved, is surely to have achieved the last height of sacrifice.

Is it peace when the deed has been done? Is your virtue its own reward? Is your giving repaid to you in good measure, well pressed down and running over?

Let each one who has made the sacrifice answer for himself. Your experience shall not lie parallel to mine, nor may mine help you in a crisis.

'*The true affinities of sacrifice are with pleasure, with rapture even.*'

If it be yours to find this true affinity, you shall not repent.

* * * * *

When Mrs. Salvain came to her son's room she came with the news that Dorigen was doing well. The child had spoken, and spoken quite naturally, asking, first of all, if the basket had been lost.

'But she is asleep now,' Mrs. Salvain said. The poor old lady's eyes were still bright with excitement; two spots of colour were burning on her cheeks. 'She is sleeping nicely, and Dr. Duncan says she is going on as rightly as can be; but he thinks it will take her a long while to get over the shock and the bruises. Poor little darling! It seems the bank gave way under her. Enoch has been up to the spot, and he says it is close to where the path branches off to Whin-

fields. It *is* a marvel to think of anybody being washed down from there to the sea, half killed and half drowned, and then coming back to life again. Enoch says the force is so strong that he had no more power against it than a child. I've sent him home now, and made him promise to go to bed. You don't want him, Michael, do you?'

'No, mother, certainly not; he has done enough for one day.'

'He did his best, I don't doubt. But what a mercy it was that you were there to do better!'

'Not better, mother. I didn't risk my life.'

'No; but you saved Dora's. . . . She will seem to belong to us more than ever now, won't she, Michael?'

Mr. Salvain raised his eyes to his mother's face. She thought they looked heavy and weary; but she understood no further. 'I think you had better go and lie down too,' she said tenderly. 'We shall all of us feel some reaction after this anxiety. But I feel very thankful; I do feel thankful. I could never have faced her mother again if she had been drowned.'

Mr. Salvain made no answer, and his mother went away with the soft sigh that took the place of her smile so readily on occasion. He was not yet equal to the task of answering her commonplaces about the day's events. It had been a

great crisis in his life, one of the days that stand out above all other days, and his thought was not yet adjusted to the changes it had wrought. As he sat there it seemed that there could never be but one adjustment. There had been renunciation in his life before—vague, habitual, half-congenial ; now he must grasp a keener, sharper rule. If he would really conquer in this great thing, he must conquer in all else that touched his life. Only so might there be any victory.

CHAPTER XIX.

'IS ONE DAY MORE SO LONG TO WAIT?'

'If I could trust mine own self with your fate,
Shall I not rather trust it in God's hand?
Without whose will one lily doth not stand,
Nor sparrow fall at his appointed date.'

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

DORIGEN GOWER, like most highly organized people, was possessed of an immense vital elasticity. In spite of her natural paleness and fragility of appearance, she was unacquainted with the feeling of weakness, and such weariness as she knew was, as a rule, very much a matter of mental depression. At her worst moments a smile or a few friendly words would put all the springs of life into fullest motion again, and a new turn of thought would sustain her powers of endurance far beyond the point when a less impressionable person would have sunk from exhaustion. Such temperaments

are apt to be perplexing, but they are seldom disappointing. They will answer to almost any call, bear almost any strain, and exhibit a power of rebounding after fatigue or accident that is infinitely astonishing, even where it is scientifically understood.

It seemed little short of marvellous to the household of Thorsgrif that, three days after she had lain for hours in the arms of death, so to speak, Dorigen should be out again, flitting lightly to and fro amongst the holly-trees below the terrace, sauntering down on to the sands in the still sunshine with Joanna, or climbing up the narrow paths that led through Thorsgrif Gill to Whinfields, the picturesque farm on the hill-top where Squire Ormston lived in elderly single-blessedness. It was said that the Squire was looking out for a young wife, and for over thirty years past he had liked to have it said that he was looking for her. He was sensitive about his age, and as evasive as a woman who has lost her first youth and found no compensation.

The Squire was standing at his big green gate one day when Joanna and Dorigen passed.

'Whya this 'll be t' young laädy 'at was weshed doon t' beck t' other daäy!' he began, speaking to Joanna, but looking intently at Dorigen as he spoke. The girl was blushing; looking as con-

fused as a child convicted of wrongdoing. 'Ya'll ha' to mind, miss. 'Tisn't allus 'at there's a gentleman at hand to rescue young ladies when they're gettin' droonded. . . . Salvain considers hisself a lucky fellow, *Ah'll* be bound!'

Dorigen's cheeks were hotly flushed all the way as they went up to the moor, but Joanna made no comment beyond saying, 'Never mind, dear; never mind. Squire Ormston will have his joke, but nobody minds him.'

It was not easy not to mind. The day when she had fallen into the stream had been a crisis in the girl's mental life as well as in that of Michael Salvain. She had loved him before; and from the day that Joanna had spoken to her on the edge of the cliff she had known that it was love that was in her heart, and filled all her thought of one human being with such strange sweetness. But there had been no pain in the feeling, because there had been no fear or jealousy, and it had had no root of selfishness. Though it had never passed beyond that stage it had been to her a lifelong good, and a lifelong thing of beauty, precious and fragrant in the memory to the end. But all was changed now. Unrest had entered, and vague fear, and need of some hope that could be grasped, and felt to be tangible. It was the old, old story: 'If he will not love me

I must die.' And the change was written on her face, about her heavy eyelids, and her drooping mouth. It was as if she were repeating to herself all day, 'If he will not love me I must die.'

It was twilight when they came back from the moor, and a large, low moon was just coming up from the cliff-tops behind Hild's Haven, rising from a bank of low, misty clouds that stretched all across the sky, and hung upon the distant horizon like a grey, sad curtain. Dorigen could not see the Abbey, or any sign of the old town, but again the strong, sudden yearning for her father's face and the home fireside came upon her; a new perturbation striking through the old, till the very air seemed filled with aching desires for that which was not. Joanna was silent, and Dorigen felt grateful for her silence as they went together down the hilly road between the budding hawthorn hedges. The kindest words would have fallen jarringly upon the mood that possessed her so completely at that moment.

It did not leave her when they went indoors. Miss Camble, who was a friend of Joanna's, had come down from Gowbusk to spend the evening; a fire had been lighted in the drawing-room, and the tea-table set there. 'Come in, my dears; come in! You're very late,' Mrs. Salvain said, with her amiable smile. And Miss Camble

smiled amiably too. She was a tall, fair woman, with a foolish face, and a thin, wide mouth that never ceased from its wearisome smiling. Dorigen had seen her before, and she was not sorry to see her again, sitting there by the drawing-room fire, with her velvet head-dress all stuck over with glass pearls, and her blue knitting in her hands. Mrs. Salvain liked to talk, or, rather, to listen to Miss Camble; and Dorigen knew that she might be as silent as she chose without exciting remark. It was as if a passion for silence had fallen upon her.

It seemed to deepen as the evening went on. The windows were open, the soft breeze came in, making the dim lamp-light flicker upon the walls, bringing the scent of the sea up through the green mist of the budding larches. Presently Joanna left the room; Mrs. Salvain and Miss Camble went on talking by the fire; and by-and-by Dorigen, sitting by the window, heard the tones of the little old square piano that stood in the dining-room. Dorigen felt as if something stirred in her own heart, answering Joanna's impulse. 'May I go down, Mrs. Salvain?' she asked almost tremblingly. 'May I go and listen? I should like to listen on the terrace, if I might.'

'Of course you may go, dear, and I'll get you my knitted shawl; but be sure you come in if

you feel chill,' Mrs. Salvain said kindly. By this time the moon was up over the Scotch firs at the top of the hill; the trees stood still and dark in the mystery of light; underneath there was the deeper mystery of blue-black shadow. The water of the beck had subsided now, and the sound that came was like the sound of rustling leaves mingled with the dropping of rain. Below, the incessant sea was rippling, shining; the waves were rushing softly; falling slowly and sadly back. The tones of the piano came like part of the scene, full of sad harmonies, wistful yearnings, uncomprehended depths of aching pain. The very stars that shone down from the clear ether seemed to add to the feeling of overfulness that was about the child's heart; and the sea, that had always seemed so full of sympathy, looked silent and lonely, and had a strange coldness that touched her like the face of a changed friend. As she reached the end of the terrace she held out her arms appealingly.

'But you will be good to my father?' she said, speaking audibly, and almost prayerfully. 'You will be still, and calm, and kind. He is so good; he has had much trouble. . . . And I have no one else. . . . In all the world there is no one else. Oh, be good to him!'

Does it not almost always happen, when we

have made a resolution that an instant and extreme testing of its strength comes upon us unawares? Michael Salvain, coming up by the path that led from the sands, was arrested first of all by the pale figure that stood in the moonlight against the dark ivy that covered the front of the house. The music reached him, too; it was an adagio of Mozart's in B minor—a solemn, sad, impassioned thing that seemed to speak of parting, and pain, and the utterance of last words in almost every phrase of it. Involuntarily he stood still, leaning with his face seaward against the trunk of a gnarled oak-tree. A few of the dead russet-leaves of last year hung on the boughs, stirring in the night air; for him the waves fell with a soft, pathetic gentleness; across their falling came the subdued cry, 'I have no one else; in all the world there is no one else. Oh, be good, then, to my father!'

He would not, he could not, withhold an answering word.

'Don't say that, my child!' he exclaimed, stepping on to the terrace, and speaking as a man speaks who has been struck with a pain which has seized his whole being. He was quite close to her; bending over her that she might hear and believe his lightest word. 'Don't say that,' he went on. 'Did you not promise me

that I should be your friend—that I should always be your friend? and is not friendship the best thing left on this earth?'

She did not answer, but all unknowing what she did in the glad excitement of his presence, she put her small white hand into his with a movement of trustful affection that she might have shown to her father; and Michael Salvain's heart bounded with a gladness he had never thought to know again.

Why might he not take the child to that throbbing heart of his? Why might he not give back love for love? It was in him—nay, it was himself! Why should he strain every nerve to seem hard, and cold, and unresponsive? It was like a falseness. A feeling was rising within him that was like a reproach.

Was he going to have that battle to fight over again? The question came definitely, and he answered it definitely.

'If I do not yield, the battle will end only with my life. . . . But heaven helping me, there shall be no talk of yielding. *If I yield, I fall*—so much I know, not knowing how I know, nor what lies behind the knowledge.'

'You are too young yet to understand all that I mean when I speak of friendship,' he said tenderly, and with as much emotion as if he spoke

of love itself. 'You were thinking that you would never have anyone to care for you or protect you but your father, who is going away from you; but surely you believe that we do care for you here, that we shall always care for you? I should be very sad to-night if I thought that we were in any danger of losing sight of you when you go back to Hild's Haven. I shall come and see you as often as I may, and when things are settled at home we shall want you to come back here and stay with us for a longer visit than this has been. That will be something for us to look forward to, and you will like to think of it too—I know that. . . . Tell me that you will try not to think any more that there is no one to care for you.'

He was still holding her hand, still bending down to her there in the quiet moonlight. Joanna's music was coming slower and sadder, the waves were dropping downward to the sea more faintly; the girl's perplexed heart seemed to beat more faintly in unison. What did it all mean, this profession of friendship? What was there behind and between that seemed like coldness, that came like disappointment? Though the evening was so mild she felt herself shivering in the light air that stirred the boughs. It was a long time before she made answer;

then she said, in a tone that seemed hardly her own:

'Will you take me home? . . May I go on Saturday?'

Michael Salvain felt it all—the change, the disappointment, the aching, the chill. He comprehended it better than the child comprehended it herself.

And again there came upon him the shock of battle, again he reeled under the charge that struck him as he stood.

It would be better that the child should go as she asked. Then at least there would be less fierceness in the attacks that would beset him, and it would be better for herself that she should be out of reach of any influence that might not be for her future good. All this he felt, and yet it was not easy to make answer.

'Yes,' he said presently; 'yes, I will take you home on Saturday if you wish. But you remember that to-day is Thursday, that there will only be one more day?'

'Yes, I remember.'

Was this the real parting between them? Michael felt as if it must be, the hour was so full of pain, of stress, of apprehension.

A great weariness, a weariness 'of love, life, all things,' began to creep over him as he stood

there in the night that was so still and mystic in its beauty. Had he all the old lessons to learn over again? Had he yet to perceive that the good of life is the depth of the sacrifice it permits, and that only in giving, complete unrestrained giving up of all that a man has, is there any safety or satisfaction?

He asked the questions aloud, forgetting that the girl beside him could hardly have followed his thought. She turned her head and looked into his face inquiringly.

'Are you meaning that one should give up caring much for one's friends?' she asked in some surprise.

'That belongs to what I mean,' he answered. 'And yet, no; it is impossible to care too much. The danger is always of not caring enough. If I care for you rightly I shall think more of your happiness than of my own. We do not understand *that* sufficiently in our friendships and relationships. The renunciation they demand of us is the measure of the depth and value of them.'

The earnestness in his tone struck upon his listener, as earnestness always will. We know certainly when a man has paid the full price for his utterance, whether it be of the tongue or of the pen, and your cheap phrase is as your cheap

merchandise, and shall come to its market price in the end.

Dorigen made no answer; but Michael went on, being impelled to speech by the strong emotion that beset him and held him in its grasp.

'All that is best in this life opens a way to sacrifice,' he said. 'And if a man or woman, fore-ordained to the higher life, does not accept sacrifice, voluntarily, deliberately, it is forced upon him or her with circumstances that add a tenfold bitterness to the simple loss. To renounce a seeming good of your own will is hard, but that it should be torn from you while you chafe, and writhe, and cry aloud to gods and men is immeasurably harder. But this is the lower side of the matter. There is a higher side, the side on which the gain lies—the only true gain for a human soul. You can find by experience alone what I mean, and I think you will find it. I think you will some day see that no growth, no good, no elevation, no true joy is possible but through and by sacrifice. Peace comes by pain. Whatever your aim in life may be, you will not reach it, or grasp it, save by letting all else go. If your aim should be, as I think it will be, to live the truest life a human being may live, you will find that your pathway lies always over the thorns. In the smallest

things as in the greatest, sacrifice is safety, sacrifice is peace, sacrifice is life. Without sacrifice there is no true living.'

There was a strange depth and intensity in the silence that followed—an intensity that was to the girl as if that one hour were there and then striking its roots through her whole being, underlying, uplifting the past, the present, the near and the far-off future. Something in the word that had been said was like the opening of a door where she had been standing knocking in the darkness. She might not wholly understand, but she had heard, and something within her that was not understanding had answered. Was it belief? Was it faith? Was it that finer spiritual insight by which we now and then discern for a moment at a time some great truth too high, too subtle for the point we have arrived at in our soul's life? Ah! these flashes of heaven's own light! Each one of them is an apocalypse, and reveals enough for a man's redeeming.

CHAPTER XX.

'SO FAREWELL, THOU WHOM I HAVE KNOWN TOO LATE.'

'JUST as you will, my dear, but you might have stayed another week, you know,' Mrs. Salvain was saying. 'Your father doesn't leave Hild's Haven for a fortnight yet, and mother is quite happy about you—she said so; though she was alarmed enough when I told her of the tumble you had had in the beck. Of course, I didn't make the worst of it, for fear she shouldn't let you come again. Joanna is talking already about your next visit.'

So Mrs. Salvain ran on. It was only the middle of the forenoon, but she sat quite complacently in the dusty, untidy dining-room, working at a yellow canary pecking at a basket of oranges, each orange about half the size of the bird's small head.

'It is for a footstool,' she said, smoothing out the piece of work upon her lap, and contemplating it with her head on one side. 'And I'm going to put a purple ground, and then finish it off with a purple fringe. I thought I might take it with me to Oswaldthorpe this evening. I may have a chance of doing a little of the grounding between the tea and the speeches. What do you think, Joanna?'

'You could take it, mother, and see.'

'So I could, my dear; and you might take your embroidery, and Dora could take a book. It's so wearisome, sitting for nearly an hour while they are clearing the tables and preparing for the speeches; and it will be too late and chill to be out of doors.'

Mrs. Salvain did not notice the quick change of colour on Dorigen's cheek. This was her last day at Thorsgrif, and the idea had been present with her from her first awakening in the morning. She had a very natural desire that the most should be made of it in some way, and there had been a little disappointment for her when Mr. Salvain had started for the works as usual, saying only 'Good-morning,' and saying it with even less than his ordinary warmth and emphasis. As the morning wore on she counted the minutes till dinner-time; something might happen then

perhaps, some word might be said that would have gladness in it, some look given that would be good to remember; and it had seemed to her that that last evening could hardly be as the other evenings. She had forgotten the missionary meeting at Oswaldthorpe. Surely they would not take her there—Mrs. Salvain and Joanna. Mr. Salvain was not going—he had said so in the beginning, and Dorigen had hoped, even before she knew that she was going home the next day, that he would so arrange matters that she need not go either. Now the thing had become imperative. It could not be that she must go to the schoolroom at Oswaldthorpe, and pretend to be amused while her very heart was aching to be elsewhere. It was not exactly a childish trouble, but only a child could have felt it with such tragic depth and intensity, and yet have made no effort all day to escape the dreaded disposal of herself in the evening. Could they not see? Did they not know? she asked herself, and the next moment there came over her a very passion of fear lest she should say or do or look anything that should lead them to suspect how it was with her in that foolish heart of hers.

Had Joanna any suspicion? More than once Dorigen, looking up, found Miss Salvain's eyes fixed on her face, half sadly, half wonderingly,

and then the girl's blush deepened, and her eyes fell in embarrassment. What could she do? What could she say? Was it after all so terrible a thing that she should wish to stay at home that evening? She could go to missionary meetings at Zion Chapel almost any time, and it might be that she would never again spend an evening at Thorsgrif. There was very little comfort for her in all those kindly-meant utterances concerning some future visit. She had not grasped the idea in any helpful way. This one evening was more to her than any number of evenings to come. Let them leave her to do as she would for this once, and she would ask no more of them. How strange it was that she could not ask even this!

Dinner-time came at last, and with it Mr. Salvain; but he was absent and apparently self-absorbed to a degree that took away all hope of any help that he might have been moved to afford. The child watched him, and her heart sank. Presently he went away, and she could watch him no longer; then her heart sank lower still.

Was the end to be like this? The afternoon went on; Enoch came up from the alum-works, dressed in his Sunday coat, and quite ready to drive the gig over to Oswaldthorpe. The sight

of him was like the forging of another link in that binding chain of events. There was no hope of deliverance.

'Put your grey frock on, honey,' Mrs. Salvain said, taking Dorigen's hand affectionately, as they went upstairs together. 'Your grey frock and your best bonnet, and you shall take my scarlet shawl to put round you in the evening. It will be late, and perhaps very chill: but we'll take care of you, so that you shan't catch a cold to take home with you. . . . I can't feel as if this were really your last evening.'

Was this an opportunity? The girl looked up quickly as the impulse to speak stirred within her, but she was not equal to the effort. Another moment and the opportunity was gone.

The tears that fell over her face were very natural tears, but they were soon dried. She had not been accustomed to find life arranged to her own liking, and having that aptness to seize an analogy which is the usual accompaniment of mental activity, she perceived that here was opportunity enough for making an experiment in that voluntary acceptance of contrary circumstance which Mr. Salvain had spoken of the previous evening. 'She would think no more of it,' she said to herself, tying the strings of her brown straw bonnet, and then, even as she stood

there, the sharp and sudden dashing of rain upon the window-pane caused her to look up with wide, surprised eyes, recognising, in childish fashion, a stroke struck verily for her deliverance. Another dash came, more angry than the last, a rush of wild gusty wind followed, then voices were heard on the landing, one uttering words of dismay, another mildly persisting. Surely Joanna was not wishing to go to Oswaldthorpe now!

'You'll be *so* disappointed, my dear!' Mrs. Salvain said, coming into Dorigen's room. 'Joanna wants to go, even though it's raining like this. She says it will only be a shower; and I shouldn't mind it for myself; but I couldn't think of taking you, honey. And it *will* seem so unkind to leave you.' Dorigen's colour was changing; it was difficult to her to speak, but she managed to speak unreservedly, and, as usual, somewhat brusquely. 'I am very glad it rains,' she said, looking from Mrs. Salvain to Joanna as if for better understanding. 'I didn't want to go to Oswaldthorpe. All day I have been wishing to ask you if I might stay at home.'

'Well now, you *are* a strange child!' Mrs. Salvain said in real perplexity. 'Why couldn't you ask? And why don't you want to go? I suppose it's those musty old books again. Think of a child like you wanting to spend the last

evening in that way! But you shall do as you like, dear. I am only too thankful that it's no disappointment to you. And Michael will be here by six o'clock; he'll be a little company for you. But we must go now, or else we shall be too late for tea. Come and see us start, honey.'

Dorigen stood at the door as they drove off in the small misty rain which had succeeded the first heavy breaking of the shower.

'It *will* be provoking if it comes out fine after all,' Mrs. Salvain said, having, with her usual want of grasp, already lost sight of Dorigen's reluctance to spend that evening away from Thorsgrif. The old lady looked very handsome under her umbrella as she turned to kiss her hand. Dorigen was smiling, but half-sadly; a sudden shower of raindrops was brushed from the holly-trees as the gig turned the corner of the terrace; then all was quiet and still; and the big sombre old house looked empty, and Dorigen's light footstep fell upon the stair with a hollow sound she had never noticed before. What, after all, would the evening be like, now that the rain had fought for her, and brought about the thing she had so intensely desired?

She had no clear idea, except that she would be in the house when Mr. Salvain came home to his tea, and that he would be surprised. She

was not quite sure, poor child, that he would be glad, not very glad, as she would fain have made him, if she might. What was it that had changed him so of late, especially since that day when he had saved her from the sea? He had never been quite so kind, except that one evening on the terrace; never quite so gentle, so thoughtful in his ways as he had always been before. But now perhaps, now, this last evening, it would be different again. A certain tremulousness came over her as she stood there thinking; a certain quiet but deep conflict of hoping and fearing was begun. Surely these last hours would hold some good that might be remembered in the days to be!

When six o'clock came twilight was beginning to close over Thorsgrif Gill, and there was yet no footstep on the hill-top road. Dorigen had taken off her bonnet, rearranged her hair and tied her white muslin frill closer to her throat with the pink ribbon that Mrs. Salvain had brought from Hild's Haven on the previous Saturday; so that she had the satisfaction, which was not a small one, of feeling at least tidy. It had been enough hitherto; but it was not enough this evening. A sudden longing to be beautiful, very beautiful, beset her; and she had only one idea of beauty now. If she might have had

a quantity of pale gold hair like that in the picture upstairs, and large liquid light blue eyes, and a queenly figure, then life would have been altogether different. Love would have come as a right, instead of having to be fearfully hoped for, and sadly waited for. What was there in such a face as hers that one like Mr. Salvain should care for it? Only half knowing why, she went upstairs again, and stood before the glass awhile, seeing in the grey twilight nothing but a small, white, inanimate face, which seemed as if nobody could ever care to look at it a second time. She turned from it sadly, and went into the drawing-room, where the great picture was. Ah, *that* was a face to dream over, indeed! Those were eyes to haunt you, whether you cared for their haunting or no! Had they ever haunted Mr. Salvain?

She heard his footstep as she stood there. He was coming along the terrace, coming carelessly, heavily, as he often did. Was he thinking of her? Would he be angry to find her there? She did not feel that it would be very easy to go down and speak to him in the darkness. Keziah was in the cow-house, where Enoch was milking, and the table was set ready in the dining-room. Perhaps she had better go and make the tea.

Michael was standing on the step at the door

as she went slowly down the stair. He turned in evident surprise.

There was a moment's silence.

'I did not go to Oswaldthorpe with Mrs. Salvain,' Dorigen said at last, rather timidly.

'And why was that?' Mr. Salvain asked, speaking in a tone that was less reassuring than he knew.

'I—I didn't want to go,' was the reluctant confession. 'And it rained a little.'

There was silence again, a moment of deep intense perplexity. The man had not prepared himself for another conflict; and it was here upon him with all the weight and disadvantage that suddenness can give. Beyond all doubt it was confusing.

Another man would have gained by assuming something of lightness or cheerfulness of manner. It would not have been difficult; but the idea never occurred to Michael Salvain. His whole soul was in the hour and its event; and it is probable that he could not have trusted himself off guard, not even in seeming.

'We must have some tea, then,' he said, turning to go into the house. Keziah was lighting the lamp, the kettle was singing by the fire; the old brown-red room looked a very picture of comfort and cosiness. It was no fitting background for

yearnings, or heart aches, or still despairs, and yet it had probably known many. But it may be that in all the years of its existence it had never been the theatre of a more pathetic scene than was beginning now.

And yet it was a very simple scene, hardly more than a *tableau*. Any one looking through the old red curtains of watered moreen would only have seen a cheery fire, an oval table with a white damask cloth; a tea-tray with cups and saucers of ancient china; a girl with small white hands and a grave face making tea deftly and mindfully; a dark, stern man with a still graver face taking his teacup without lifting his eyes, or saying aught but the curtest 'thank you' he could utter. He seemed to be growing paler in his silence, and he ate nothing; moreover, he knew that his companion ate nothing, yet he made no remark. He dared not trust himself to care for her wants. The feeling was with him that one spoken word would betray him, one wistful, tender inflexion of her voice in answer might at this last hour undo all that had been so painfully done.

There was another moment of indecision when the tea was over, and Keziah had cleared the table. What should he do? There would be yet two hours, or more, before he need expect

the return of his mother and sister. He could hardly leave the child alone; nay, he was conscious of the fact that he did not want to leave her, and he saw no inconsistency here. Though he might not speak, nor even meet the eyes which he knew were seeking his all the while; yet he could not, would not secure himself from temptation by flight. He was conscious that this last evening was indeed the last. 'There will never again be another opportunity,' said the voice within him. 'Now again you might speak, now you have the only chance of securing the only earthly happiness you can ever know. When this one evening is over it will be too late, too late!'

He was standing by the fire as he listened, and Dorigen had seated herself on a chair by the table with a volume of Wordsworth's poems. Her head, bent downward, was resting on her hand, her white eyelids drooped heavily over her eyes; her slight figure seemed to be yielding itself to some grace or sweetness of idea that was in the printed page. There was, for Michael Salvain, a strange eloquence about her. It was as if he could hear the thing she would have said if she had spoken. But he knew now that she would not speak. He was aware of the changes the last few days had wrought. Her life had

begun, she had awakened; she would no more ask him in her innocent way if he would be her friend always. . . . She did not care for his friendship now. So much he knew, and it was the most perilous knowledge he had; and made his task harder far than it had otherwise been.

Ah, what that one evening might have been if he had but willed, if he had but dared to offer to this child his life's love instead of his life's friendship!

He sat down presently in his own chair at the other side of the table, and took up the newspaper, which he had not seen, turning himself a little so that the lamp-light fell full upon the page. Was he really reading? Dorigen wondered, looking up timidly after a time, and seeing the pale, stern profile and the fixed look that was in the deep-set grey eyes. She saw more than these, and unconsciously her eyes dilated, and her colour came and went swiftly as she began to divine how it might be with him in that strange, unkind silence. There was a drawn, pathetic look about the mouth under the short moustache, that told only too plainly of conflict,—hard, sorrowful conflict; and unerring intuition told her that the conflict concerned herself. Did he care for her? In that instant she knew that he did,

and the knowledge made her heart leap within her. Let all else be, then, if he loved her. Then swiftly came the fear, 'But I am not worthy of his love. I am too young, too ignorant, too childish, too inefficient. I am not *enough* for him; and this he knows, and this he will not overpass. So it is that he has conflict; so it is that he must be silent.' Then her eyes drooped under the new knowledge, and her head sank on her hand. 'He must always keep this silence!' she said with slower pulse and heavier breathing. 'He will always keep this silence!'

But after this turbulence calm came down, and peace.

If he loved her his love was enough.

So in this strange, mute way the scene was lived out. The minutes went slowly, being so weighted, so full: the clock ticked each one away with emphasis and emotion. 'The last hour!' it said; 'the last! . . . the last! . . . the last!' Each swing of the pendulum affirmed it. 'The last hour! . . . the last! . . . the last! . . . the last!'

Had she been hoping all day for this? Had the rain fallen in her favour for this? Had every circumstance conspired to bring them together on the last evening for this?

Then the old clock in the corner changed its

burden, and said, 'Only for this! . . . for this . . . for this! . . . for this!'

Not the slightest movement in either escaped the other. Mr. Salvain knew that the child beside him had not turned the page of her book for an hour. She knew that during the same space of time he had not changed the position of his newspaper.

More than once he looked at his watch. 'He is wishing for Mrs. Salvain and Joanna to come back,' the girl said to herself, knowing that the first sound of the wheels would strike the hour of her hope's ending.

It was not a question of hours now, but of minutes. Would he not speak once? Would he not lift his eyes to look into hers once? She was watching him closely, that she might not lose the boon if it were given.

And he? He marvelled at her long silence and stillness, praying only that it might last to the end.

Why should such a passage in any life-history be written down? Why not have changed it all, and given a tragic scene, with passionate words, despairing tears, and histrionic gestures? It might have been done quite easily. But are the great turning-points of life always scenic? Does not Fate sometimes stand by with a finger on her

lip while the wheel turns in utter noiselessness? Looking back through its effects upon your whole after-life, you can discern the hour that was so full of importance, but you perceive with surprise how little it lends itself to picturesque description. To this day your soul is saddened by it, your life coloured and changed by it, and yet it is as a story without a point, a composition without a theme, a picture with no sufficient motive.

The sound of the wheels came at last, grinding down heavily more than the gravel on the path. Mr. Salvain rose to open the door: a white, stricken face was lifted to his, and he could not but see it. The sight was sharper than a stroke of steel. One moment he stood, silent under the shock of impulse, then he put out his hand, laying it upon the child's head softly, tenderly. 'God bless you!' he said in broken, reverent tones. 'God bless you, little one!' Then he passed on, still suffering, still enduring; but the girl was comforted with a comfort that was upon her through many days that followed upon that last day in Thorsgrif Gill.

* * * * *

That was the end. Dorigen went home next day in the gig with Mr. Salvain and his mother. The new baby had grown, and was a very pretty baby, with round grey-blue eyes, and soft, pale

red hair curving and shining all over its head. There was a little smile, as if of welcome, when Dorigen took it in her arms; and that was more than John Gower had for his elder daughter. The man was crushed, changed. Hope was dead in his heart at last, and he knew it.

'You are glad to see me back again, father?' Dorigen asked of him before the day was over.

He looked up for a moment. There was light in his sunken eye, and a word of warmth on his lip, but remembrance struck him and restrained him.

'I shall be glad no more,' he said. Then he rose up and went out, leaving his children alone with their mother.

There was change in Mrs. Gower too, and Dorigen was quick to perceive it. The old austerity, the old tendency to perpetual suspicion and repression was gone. A new kindness had come in place of them, a new gentleness of manner, a new softness of look and voice. She listened patiently and with satisfaction to all that Dorigen had to tell of her new friends.

'Anybody might see they'd been good to you,' she said, glancing at her daughter with a touch of pride. 'You look quite different, as if you'd been years away; an' you're ever so much taller. . . . Oh, but I've thanked Heaven for givin'

you such good friends. Mind you try to deserve them, honey. I've thought many a time lately 'at mebbe they'll befriend you when there's nobody else.'

'But you're better, mother; you don't feel ill now?'

'No; I'm well enough; but it's borne in upon me strangely 'at there's change comin'. I don't mean only your father's goin' to sea; that's bad enough; but it isn't the worst, I'm fearin'. There's more than I can tell a child like you. An' it's you I think of most. I've thought of you a deal lately, an' I've dreamed of you at nights almost ever since you went away; an' such strange dreams they are. I seem to see you in a strange country; an' all alone, always alone; an' always in the dark, with rain an' wind beatin' upon you till you scarce can stand. An' you never seem to know the way, an' there's never nobody to tell you. Night after night I've woke your father with cryin' an' sayin', "O show her the way! Will nobody tell her which way to go?" An' then I get to sleep again, an' dream the same thing all over again; but nobody ever comes to show you the way.'

It was not a bright home-coming; and though Dorigen quietly slipped back into the old life, it

was yet lived with a difference, a wider and deeper difference than anyone dreamed. That high-tide of emotion which had lifted her soul from itself had borne her onward and upward to a loftier region of living and thinking. And there was more light in that higher region—light which illuminated existence on every side, so that not the smallest deed seemed to be really small, or without its influence upon the future.

It was natural, almost inevitable, that a certain half-poetic yet wholly real asceticism should grow out of this new carefulness of thought, word, and deed. Day by day, without her knowing it, the commonness of the common life about her grew more apparent, more distasteful. It was as if some influence which she herself could not discern were descending between her and the people who yet looked upon her with kindly glance, and spoke in tones of half-wondering deference. It was no matter for pride, nor yet for regret; indeed, it was no occasion for speculative thought of any kind. The atmosphere about each of us is intangible, and less to be felt by ourselves than by others. Only the rude and spiritually insensible ignore it; and you shall gauge a man's character by the easy obtuseness with which he pushes through the natural outworks of your individuality, and shows how much he considers

himself at home with you by crushing his way boldly among the finest and most cherished of your secret emotions. For one to show his capacity for human irreverence is to betray his soul's shallowness as nothing else can betray it; and no intimateness shall excuse the vulgarity of flippant manner and overfamiliar speech. Moreover, the human being from whose unseasonable and untempered forwardness you have once had to shrink shall never again command your full confidence.

END OF VOL. I.

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