# VARIOUS

## HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE, VOL. 1. NO 1, JUNE 1850

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Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. 1. No 1, June 1850 / Various — «Public Domain»,

# Содержание

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## ADVERTISEMENT

The Publishers take great pleasure in presenting herewith the first volume of the New Monthly Magazine. It was projected and commenced in the belief, that it might be made the means of bringing within the reach of the great mass of the American people, an immense amount of useful and entertaining reading matter, to which, on account of the great number and expense of the books and periodicals in which it originally appears, they have hitherto had no access. The popularity of the work has outstripped their most sanguine expectations. Although but six months have elapsed since it was first announced, it has already attained a regular monthly issue of more than Fifty Thousand Copies, and the rate of its increase is still unchecked. Under these circumstances, the Publishers would consider themselves failing in duty, as well as in gratitude, to the public, if they omitted any exertion within their power to increase its substantial value and its attractiveness. It will be their aim to present, in a style of typography unsurpassed by any similar publication in the world, every thing of general interest and usefulness which the current literature of the times may contain. They will seek, in every article, to combine entertainment with instruction, and to enforce, through channels which attract rather than repel attention and favor, the best and most important lessons of morality and of practical life. They will spare neither labor nor expense in any department of the work; freely lavishing both upon the editorial aid, the pictorial embellishments, the typography, and the general literary resources by which they hope to give the Magazine a popular circulation, unequaled by that of any similar periodical ever published in the world. And they are satisfied that they may appeal with confidence to the present volume, for evidence of the earnestness and fidelity with which they will enter upon the fulfillment of these promises for the future.

# A WORD AT THE START

Harper's New Monthly Magazine, of which this is the initial number, will be published every month, at the rate of three dollars per annum. Each number will contain as great an amount and variety of reading matter, and at least as many pictorial illustrations, and will be published in the same general style, as the present.

The design of the Publishers, in issuing this work, is to place within the reach of the great mass of the American people the unbounded treasures of the Periodical Literature of the present day. Periodicals enlist and absorb much of the literary talent, the creative genius, the scholarly accomplishment of the present age. The best writers, in all departments and in every nation, devote themselves mainly to the Reviews, Magazines, or Newspapers of the day. And it is through their pages that the most powerful historical Essays, the most elaborate critical Disquisitions, the most eloquent delineations of Manners and of Nature, the highest Poetry and the most brilliant Wit, have, within the last ten years, found their way to the public eye and the public heart.

This devotion to Periodical writing is rapidly increasing. The leading authors of Great Britain and of France, as well as of the United States, are regular and constant contributors to the Periodicals of their several countries. The leading statesmen of France have been for years the leading writers in her journals. Lamartine has just become the editor of a newspaper. Dickens has just established a weekly journal of his own, through which he is giving to the world some of the most exquisite and delightful creations that ever came from his magic pen. Alison writes constantly for Blackwood. Lever is enlisted in the Dublin University Magazine. Bulwer and Croly publish their greatest and most brilliant novels first in the pages of the Monthly Magazines of England and of Scotland. Macaulay, the greatest of living Essayists and Historians, has enriched the Edinburgh Review with volumes of the most magnificent productions of English Literature. And so it is with all the living authors of England. The ablest and the best of their productions are to be found in Magazines. The wealth and freshness of the Literature of the Nineteenth Century are embodied in the pages of its Periodicals.

The Weekly and Daily Journals of England, France, and America, moreover, abound in the most brilliant contributions in every department of intellectual effort. The current of Political Events, in an age of unexampled political activity, can be traced only through their columns. Scientific discovery, Mechanical inventions, the creations of Fine Art, the Orations of Statesmen, all the varied intellectual movements of this most stirring and productive age, find their only record upon these multiplied and ephemeral pages.

It is obviously impossible that all these sources of instruction and of interest should be accessible to any considerable number even of the reading public, much less that the great mass of the people of this country should have any opportunity of becoming familiar with them. They are scattered through scores and hundreds of magazines and journals, intermingled with much that is of merely local and transient interest, and are thus hopelessly excluded from the knowledge and the reach of readers at large.

The Publishers of the New Monthly Magazine intend to remedy this evil, and to place every thing of the Periodical Literature of the day, which has permanent value and commanding interest, in the hands of all who have the slightest desire to become acquainted with it. Each number will contain 144 octavo pages, in double columns: the volumes of a single year, therefore, will present nearly two thousand pages of the choicest and most attractive of the Miscellaneous Literature of the Age. The Magazine will transfer to its pages as rapidly as they may be issued all the continuous tales of Dickens, Bulwer, Croly, Lever, Warren, and other distinguished contributors to British Periodicals: articles of commanding interest from all the leading Quarterly Reviews of both Great Britain and the United States: Critical Notices of the current publications of the day: Speeches and Addresses of distinguished men upon topics of universal interest and importance: Notices of Scientific discoveries,

of the progress and fruits of antiquarian research, of mechanical inventions, of incidents of travel and exploration, and generally of all the events in Science, Literature, and Art in which the people at large have any interest. Constant and special regard will be had to such articles as relate to the Economy of Social and Domestic Life, or tend to promote in any way the education, advancement, and well-being of those who are engaged in any department of productive activity. A carefully prepared Fashion Plate, and other pictorial illustrations, will also accompany each number.

The Magazine is not intended exclusively for any class of readers, or for any kind of reading. The Publishers have at their command the exhaustless resources of current Periodical Literature in all its departments. They have the aid of Editors in whom both they and the public have long since learned to repose full and implicit confidence. They have no doubt that, by a careful, industrious, and intelligent use of these appliances, they can present a Monthly Compendium of the periodical productions of the day which no one who has the slightest relish for miscellaneous reading, or the slightest desire to keep himself informed of the progress and results of the literary genius of his own age, would willingly be without. And they intend to publish it at so low a rate, and to give to it a value so much beyond its price, that it shall make its way into the hands or the family circle of every intelligent citizen of the United States.

## [From the Dublin University Magazine.]

# MAURICE TIERNAY, THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

## CHAPTER I. "THE DAYS OF THE GUILLOTINE."

Neither the tastes nor the temper of the age we live in are such as to induce any man to boast of his family nobility. We see too many preparations around us for laying down new foundations, to think it a suitable occasion for alluding to the ancient edifice. I will, therefore, confine myself to saying, that I am not to be regarded as a mere Pretender because my name is not chronicled by Burke or Debrett. My great-grandfather, after whom I am called, served on the personal staff of King James at the Battle of the Boyne, and was one of the few who accompanied the monarch on his flight from the field, for which act of devotion he was created a peer of Ireland, by the style and title of Timmahoo – Lord Tiernay of Timmahoo the family called it – and a very rich-sounding and pleasant designation has it always seemed to me.

The events of the time – the scanty intervals of leisure enjoyed by the king, and other matters, prevented a due registry of my ancestors' claims; and, in fact, when more peaceable days succeeded it, it was judged prudent to say nothing about a matter which might revive unhappy recollections, and open old scores, seeing that there was now another king on the throne "who knew not Joseph;" and so, for this reason and many others, my great-grandfather went back to his old appellation of Maurice Tiernay, and was only a lord among his intimate friends and cronies of the neighborhood.

That I am simply recording a matter of fact, the patent of my ancestors' nobility now in my possession will sufficiently attest: nor is its existence the less conclusive, that it is inscribed on the back of his commission as a captain in the Shanabogue Fencibles – the well-known "Clear-the-way-boys" – a proud title, it is said, to which they imparted a new reading at the memorable battle aforementioned.

The document bears the address of a small public house called the Nest, on the Kells Road, and contains in one corner a somewhat lengthy score for potables, suggesting the notion that his majesty sympathized with vulgar infirmities, and found, as the old song says, "that grief and sorrow are dry."

The prudence which for some years sealed my grandfather's lips, lapsed, after a time, into a careless and even boastful spirit, in which he would allude to his rank in the peerage, the place he ought to be holding, and so on; till at last some of the government people, doubtless taking a liking to the snug house and demesne of Timmahoo, denounced him as a rebel, on which he was arrested and thrown into jail, where he lingered for many years, and only came out at last to find his estate confiscated and himself a beggar.

There was a small gathering of Jacobites in one of the towns of Flanders, and thither he repaired; but how he lived, or how he died, I never learned. I only know that his son wandered away to the east of Europe, and took service in what was called Trenck's Pandours – as jolly a set of robbers as ever stalked the map of Europe, from one side to the other. This was my grandfather, whose name is mentioned in various chronicles of that estimable corps, and who was hanged at Prague afterward for an attempt to carry off an archduchess of the empire, to whom, by the way, there is good reason to believe he was privately married. This suspicion was strengthened by the fact that his infant child, Joseph, was at once adopted by the imperial family, and placed as a pupil in the great military school of Vienna. From thence he obtained a commission in the Maria Theresa Hussars, and subsequently, being sent on a private mission to France, entered the service of Louis XVI., where he married a lady of the queen's household – a Mademoiselle de la Lasterie – of high rank and some fortune; and with whom he lived happily till the dreadful events of 17 – , when she lost her life, beside my father, then fighting as a Garde du Corps, on the stair-case at Versailles. How he himself escaped on that day, and what were the next features in his history, I never knew; but when again we heard of him, he was

married to the widow of a celebrated orator of the Mountain, and he himself an intimate friend of St. Just and Marat, and all the most violent of the Republicans.

My father's history about this period is involved in such obscurity, and his second marriage followed so rapidly on the death of his first wife, that, strange as it may seem, I never knew who was my mother – the lineal descendant of a house, noble before the Crusades, or the humble "bourgeoise" of the Quartier St. Denis. What peculiar line of political action my father followed I am unable to say, nor whether he was suspected with or without due cause: but suspected he certainly was, and at a time when suspicion was all-sufficient for conviction. He was arrested, and thrown into the Temple, where I remember I used to visit him every week; and whence I accompanied him one morning, as he was led forth with a string of others to the Place de la Grève, to be guillotined. I believe he was accused of royalism; and I know that a white cockade was found among his effects, and in mockery was fastened on his shoulder on the day of his execution. This emblem, deep dyed with blood, and still dripping, was taken up by a bystander, and pinned on my cap, with the savage observation, "Voila, it is the proper color; see that you profit by the way it became so." As with a bursting heart, and a head wild with terror, I turned to find my way homeward, I felt my hand grasped by another – I looked up, and saw an old man, whose threadbare black clothes and emaciated appearance bespoke the priest in the times of the Convention.

"You have no home now, my poor boy," said he to me; "come and share mine."

I did not ask him why. I seemed to have suddenly become reckless as to every thing present or future. The terrible scene I had witnessed had dried up all the springs of my youthful heart; and, infant as I was, I was already a skeptic as to every thing good or generous in human nature. I followed him, therefore, without a word, and we walked on, leaving the thoroughfares and seeking the less frequented streets, till we arrived in what seemed a suburban part of Paris – at least the houses were surrounded with trees and shrubs; and at a distance I could see the hill of Montmartre and its wind-mills – objects well known to me by many a Sunday visit.

Even after my own home, the poverty of the Père Michel's household was most remarkable: he had but one small room, of which a miserable settle-bed, two chairs, and a table constituted all the furniture; there was no fire-place, a little pan for charcoal supplying the only means for warmth or cookery; a crucifix and a few colored prints of saints decorated the whitewashed walls; and, with a string of wooden beads, a cloth skull-cap, and a bracket with two or three books, made up the whole inventory of his possessions; and yet, as he closed the door behind him, and drew me toward him to kiss my cheek, the tears glistened in his eyes with gratitude as he said,

"Now, my dear Maurice, you are at home."

"How do you know that I am called Maurice?" said I, in astonishment.

"Because I was an old friend of your poor father, my child; we came from the same country – we held the same faith, had the same hopes, and may one day yet, perhaps, have the same fate."

He told me that the closest friendship had bound them together for years past, and in proof of it showed me a variety of papers which my father had intrusted to his keeping, well aware, as it would seem, of the insecurity of his own life.

"He charged me to take you home with me, Maurice, should the day come when this might come to pass. You will now live with me, and I will be your father, so far at least as humble means will suffer me."

I was too young to know how deep my debt of gratitude ought to be. I had not tasted the sorrows of utter desertion; nor did I know from what a hurricane of blood and anarchy fortune had rescued me; still I accepted the Père's benevolent offer with a thankful heart, and turned to him at once as to all that was left to me in the world.

All this time, it may be wondered how I neither spoke nor thought of my mother, if she were indeed such; but for several weeks before my father's death I had never seen her, nor did he ever once allude to her. The reserve thus imposed upon me remained still, and I felt as though it would

have been like a treachery to his memory were I now to speak of her whom, in his life-time I had not dared to mention.

The Père lost no time in diverting my mind from the dreadful events I had so lately witnessed. The next morning, soon after daybreak, I was summoned to attend him to the little church of St. Blois, where he said mass. It was a very humble little edifice, which once had been the private chapel of a chateau, and stood in a weed-grown, neglected garden, where broken statues and smashed fountains bore evidence of the visits of the destroyer. A rude effigy of St. Blois, upon whom some profane hand had stuck a Phrygian cap of liberty, and which none were bold enough to displace, stood over the doorway; besides, not a vestige of ornament or decoration existed. The altar, covered with a white cloth, displayed none of the accustomed emblems; and a rude crucifix of oak was the only symbol of the faith remaining. Small as was the building, it was even too spacious for the few who came to worship. The terror which prevailed on every side – the dread that devotion to religion should be construed into an adherence to the monarchy, that submission to God should be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the sovereignty of human will, had gradually thinned the numbers, till at last the few who came were only those whose afflictions had steeled them against any reverses, and who were ready martyrs to whatever might betide them. These were almost exclusively women – the mothers and wives of those who had sealed their faith with their blood in the terrible Place de la Grève. Among them was one whose dress and appearance, although not different from the rest, always created a movement of respect as she passed in or out of the chapel. She was a very old lady, with hair white as snow, and who led by the hand a little girl of about my own age; her large dark eyes and brilliant complexion giving her a look of unearthly beauty in that assemblage of furrowed cheeks, and eyes long dimmed by weeping. It was not alone that her features were beautifully regular, or that their lines were fashioned in the very perfection of symmetry, but there was a certain character in the expression of the face so different from all around it, as to be almost electrical in effect. Untouched by the terrible calamities that weighed on every heart, she seemed, in the glad buoyancy of her youth, to be at once above the very reach of sorrow, like one who bore a charmed fate, and whom Fortune had exempted from all the trials of this life. So at least did I read those features, as they beamed upon me in such a contract to the almost stern character of the sad and sorrow-struck faces of the rest.

It was a part of my duty to place a foot-stool each morning for the "Marquise," as she was distinctively called, and on these occasions it was that I used to gaze upon that little girl's face with a kind of admiring wonder that lingered in my heart for hours after. The bold look with which she met mine, if it at first half abashed, at length encouraged me; and as I stole noiselessly away, I used to feel as though I carried with me some portion of that high hope which bounded within her own heart. Strange magnetism! it seemed as though her spirit whispered to me not to be down-hearted or depressed – that the sorrows of life came and went as shadows pass over the earth – that the season of mourning was fast passing, and that for us the world would wear a brighter and more glorious aspect.

Such were the thoughts her dark eyes revealed to me, and such the hopes I caught up from her proud features.

It is easy to color a life of monotony; any hue may soon tinge the outer surface, and thus mine speedily assumed a hopeful cast; not the less decided, that the distance was lost in vague uncertainty. The nature of my studies – and the Père kept me rigidly to the desk – offered little to the discursiveness of fancy. The rudiments of Greek and Latin, the lives of saints and martyrs, the litanies of the church, the invocations peculiar to certain holy days, chiefly filled up my time, when not sharing those menial offices which our poverty exacted from our own hands.

Our life was of the very simplest; except a cup of coffee each morning at daybreak, we took but one meal; our drink was always water. By what means even the humble fare we enjoyed was procured, I never knew, for I never saw money in the Père's possession, nor did he ever appear to buy any thing.

For about two hours in the week I used to enjoy entire liberty, as the Père was accustomed every Saturday to visit certain persons of his flock who were too infirm to go abroad. On these occasions

he would leave me with some thoughtful injunction about reflection or pious meditation, perhaps suggesting, for my amusement, the life of St. Vincent de Paul, or some other of those adventurous spirits whose missions among the Indians are so replete with heroic struggles; but still with free permission for me to walk out at large and enjoy myself as I liked best. We lived so near the outer Boulevard that I could already see the open country from our windows; but fair and enticing as seemed the sunny slopes of Montmartre – bright as glanced the young leaves of spring in the gardens at its foot – I ever turned my steps into the crowded city, and sought the thoroughfares where the great human tide rolled fullest.

There were certain spots which held a kind of supernatural influence over me – one of these was the Temple, another was the Place de la Grève. The window at which my father used to sit, from which, as a kind of signal, I have so often seen his red kerchief floating, I never could pass now, without stopping to gaze at; now, thinking of him who had been its inmate, now, wondering who might be its present occupant. It needed not the onward current of population that each Saturday bore along, to carry me to the Place de la Grève. It was the great day of the guillotine, and as many as two hundred were often led out to execution. Although the spectacle had now lost every charm of excitement to the population, from its frequency, it had become a kind of necessity to their existence, and the sight of blood alone seemed to slake that feverish thirst for vengeance which no sufferings appeared capable of satiating. It was rare, however, when some great and distinguished criminal did not absorb all the interest of the scene. It was at that period when the fierce tyrants of the Convention had turned upon each other, and sought, by denouncing those who had been their bosom friends, to seal their new allegiance to the people. There was something demoniacal in the exultation with which the mob witnessed the fate of those whom, but a few weeks back, they had acknowledged as their guides and teachers. The uncertainty of human greatness appeared the most glorious recompense to those whose station debarred them from all the enjoyments of power, and they stood by the death-agonies of their former friends with a fiendish joy that all the sufferings of their enemies had never yielded.

To me the spectacles had all the fascination that scenes of horror exercise over the mind of youth. I knew nothing of the terrible conflict, nothing of the fierce passions enlisted in the struggle, nothing of the sacred names so basely polluted, nothing of that remorseless vengeance with which the low-born and degraded were still hounded on to slaughter. It was a solemn and a fearful sight, but it was no more; and I gazed upon every detail of the scene with an interest that never wandered from the spot whereon it was enacted. If the parade of soldiers, of horse, foot, and artillery, gave these scenes a character of public justice, the horrible mobs, who chanted ribald songs, and danced around the guillotine, suggested the notion of popular vengeance; so that I was lost in all my attempts to reconcile the reasons of these executions with the circumstances that accompanied them.

Not daring to inform the Père Michel of where I had been, I could not ask him for any explanation; and thus was I left to pick up from the scattered phrases of the crowd what was the guilt alleged against the criminals. In many cases the simple word "Chouan," of which I knew not the import, was all I heard; in others jeering allusions to former rank and station would be uttered; while against some the taunt would imply that they had shed tears over others who fell as enemies of the people, and that such sympathy was a costly pleasure to be paid for but with a life's-blood. Such entire possession of me had these awful sights taken, that I lived in a continual dream of them. The sound of every cart-wheel recalled the dull rumble of the hurdle – every distant sound seemed like the far-off hum of the coming multitude – every sudden noise suggested the clanking drop of the guillotine! My sleep had no other images, and I wandered about my little round of duties pondering over this terrible theme.

Had I been less occupied with my own thoughts, I must have seen that Père Michel was suffering under some great calamity. The poor priest became wasted to a shadow; for entire days long he would taste of nothing; sometimes he would be absent from early morning to late at night, and when he did

return, instead of betaking himself to rest, he would drop down before the crucifix in an agony of prayer, and thus spend more than half the night. Often and often have I, when feigning sleep, followed him as he recited the litanies of the breviary, adding my own unuttered prayers to his, and beseeching for a mercy whose object I knew not.

For some time his little chapel had been closed by the authorities; a heavy padlock and two massive seals being placed upon the door, and a notice, in a vulgar handwriting, appended, to the effect, that it was by the order of the Commissary of the Department. Could this be the source of the Père's sorrow? or did not his affliction seem too great for such a cause? were questions I asked myself again and again.

In this state were matters, when one morning, it was a Saturday, the Père enjoined me to spend the day in prayer, reciting particularly the liturgies for the dead, and all those sacred offices for those who have just departed this life.

"Pray unceasingly, my dear child – pray with your whole heart, as though it were for one you loved best in the world. I shall not return, perhaps, till late to-night; but I will kiss you then, and to-morrow we shall go into the woods together."

The tears fell from his cheek to mine as he said this, and his damp hand trembled as he pressed my fingers. My heart was full to bursting at his emotion, and I resolved faithfully to do his bidding. To watch him, as he went, I opened the sash, and as I did so, the sound of a distant drum, the well-known muffled roll, floated on the air, and I remembered it was the day of the guillotine – that day in which my feverish spirit turned, as it were in relief, to the reality of blood. Remote as was the part of the city we lived in, to escape from the hideous imaginings of my overwrought brain, I could still mark the hastening steps of the foot-passengers, as they listened to the far-off summons, and see the tide was setting toward the fatal Place de Grève. It was a lowering, heavy morning, overcast with clouds, and on its loaded atmosphere sounds moved slowly and indistinctly; yet I could trace through all the din of the great city, the incessant roll of the drums, and the loud shouts that burst forth, from time to time, from some great multitude.

Forgetting every thing, save my intense passion for scenes of terror, I hastened down the stairs into the street, and at the top of my speed hurried to the place of execution. As I went along, the crowded streets and thronged avenues told of some event of more than common interest; and in the words which fell from those around me I could trace that some deep Royalist plot had just been discovered, and that the conspirators would all on that day be executed. Whether it was that the frequent sight of blood was beginning to pall upon the popular appetite, or that these wholesale massacres interested less than the sight of individual suffering, I know not; but certainly there was less of exultation, less of triumphant scorn in the tone of the speakers. They talked of the coming event, as of a common occurrence, which, from mere repetition, was gradually losing interest.

"I thought we had done with these Chouans," said a man in a blouse, with a paper cap on his head. "Pardie! they must have been more numerous than we ever suspected."

"That they were, citoyen," said a haggard-looking fellow, whose features showed the signs of recent strife; "they were the millions who gorged and fed upon us for centuries – who sipped the red grape of Bourdeaux, while you and I drank the water of the Seine."

"Well, their time is come now," cried a third.

"And when will ours come?" asked a fresh-looking, dark-eyed girl, whose dress bespoke her trade of *bouquetiere*– "Do you call this our time, my masters, when Paris has no more pleasant sight than blood, nor any music save the 'ça ira' that drowns the cries at the guillotine? Is this our time, when we have lost those who gave us bread, and got in their place only those who would feed us with carnage?"

"Down with her! down with the Chouan! à bas la Royaliste!" cried the pale-faced fellow; and he struck the girl with his fist upon the face, and left it covered with blood.

"To the lantern with her! – to the Seine!" shouted several voices; and now, rudely seizing her by the shoulders, the mob seemed bent upon sudden vengeance; while the poor girl, letting fall her basket, begged, with clasped hands, for mercy.

"See here, see here, comrades," cried a fellow, stooping down among the flowers, "she is a Royalist: here are lilies hid beneath the rest."

What sad consequences this discovery might have led to, there is no knowing; when, suddenly, a violent rush of the crowd turned every thought into a different direction. It was caused by a movement of the Gendarmerie à cheval, who were clearing the way for the approaching procession. I had just time to place the poor girl's basket in her hands, as the onward impulse of the dense mob carried me forward. I saw her no more. A flower – I know not how it came there – was in my bosom, and seeing that it was a lily, I placed it in my cap for concealment.

The hoarse clangor of the bassoons – the only instruments which played during the march – now told that the procession was approaching; and then I could see, above the heads of the multitude, the leopard-skin helmets of the dragoons, who led the way. Save this I could see nothing, as I was borne along in the vast torrent toward the place of execution. Slowly as we moved, our progress was far more rapid than that of the procession, which was often obliged to halt from the density of the mob in front. We arrived, therefore, at the Place a considerable time before it; and now I found myself beside the massive wooden railing placed to keep off the crowd from the space around the guillotine.

It was the first time I had ever stood so close to the fatal spot, and my eyes devoured every detail with the most searching intensity. The colossal guillotine itself, painted red, and with its massive ax suspended aloft – the terrible basket, half filled with sawdust, beneath – the coarse table, on which a rude jar and a cap were placed – and, more disgusting than all, the lounging group, who, with their newspapers in hand, seemed from time to time to watch if the procession were approaching. They sat beneath a misshapen statue of wood, painted red like the guillotine. This was the goddess of Liberty. I climbed one of the pillars of the paling, and could now see the great cart, which, like a boat upon wheels, came slowly along, dragged by six horses. It was crowded with people, so closely packed that they could not move their bodies, and only waved their hands, which they did incessantly. They seemed, too, as if they were singing; but the deep growl of the bassoons, and the fierce howlings of the mob, drowned all other sounds. As the cart came nearer, I could distinguish the faces, amid which were those of age and youth – men and women – bold-visaged boys and fair girls – some, whose air bespoke the very highest station, and beside them, the hardy peasant, apparently more amazed than terrified at all he saw around him. On they came, the great cart surging heavily, like a bark in a stormy sea; and now it cleft the dense ocean that filled the Place, and I could descry the lineaments wherein the stiffened lines of death were already marked. Had any touch of pity still lingered in that dense crowd, there might well have been some show of compassion for the sad convoy, whose faces grew ghastly with terror as they drew near the horrible engine.

Down the furrowed cheek of age the heavy tears coursed freely, and sobs and broken prayers burst forth from hearts that until now had beat high and proudly.

"There is the Duc d'Angeaç," cried a fellow, pointing to a venerable old man, who was seated at the corner of the cart, with an air of calm dignity; "I know him well, for I was his perruquier."

"His hair must be content with sawdust this morning, instead of powder," said another; and a rude laugh followed the ruffian jest.

"See! mark that woman with the long dark hair – that is La Bretonville, the actress of the St. Martin."

"I have often seen her represent terror far more naturally," cried a fashionably-dressed man, as he stared at the victim through his opera-glass.

"Bah!" replied his friend, "she despises her audience, *voila tout*. Look, Henri, if that little girl beside her be not Lucille of the Pantheon."

"Parbleu! so it is. Why, they'll not leave a pirouette in the Grand Opera. Pauvre petite, what had you to do with politics?"

"Her little feet ought to have saved her head any day."

"See how grim that old lady beside her looks: I'd swear she is more shocked at the company she's thrown into, than the fate that awaits her. I never saw a glance of prouder disdain than she has just bestowed on poor Lucille."

"That's the old Marquise d'Estelles, the very essence of our old nobility. They used to talk of their mesalliance with the Bourbons as the first misfortune of their house."

"Pardie! they have lived to learn deeper sorrows."

I had by this time discovered her they were speaking of, whom I recognized at once as the old marquise of the chapel of St. Blois. My hands nearly gave up their grasp as I gazed on those features, which so often I had seen fixed in prayer, and which now – a thought paler, perhaps – wore the self-same calm expression. With what intense agony I peered into the mass, to see if the little girl, her grand-daughter, were with her; and, oh! the deep relief I felt as I saw nothing but strange faces on every side. It was terrible to feel, as my eyes ranged over that vast mass, where grief and despair, and heart-sinking terror were depicted, that I should experience a spirit of joy and thankfulness; and yet I did so, and with my lips I uttered my gratitude that she was spared! But I had not time for many reflections like this; already the terrible business of the day had begun, and the prisoners were now descending from the cart, ranging themselves, as their names were called, in a line below the scaffold. With a few exception, they took their places in all the calm of seeming indifference. Death had long familiarized itself to their minds in a thousand shapes. Day by day they had seen the vacant places left by those led out to die, and if their sorrows had not rendered them careless of life, the world itself had grown distasteful to them. In some cases a spirit of proud scorn was manifested to the very last; and, strange inconsistency of human nature! the very men whose licentiousness and frivolity first evoked the terrible storm of popular fury, were the first to display the most chivalrous courage in the terrible face of the guillotine. Beautiful women, too, in all the pride of their loveliness, met the inhuman stare of that mob undismayed. Nor were these traits without their fruits. This noble spirit – this triumphant victory of the well-born and the great – was a continual insult to the populace, who saw themselves defrauded of half their promised vengeance, and they learned that they might kill, but they could never humiliate them. In vain they dipped their hands in the red life-blood, and, holding up their dripping fingers, asked, "How did it differ from that of the canaille?" Their hearts gave the lie to the taunt for they witnessed instances of heroism from gray hairs and tender womanhood, that would have shamed the proudest deeds of their new-born chivalry!

"Charles Gregoire Courcelles!" shouted out a deep voice from the scaffold.

"That is my name," said a venerable-looking old gentleman, as he arose from his seat, adding, with a placid smile, "but, for half a century my friends have called me the Duc de Riancourt."

"We have no dukes nor marquises; we know of no titles in France," replied the functionary. "All men are equal before the law."

"If it were so, my friend, you and I might change places; for you were my steward, and plundered my chateau."

"Down with the royalist – away with the aristocrat!" shouted a number of voices from the crowd.

"Be a little patient, good people," said the old man, as he ascended the steps with some difficulty; "I was wounded in Canada, and have never yet recovered. I shall probably be better a few minutes hence."

There was something of half simplicity in the careless way the words were uttered that hushed the multitude, and already some expressions of sympathy were heard; but as quickly the ribald insults of the hired ruffians of the Convention drowned these sounds, and "Down with the royalist" resounded on every side, while two officials assisted him to remove his stock and bare his throat. The commissary, advancing to the edge of the platform, and, as it were, addressing the people, read in a

hurried, slurring kind of voice, something that purported to be the ground of the condemnation. But of this not a word could be heard. None cared to hear the ten-thousand-time told tale of suspected royalism, nor would listen to the high-sounding declamation that proclaimed the virtuous zeal of the government – their untiring energy – their glorious persistence in the cause of the people. The last words were, as usual, responded to with an echoing shout, and the cry of "Vive la Republique" rose from the great multitude.

"Vive le Roi!" cried the old man, with a voice heard high above the clamor; but the words were scarce out when the lips that muttered them were closed in death; so sudden was the act, that a cry burst forth from the mob, but whether in reprobation or in ecstasy I knew not.

I will not follow the sad catalogue, wherein nobles and peasants, priests, soldiers, actors, men of obscure fortune, and women of lofty station succeeded each other, occupying for a brief minute every eye, and passing away for ever. Many ascended the platform without a word; some waved a farewell toward a distant quarter, where they suspected a friend to be – others spent their last moments in prayer, and died in the very act of supplication. All bore themselves with a noble and proud courage; and now some five or six alone remained, of whose fate none seemed to guess the issue, since they had been taken from the Temple by some mistake, and were not included in the list of the commissary. There they sat, at the foot of the scaffold, speechless and stupefied – they looked as though it were matter of indifference to which side their steps should turn – to the jail or the guillotine. Among these was the marquise, who alone preserved her proud self-possession, and sat in all her accustomed dignity; while close beside her an angry controversy was maintained as to their future destiny – the commissary firmly refusing to receive them for execution, and the delegate of the Temple, as he was styled, as flatly asserting that he would not re-conduct them to prison. The populace soon grew interested in the dispute, and the most violent altercations arose among the partisans of each side of the question.

Meanwhile, the commissary and his assistants prepared to depart. Already the massive drapery of red cloth was drawn over the guillotine, and every preparation made for withdrawing, when the mob, doubtless dissatisfied that they should be defrauded of any portion of the entertainment, began to climb over the wooden barricades, and, with furious cries and shouts, threatened vengeance upon any who would screen the enemies of the people.

The troops resisted the movement, but rather with the air of men entreating calmness, than with the spirit of soldiery. It was plain to see on which side the true force lay.

"If you will not do it, the people will do it for you," whispered the delegate to the commissary; "and who is to say where they will stop when their hands once learn the trick!"

The commissary grew lividly pale, and made no reply.

"See there!" rejoined the other; "they are carrying a fellow on their shoulders yonder; they mean him to be executioner."

"But I dare not – I can not – without my orders."

"Are not the people sovereign? – whose will have we sworn to obey, but theirs?"

"My own head would be the penalty if I yielded."

"It will be, if you resist – even now it is too late."

And as he spoke he sprang from the scaffold, and disappeared in the dense crowd that already thronged the space within the rails.

By this time, the populace were not only masters of the area around, but had also gained the scaffold itself, from which many of them seemed endeavoring to harangue the mob; others contenting themselves with imitating the gestures of the commissary and his functionaries. It was a scene of the wildest uproar and confusion – frantic cries and screams, ribald songs and fiendish yellings on every side. The guillotine was again uncovered, and the great crimson drapery, torn into fragments, was waved about like flags, or twisted into uncouth head-dresses. The commissary failing in every attempt to restore order peaceably, and either not possessing a sufficient force, or distrusting the temper of the

soldiers, descended from the scaffold, and gave the order to march. This act of submission was hailed by the mob with the most furious yell of triumph. Up to that very moment, they had never credited the bare possibility of a victory; and now they saw themselves suddenly masters of the field – the troops, in all the array of horse and foot, retiring in discomfiture. Their exultation knew no bounds; and, doubtless, had there been among them those with skill and daring to profit by the enthusiasm, the torrent had rushed a longer and more terrific course than through the blood-steeped clay of the Place de la Grève.

"Here is the man we want," shouted a deep voice. "St. Just told us, t'other day, that the occasion never failed to produce one; and see, here is 'Jean Gougon;' and though he's but two feet high, his fingers can reach the pin of the guillotine."

And he held aloft on his shoulders a misshapen dwarf, who was well known on the Pont Neuf, where he gained his living by singing infamous songs, and performing mockeries of the service of the mass. A cheer of welcome acknowledged this speech, to which the dwarf responded by a mock benediction, which he bestowed with all the ceremonious observance of an archbishop. Shouts of the wildest laughter followed this ribaldry, and in a kind of triumph they carried him up the steps, and deposited him on the scaffold.

Ascending one of the chairs, the little wretch proceeded to address the mob, which he did with all the ease and composure of a practiced public speaker. Not a murmur was heard in that tumultuous assemblage, as he, with a most admirable imitation of Hebert, then the popular idol, assured them that France was, at that instant, the envy of surrounding nations; and that, bating certain little weaknesses on the score of humanity – certain traits of softness and over-mercy – her citizens realized all that ever had been said of angels. From thence he passed on to a mimicry of Marat, of Danton, and of Robespierre – tearing off his cravat, baring his breast, and performing all the oft-exhibited antics of the latter, as he vociferated, in a wild scream, the well-known peroration of a speech he had lately made – "If we look to a glorious morrow of freedom, the sun of our slavery must set in blood!"

However amused by the dwarf's exhibition, a feeling of impatience began to manifest itself among the mob, who felt that, by any longer delay, it was possible time would be given for fresh troops to arrive, and the glorious opportunity of popular sovereignty be lost in the very hour of victory.

"To work – to work, Master Gougon!" shouted hundreds of rude voices; "we can not spend our day in listening to oratory."

"You forget, my dear friends," said he blandly, "that this is to me a new walk in life I have much to learn, ere I can acquit myself worthily to the republic."

"We have no leisure for preparatory studies, Gougon," cried a fellow below the scaffold.

"Let me, then, just begin with monsieur," said the dwarf, pointing to the last speaker; and a shout of laughter closed the sentence.

A brief and angry dispute now arose as to what was to be done, and it is more than doubtful how the debate might have ended, when Gougon, with a readiness all his own, concluded the discussion by saying,

"I have it, messieurs, I have it. There is a lady here, who, however respectable her family and connections, will leave few to mourn her loss. She is, in a manner, public property, and if not born on the soil, at least a naturalized Frenchwoman. We have done a great deal for her, and in her name, for some time back, and I am not aware of any singular benefit she has rendered us. With your permission, then, I'll begin with *her*."

"Name, name – name her," was cried by thousands.

"*La voila*," said he, archly, as he pointed with his thumb to the wooden effigy of Liberty above his head.

The absurdity of the suggestion was more than enough for its success. A dozen hands were speedily at work, and down came the Goddess of Liberty! The other details of an execution were

hurried over with all the speed of practiced address, and the figure was placed beneath the drop. Down fell the ax, and Gougon, lifting up the wooden head, paraded it about the scaffold, crying,

"Behold! an enemy of France. Long live the republic, one and 'indivisible.'"

Loud and wild were the shouts of laughter from this brutal mockery; and for a time it almost seemed as if the ribaldry had turned the mob from the sterner passions of their vengeance. This hope, if one there ever cherished it, was short-lived; and again the cry arose for blood. It was too plain, that no momentary diversion, no passing distraction, could withdraw them from that lust for cruelty, that had now grown into a passion.

And now a bustle and movement of those around the stairs showed that something was in preparation; and in the next moment the old marquise was led forward between two men.

"Where is the order for this woman's execution?" asked the dwarf, mimicking the style and air of the commissary.

"We give it: it is from us," shouted the mob, with one savage roar.

Gougon removed his cap, and bowed a token of obedience.

"Let us proceed in order, messieurs," said he, gravely; "I see no priest here."

"Shrive her yourself, Gougon; few know the mummeries better!" cried a voice.

"Is there not one here can remember a prayer, or even a verse of the offices," said Gougon, with a well-affected horror in his voice.

"Yes, yes, I do," cried I, my zeal overcoming all sense of the mockery in which the words were spoken; "I know them all by heart, and can repeat them from 'lux beatissima' down to 'hora mortis;'" and as if to gain credence for my self-laudation, I began at once to recite in the sing-song tone of the seminary,

"Salve, mater salvatoris,
Fons salutis, vas honoris:
Scala cœli porta et via
Salve semper, O, Maria!"

It is possible I should have gone on to the very end, if the uproarious laughter which rung around had not stopped me.

"There's a brave youth!" cried Gougon, pointing toward me, with mock admiration. "If it ever come to pass – as what may not in these strange times? – that we turn to priest-craft again, thou shalt be the first archbishop of Paris. Who taught thee that famous canticle?"

"The Père Michel," replied I, in no way conscious of the ridicule bestowed upon me; "the Père Michel of St. Blois."

The old lady lifted up her head at these words, and her dark eyes rested steadily upon me; and then, with a sign of her hand, she motioned to me to come over to her.

"Yes; let him come," said Gougon, as if answering the half-reluctant glances of the crowd. And now I was assisted to descend, and passed along over the heads of the people till I was placed upon the scaffold. Never can I forget the terror of that moment, as I stood within a few feet of the terrible guillotine, and saw beside me the horrid basket, splashed with recent blood.

"Look not at these things, child," said the old lady, as she took my hand and drew me toward her, "but listen to me, and mark my words well."

"I will, I will," cried I, as the hot tears rolled down my cheeks.

"Tell the Père – you will see him to-night – tell him that I have changed my mind, and resolved upon another course, and that he is not to leave Paris. Let them remain. The torrent runs too rapidly to last. This can not endure much longer. We shall be among the last victims! You hear me, child?"

"I do, I do," cried I, sobbing. "Why is not the Père Michel with you now?"

"Because he is suing for my pardon; asking for mercy, where its very name is a derision. Kneel down beside me, and repeat the 'angelus.'"

I took off my cap, and knelt down at her feet, reciting, in a voice broken by emotion, the words of the prayer. She repeated each syllable after me, in a tone full and unshaken, and then stooping, she took up the lily which lay in my cap. She pressed it passionately to her lips; two or three times passionately. "Give it to her; tell her I kissed it at my last moment. Tell her – "

"This 'shrift' is beyond endurance. Away, holy father," cried Gougon, as he pushed me rudely back, and seized the marquise by the wrist. A faint cry escaped her. I heard no more; for, jostled and pushed about by the crowd, I was driven to the very rails of the scaffold. Stepping beneath these, I mingled with the mob beneath; and burning with eagerness to escape a scene, to have witnessed which would almost have made my heart break, I forced my way into the dense mass, and, by squeezing and creeping, succeeded at last in penetrating to the verge of the Place. A terrible shout, and a rocking motion of the mob, like the heavy surging of the sea, told me that all was over; but I never looked back to the fatal spot, but having gained the open streets, ran at the top of my speed toward home.

**(To be continued.)**

**[From Bender's Monthly Miscellany.]**

# WOMEN IN THE EAST

## by an oriental traveler

Within the gay kiosk reclined,
Above the scent of lemon groves,
Where bubbling fountains kiss the wind,
And birds make music to their loves,
She lives a kind of faery life,
In sisterhood of fruits and flowers,
Unconscious of the outer strife
That wears the palpitating hours.

*The Hareem. R.M. Milnes.*

There is a gentle, calm repose breathing through the whole of this poem, which comes soothingly to the imagination wearied with the strife and hollowness of modern civilization. Woman in it is the inferior being; but it is the inferiority of the beautiful flower, or of the fairy birds of gorgeous plumage, who wing their flight amid the gardens and bubbling streams of the Eastern palace. Life is represented for the Eastern women as a long dream of affection; the only emotions she is to know are those of ardent love and tender maternity. She is not represented as the companion to man in his life battle, as the sharer of his triumph and his defeats: the storms of life are hushed at the entrance of the hareem; *there* the lord and master deposits the frown of unlimited power, or the cringing reverence of the slave, and appears as the watchful guardian of the loved one's happiness. Such a picture is poetical, and would lead one to say, alas for human progress, if the Eastern female slave is thus on earth to pass one long golden summer – her heart only tied by those feelings which keep it young – while her Christian sister has these emotions but as sun-gleams to lighten and make dark by contrast, the frequent gloom of her winter life.

But although the conception is poetical, to one who has lived many years in the East, it appears a conception, not a description of the real hareem life, even among the noble and wealthy of those lands. The following anecdote may be given us the other side of the picture. The writer was a witness of the scene, and he offers it as a consolation to those of his fair sisters, who, in the midst of the troubles of common-place life, might be disposed to compare their lot with that of the inmate of the mysterious and happy home drawn by the poet.

It was in a large and fruitful district of the south of India that I passed a few years of my life. In this district lived, immured in his fort, one of the native rajahs, who, with questionable justice, have gradually been shorn of their regal state and authority, to become pensioners of the East India Company. The inevitable consequence of such an existence, the forced life of inactivity with the traditions of the bold exploits of his royal ancestors, brilliant Mahratta chieftains, may be imagined. The rajah sunk into a state of slothful dissipation, varied by the occasional intemperate exercise of the power left him within the limits of the fortress, his residence. This fort is not the place which the word would suggest to the reader, but was rather a small native town surrounded by fortifications. This town was peopled by the descendants of the Mahrattas, and by the artisans and dependents of the rajah and his court. Twice a year the English resident and his assistants were accustomed to pay visits of ceremony to the rajah, and had to encounter the fatiguing sights of dancing-girls, beast-

fights, and *music*, if the extraordinary assemblage of sounds, which in the East assume the place of harmony, can be so called.

We had just returned from one of these visits, and were grumbling over our headaches, the dust, and the heat, when, to our surprise, the rajah's vabul or confidential representative was announced. As it was nine o'clock in the evening this somewhat surprised us. He was, however, admitted, and after a short, hurried obeisance, he announced "that he must die! that there had been a sudden revolt of the hareem, and that when the rajah knew it, he would listen to no explanations, but be sure to imprison and ruin all round him; and that foremost in the general destruction would be himself, Veneat-Rao, who had always been the child of the English Sahibs, who were his fathers – that they were wise above all natives, and that he had come to them for help!" All this was pronounced with indescribable volubility, and the appearance of the speaker announced the most abject fear. He was a little wizened Brahmin, with the thin blue lines of his caste carefully painted on his wrinkled forehead. His dark black eyes gleamed with suppressed impotent rage, and in his agitation he had lost all that staid, placid decorum which we had been accustomed to observe in him when transacting business. When urged to explain the domestic disaster which had befallen his master, he exclaimed with ludicrous pathos, "By Rama! women are devils; by them all misfortunes come upon men! But, sahibs, hasten with me; they have broken through the guard kept on the hareem door by two old sentries; they ran through the fort and besieged my house; they are now there, and refuse to go back to the hareem. The rajah returns to-morrow from his hunting – what can I say? I must die! my children, who will care for them? what crime did my father commit that I should thus be disgraced?"

Yielding to these entreaties, and amused at the prospect of a novel scene, we mounted our horses and cantered to the fort. The lights were burning brightly in the bazaars as we rode through them, and except a few groups gathered to discuss the price of rice and the want of rain, we perceived no agitation till we reached the Vakeel's house. Arrived here we dismounted, and on entering the square court-yard a scene of indescribable confusion presented itself. The first impression it produced on me was that of entering a large aviary in which the birds, stricken with terror, fly madly to and fro against the bars. Such was the first effect of our entrance. Women and girls of all ages, grouped about the court, in most picturesque attitudes, started up and fled to its extreme end; only a few of the more matronly ladies stood their ground, and with terribly screeching voices, declaimed against some one or something, but for a long time we could, in this Babel of female tongues, distinguish nothing. At last we managed to distinguish the rajah's name, coupled with epithets most disrespectful to royalty. This, and that they, the women, begged instantly to be put to death, was all that the clamor would permit us to understand. We looked appealingly at Veneat Rao, who stood by, wringing his hands. However, he made a vigorous effort, and raising his shrill voice, told them that the sahibs had come purposely to listen to, and redress their grievances, and that they would hold durbar (audience) then and there.

This announcement produced a lull, and enabled us to look round us at the strange scene. Scattered in various parts of the court were these poor prisoners, who now for the first time for many years tasted liberty. Scattered about were some hideous old women, partly guardians of the younger, partly remains, we were told, of the rajah's father's seraglio. Young children moved among them looking very much frightened. But the group which attracted our attention and admiration consisted of about twenty really beautiful girls, from fourteen to eighteen years of age, of every country and caste, in the various costume and ornament of their races; these were clustering round a fair and very graceful Mahratta girl, whose tall figure was seen to great advantage in the blaze of torchlight. Her muslin vail had half fallen from her face, allowing us to see her large, soft, dark eyes, from which the tears were fast falling, as in a low voice she addressed her fellow-sufferers. There was on her face a peculiar expression of patient endurance of ill, inexpressibly touching. This is not an unfrequent character in the beauty of Asiatic women; the natural result of habits of fear, and the entire submission to the will of others.

Her features were classically regular, with the short rounded chin, the long graceful neck, and that easy port of head so seldom seen except in the women of the East. Her arms were covered with rich bracelets, and were of the most perfect form; her hands long and tapering, the palms and nails dyed with the "henna." No barbarously-civilized restraint rendered her waist a contradiction of natural beauty; a small, dark satin bodice, richly embroidered, covered a bosom which had hardly attained womanly perfection; a zone of gold held together the full muslin folds of the lower portion of her dress, below which the white satin trowsers reached, without concealing a faultless ankle and foot, uncovered, except by the heavy anklet and rings which tinkled at every step she took. After the disturbance that our entrance had caused, had in a measure subsided, the children, who were richly dressed and loaded with every kind of fantastic ornament, came sidling timidly round us, peering curiously with their large black eyes, at the unusual sight of white men.

Considerably embarrassed at the very new arbitration which we were about to undertake, B. and I consulted for a little while, after which, gravely taking our seats, and Veneat Rao having begged them to listen with respectful attention, I, at B.'s desire, proceeded to address them, telling them,

"That we supposed some grave cause must have arisen for them to desert the palace of the rajah, their protector, during his absence, and by violently overpowering the guard, incur his serious anger (here my eye caught a sight of the said guard, consisting of two blear-eyed, shriveled old men, and I nearly lost all solemnity of demeanor) that if they complained of injustice, we supposed that it must have been committed without his highness's knowledge, but that if they would quietly return to the hareem we would endeavor to represent to their master their case, and entreat him to redress their grievance."

I spoke this in Hindusthani, which, as the *lingua franca* of the greater part of India, I thought was most likely to be understood by the majority of my female audience. I succeeded perfectly in making myself understood, but was not quite so successful in convincing them that it was better that they should return to the rajah's palace. After rather a stormy discussion, the Mahratta girl, whom we had so much admired on our entrance, stepped forward, and, bowing lowly before us, and crossing her arms, in a very sweet tone of voice proceeded to tell her story, which, she said, was very much the history of them all. The simple, and at times picturesque expressions lose much by translation.

"Sir, much shame comes over me, that I, a woman, should speak before men who are not our fathers, husbands, nor brothers, who are strangers, of another country and religion; but they tell us that you English sahibs love truth and justice, and protect the poor.

"I was born of Gentoo parents – rich, for I can remember the bright, beautiful jewels which, as a child, I wore on my head, arms, and feet, the large house and gardens where I played, and the numerous servants who attended me.

"When I had reached my eighth or ninth year I heard them talk of my betrothal,[1] and of the journey which we were, previous to the ceremony, to take to some shrine in a distant country. My father, who was advancing in years, and in bad health, being anxious to bathe in the holy waters, which should give him prolonged life and health.

"The journey had lasted for many days, and one evening after we had halted for the day I accompanied my mother when she went to bathe in a tank near to our encampment. As I played along the bank and picked a few wild flowers that grew under the trees I observed an old woman advancing toward me. She spoke to me in a kind voice, asked me my name? who were my parents? where we were going? and when I had answered her these questions she told me that if I would accompany her a little way she would give me some prettier flowers than those I was gathering, and that her servant should take me back to my people.

"I had no sooner gone far enough to be out of sight and hearing of my mother than the old woman threw a cloth over my head, and taking me up in her arms, hurried on for a short distance.

[1] The usual age for the ceremony among the wealthy India.

There I could distinguish men's voices, and was sensible of being placed in a carriage, which was driven off at a rapid pace. No answer was returned to my cries and entreaties to be restored to my parents, and at sunrise I found myself near hills which I had never before seen, and among a people whose language was new to me.

"I remained with these people, who were not unkind to me, three or four years; and I found out that the old woman who had carried me off from my parents, was an emissary sent from the rajah's hareem to kidnap, when they could not be purchased, young female children whose looks promised that they would grow up with the beauty necessary for the gratification of the prince's passions.

"Sahibs! I have been two years an inmate of the rajah's hareem – would to God I had died a child in my own country with those I loved, than that I should have been exposed to the miseries we suffer. The splendor which surrounds us is only a mockery. The rajah, wearied and worn out by a life of debauchery, takes no longer any pleasure in our society, and is only roused from his lethargy to inflict disgrace and cruelties upon us. We, who are of Brahmin caste, for his amusement, are forced to learn the work of men – are made to carry in the gardens of the hareem a palanquin, to work as goldsmiths – and, may our gods pardon us, to mingle with the dancing-girls of the bazaar. His attendants deprive us even of our food, and we sit in the beautiful palace loaded with jewels, and suffer from the hunger not felt even by the poor Pariah.

"Sahibs! you who have in your country mothers and sisters, save us from this cruel fate, and cause us to be restored to our parents; do not send us back to such degradation, but rather let us die by your orders."

As with a voice tremulous with emotion, she said these words, she threw herself at our feet, and burst into an agony of weeping.

Deeply moved by the simple expression of such undeserved misfortune, we soothed her as well as we were able, and promising her and her companions to make every effort with the rajah for their deliverance, we persuaded Rosambhi, the Mahratta girl (their eloquent pleader), to induce them to return for the night to the palace. Upon a repetition of our promise they consented, to the infinite relief of Veneat Rao, who alternately showered blessings on us, and curses on all womankind, as he accompanied us back to the Residency.

And now we had to set about the deliverance of these poor women. This was a work of considerable difficulty.

It was a delicate matter interfering with the rajah's domestic concerns, and we could only commission Veneat Rao to communicate to his highness the manner in which we had become implicated with so unusual an occurrence as a revolt of his seraglio; we told him to express to his highness our conviction that his generosity had been deceived by his subordinates. In this we only imitated the profound maxim of European diplomacy, and concealed our real ideas by our expressions. This to the rajah. On his confidential servant we enforced the disapprobation the resident felt at the system of kidnapping, of which his highness was the instigator, and hinted at that which these princes most dread – an investigation.

This succeeded beyond our expectation, and the next morning a message was sent from the palace, intimating that the charges were so completely unfounded, that the rajah was prepared to offer to his revolted women, the choice of remaining in the hareem, or being sent back to their homes.

Again they were assembled in Veneat Rao's house, but this time in much more orderly fashion, for their vails were down, and except occasionally when a coquettish movement showed a portion of some face, we were unrewarded by any of the bright eyes we had admired on the previous visit. The question was put to them one by one, and all with the exception of a few old women, expressed an eager wish not to re-enter the hareem.

After much troublesome inquiry, we discovered their parents, and were rewarded by their happy and grateful faces, as we sent them off under escort to their homes. It was painful to reflect what their fate would be; they left us rejoicing at what they thought would be a happy change, but we well

knew that no one would marry them, knowing that they had been in the rajah's hareem, and that they would either lead a life of neglect, or sink into vice, of which the liberty would be the only change from that, which by our means they had escaped.

In the inquiries we made into the circumstances of this curious case, we found that their statements were true.

Large sums were paid by the rajah to his creatures, who traveled to distant parts of the country, and wherever they could meet with parents poor enough, bought their female children from them, or when they met with remarkable beauty such as Rosambhi's, did not hesitate to carry the child off, and by making rapid marches, elude any vigilance of pursuit on the part of the parents.

The cruelties and degradations suffered by these poor girls are hardly to be described. We well know how degraded, even in civilized countries the pursuit of sensual pleasures renders men, to whom education and the respect they pay the opinion of society, are checks; let us imagine the conduct of the eastern prince, safe in the retirement of his court, surrounded by those dependents to whom the gratification of their master's worst passions was the sure road to favor and fortune.

Besides the sufferings they had to endure from him, the women of the hareem were exposed to the rapacities of those who had charge of them, and Rosambhi did not exaggerate, when she described herself and her companions as suffering the pangs of want amid the splendors of a palace.

This is the reverse of the pleasing picture drawn by the poet of the Eastern woman's existence – but, though less pleasing, it is true – nor need we describe her in the lower ranks of life in those countries, where, her beauty faded, she has to pass a wearisome existence, the servant of a rival, whose youthful charms have supplanted her in her master's affections. The calm happiness of advancing age is seldom hers – she is the toy while young – the slave, or the neglected servant, at best, when, her only merit in the eyes of her master, physical beauty, is gone.

Let her sister in the western world, in the midst of her joys, think with pity on these sufferings, and when sorrow's cloud seems darkest, let her not repine, but learn resignation to her lot, as she compares it with the condition of the women of the East; let her be grateful that she lives in an age and land where woman is regarded as the helpmate and consolation of man, by whom her love is justly deemed the prize of his life.

## [From The Ladies' Companion.]

# LETTICE ARNOLD

## By the Author of "Two Old Men's Tales," "Emilia Wyndham," &c

# CHAPTER I

"It is the generous spirit, who when brought
Unto the task of common life, hath wrought
Even upon the plan which pleased the childish thought

.....

Who doomed to go in company with pain,
And fear, and ruin – miserable train! —
Makes that necessity a glorious gain,
By actions that would force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate.

.....

More gifted with self-knowledge – even more pure
As tempted more – more able to endure,
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness."

*Wordsworth. Happy Warrior.*

"No, dearest mother, no! I can not. What! after all the tenderness, care, and love I have received from you, for now one-and-twenty years, to leave you and my father, in your old age, to yourselves! Oh, no! Oh, no!"

"Nay, my child," said the pale, delicate, nervous woman, thus addressed by a blooming girl whose face beamed with every promise for future happiness, which health and cheerfulness, and eyes filled with warm affections could give, "Nay, my child, don't talk so. You must not talk so. It is not to be thought of." And, as she said these words with effort, her poor heart was dying within her, not only from sorrow at the thought of the parting from her darling, but with all sorts of dreary, undefined terrors at the idea of the forlorn, deserted life before her. Abandoned to herself and to servants, so fearful, so weak as she was, and with the poor, invalided, and crippled veteran, her husband, a martyr to that long train of sufferings which honorable wounds, received in the service of country, too often leave behind them, a man at all times so difficult to sooth, so impossible to entertain – and old age creeping upon them both; the little strength she ever had, diminishing; the little spirit she ever possessed, failing; what should she do without this dear, animated, this loving, clever being, who was, in one word, every thing to her?

But she held to her resolution – no martyr ever more courageously than this trembling, timid woman. A prey to ten thousand imaginary fears, and, let alone the imaginary terrors, placed in a position where the help she was now depriving herself of was really so greatly needed.

"No, my dear," she repeated, "don't think of it; don't speak of it. You distress me very much. Pray don't, my dearest Catherine."

"But I should be a shocking creature, mamma, to forsake you; and, I am sure, Edgar would despise me as much as I should myself, if I could think of it. I can not – I ought not to leave you."

The gentle blue eye of the mother was fixed upon the daughter's generous, glowing face. She smothered a sigh. She waited a while to steady her faltering voice. She wished to hide, if possible, from her daughter the extent of the sacrifice she was making.

At last she recovered herself sufficiently to speak with composure, and then she said:

"To accept such a sacrifice from a child, I have always thought the most monstrous piece of selfishness of which a parent could be guilty. My love, this does not come upon me unexpectedly. I have, of course, anticipated it. I knew my sweet girl could not be long known and seen without inspiring and returning the attachment of some valuable man. I have resolved – and God strengthen me in this resolve," she cast up a silent appeal to the fountain of strength and courage – "that nothing should tempt me to what I consider so base. A parent accept the sacrifice of a life in exchange for the poor remnant of her own! A parent, who has had her own portion of the joys of youth in her day, deprive a child of a share in her turn! No, my dearest love, never – never! I would die, and I will die first."

But it was not death she feared. The idea of death did not appall her. What she dreaded was melancholy. She knew the unsoundness of her own nerves; she had often felt herself, as it were, trembling upon the fearful verge of reason, when the mind, unable to support itself, is forced to rest upon another. She had known a feeling, common to many very nervous people, I believe, as though the mind would be overset when pressed far, if not helped, strengthened, and cheered by some more wholesome mind; and she shrank appalled from the prospect.

But even this could not make her waver in her resolution. She was a generous, just, disinterested woman; though the exigencies of a most delicate constitution, and most susceptible nervous system, had too often thrown upon her – from those who did not understand such things, and whose iron nerves and vigorous health rendered sympathy at such times impossible – the reproach of being a tedious, whimsical, selfish hypochondriac.

Poor thing, she knew this well. It was the difficulty of making herself understood; the want of sympathy, the impossibility of rendering needs, most urgent in her case, comprehensible by her friends, which had added so greatly to the timorous cowardice, the fear of circumstances, of changes, which had been the bane of her existence.

And, therefore, this kind, animated, affectionate daughter, whose tenderness seemed never to weary in the task of cheering her; whose activity was never exhausted in the endeavor to assist and serve her; whose good sense and spirit kept every thing right at home, and more especially kept those terrible things, the servants, in order – of whom the poor mother, like many other feeble and languid people, was so foolishly afraid; therefore, this kind daughter was as the very spring of her existence; and the idea of parting with her was really dreadful. Yet she hesitated not. So did that man behave, who stood firm upon the rampart till he had finished his observation, though his hair turned white with fear. Mrs. Melwyn was an heroic coward of this kind.

She had prayed ardently, fervently, that day, for courage, for resolution, to complete the dreaded sacrifice, and she had found it.

"Oh, Lord! I am thy servant. Do with me what thou wilt. Trembling in spirit, the victim of my infirmity – a poor, selfish, cowardly being, I fall down before Thee. Thou hast showed me what is right – the sacrifice I ought to make. Oh, give me strength in my weakness to *be* faithful to complete it!"

Thus had she prayed. And now resolved in heart, the poor sinking spirit failing her within but, as I said, steadying her voice with an almost heroic constancy, she resisted her grateful and pious child's representation: "I have told Edgar – dear as he is to me – strong as are the claims his generous affection gives him over me – that I will not – I can not forsake you."

"You must not call it forsake," said the mother, gently. "My love, the Lord of life himself has spoken it: 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.'"

"And so he is ready to do," cried Catherine, eagerly. "Yes, mother, he desires nothing better – he respects my scruples – he has offered, dear Edgar! to abandon his profession and come and live here, and help me to take care of you and my father. Was not that beautiful?" and the tears stood in her speaking eyes.

"Beautiful! generous! devoted! My Catherine will be a happy woman;" and the mother smiled. A ray of genuine pleasure warmed her beating heart. This respect in the gay, handsome young officer for the filial scruples of her he loved was indeed beautiful! But the mother knew his spirit too well to listen to this proposal for a moment.

"And abandon his profession? No, my sweet child, that would never, never do."

"But he says he is independent of his profession – that his private fortune, though not large, is enough for such simple, moderate people as he and I are. In short, that he shall be miserable without me, and all that charming stuff, mamma; and that he loves me better, for what he calls, dear fellow, my piety to you. And so, dear mother, he says if you and my father will but consent to take him in, he will do his very best in helping me to make you comfortable; and he is so sweet-tempered, so reasonable, so good, so amiable, I am quite sure he would keep his promise, mamma." And she looked anxiously into her mother's face waiting for an answer. The temptation was very, very strong.

Again those domestic spectres which had so appalled her poor timorous spirit rose before her. A desolate, dull fireside – her own tendency to melancholy – her poor maimed suffering, and, alas, too often peevish partner – encroaching, unmanageable servants. The cook, with her careless, saucy ways – the butler so indifferent and negligent – and her own maid, that Randall, who in secret tyrannized over her, exercising the empire of fear to an extent which Catherine, alive as she was to these evils, did not suspect. And again she asked herself, if these things were disagreeable now, when Catherine was here to take care of her, what would they be when she was left alone?

And then such a sweet picture of happiness presented itself to tempt her – Catherine settled there – settled there forever. That handsome, lively young man, with his sweet, cordial ways and polite observance of every one, sitting by their hearth, and talking, as he did, to the general of old days and military matters, the only subject in which this aged military man took any interest, reading the newspaper to him, and making such lively, pleasant comments as he read! How should *she* ever get through the debates, with her breath so short, and her voice so indistinct and low? The general would lose all patience – he hated to hear her attempt to read such things, and always got Catherine or the young lieutenant-colonel to do it.

Oh! it was a sore temptation. But this poor, dear, good creature resisted it.

"My love," she said, after a little pause, daring which this noble victory was achieved – laugh if you will at the expression, but it *was* a noble victory over self – "my love," she said, "don't tempt your poor mother beyond her strength. Gladly, gladly, as far as we are concerned, would we enter into this arrangement; but it must not be. No, Catherine; Edgar must not quit his profession. It would not only be a very great sacrifice I am sure now, but it would lay the foundation of endless regrets in future. No, my darling girl, neither his happiness nor your happiness shall be ever sacrificed to mine. A life against a few uncertain years! No – no."

The mother was inflexible. The more these good children offered to give up for her sake, the more she resolved to suffer no such sacrifice to be made.

Edgar could not but rejoice. He was an excellent young fellow, and excessively in love with the charming Catherine, you may be sure, or he never would have thought of offering to abandon a profession for her sake in which he had distinguished himself highly – which opened to him the fairest prospects, and of which he was especially fond – but he was not sorry to be excused. He had resolved upon this sacrifice, for there is something in those who truly love, and whose love is elevated almost to adoration by the moral worth they have observed in the chosen one, which revolts at the idea of lowering the tone of that enthusiastic goodness and self-immolation to principle which has so enchanted them. Edgar could not do it. He could not attempt to persuade this tender, generous

daughter, to consider her own welfare and his, in preference to that of her parents. He could only offer, on his own part, to make the greatest sacrifice which could have been demanded from him. Rather than part from her what would he not do? Every thing was possible but that.

However, when the mother positively refused to accept of this act of self-abnegation, I can not say that he regretted it. No: he thought Mrs. Melwyn quite right in what she said; and he loved and respected both her character and understanding very much more than he had done before.

That night Mrs. Melwyn was very, very low indeed. And when she went up into her dressing-room, and Catherine, having kissed her tenderly, with a heart quite divided between anxiety for her, and a sense of happiness that would make itself felt in spite of all, had retired to her room, the mother sat down, poor thing, in the most comfortable arm-chair that ever was invented, but which imparted no comfort to her; and placing herself by a merry blazing fire, which was reflected from all sorts of cheerful pretty things with which the dressing-room was adorned, her feet upon a warm, soft footstool of Catherine's own working, her elbow resting upon her knee, and her head upon her hand, she, with her eyes bent mournfully upon the fire, began crying very much. And so she sat a long time, thinking and crying, very sorrowful, but not in the least repenting. Meditating upon all sorts of dismal things, filled with all kinds of melancholy forebodings, as to how it would, and must be, when Catherine was really gone, she sank at last into a sorrowful reverie, and sate quite absorbed in her own thoughts, till she – who was extremely punctual in her hour of going to bed – for reasons best known to herself, though never confided to any human being, namely, that her maid disliked very much sitting up for her – started as the clock in the hall sounded eleven and two quarters, and almost with the trepidation of a chidden child, rose and rang the bell. Nobody came. This made her still more uneasy. It was Randall's custom not to answer her mistress's bell the first time, when she was cross. And poor Mrs. Melwyn dreaded few things in this world more than cross looks in those about her, especially in Randall; and that Randall knew perfectly well.

"She must be fallen asleep in her chair, poor thing. It was very thoughtless of me," Mrs. Melwyn did not say, but would have said, if people ever did speak to themselves aloud.

Even in this sort of mute soliloquy she did not venture to say, "Randall will be very ill-tempered and unreasonable." She rang again; and then, after a proper time yielded to the claims of offended dignity, it pleased Mrs. Randall to appear.

"I am very sorry, Randall. Really I had no idea how late it was. I was thinking about Miss Catherine, and I missed it when it struck ten. I had not the least idea it was so late," began the mistress in an apologizing tone, to which Randall vouchsafed not an answer, but looked like a thunder cloud – as she went banging up and down the room, opening and shutting drawers with a loud noise, and treading with a rough heavy step; two things particularly annoying, as she very well knew, to the sensitive nerves of her mistress. But Randall settled it with herself – that as her mistress had kept her out of bed an hour and a half longer than usual, for no reason at all but just to please herself, she should find she was none the better for it.

The poor mistress bore all this with patience for some time. She would have gone on bearing the roughness and the noise, however disagreeable, as long as Randall liked; but her soft heart could not bear those glum, cross looks, and this alarming silence.

"I was thinking of Miss Catherine's marriage, Randall. That was what made me forget the hour. What shall I do without her?"

"Yes, that's just like it," said the insolent abigail; "nothing ever can content some people. Most ladies would be glad to settle their daughters so well; but some folk make a crying matter of every thing. It would be well for poor servants, when they're sitting over the fire, their bones aching to death for very weariness, if *they'd* something pleasant to think about. They wouldn't be crying for nothing, and keeping all the world out of their beds, like those who care for naught but how to please themselves."

Part of this was said, part muttered, part thought; and the poor timid mistress – one of whose domestic occupations it seemed to be to study the humors of her servants – heard a part and divined the rest.

"Well, Randall, I don't quite hear all you are saying; and perhaps it is as well I do not; but I wish you would give me my things and make haste, for I'm really very tired, and I want to go to bed."

"People can't make more haste than they can."

And so it went on. The maid-servant never relaxing an atom of her offended dignity – continuing to look as ill-humored, and to do every thing as disagreeably as she possibly could – and her poor victim, by speaking from time to time in an anxious, most gentle, and almost flattering manner, hoping to mollify her dependent; but all in vain.

"I'll teach her to keep me up again for nothing at all," thought Randall.

And so the poor lady, very miserable in the midst of all her luxuries, at last gained her bed, and lay there not able to sleep for very discomfort. And the abigail retired to her own warm apartment, where she was greeted with a pleasant fire, by which stood a little nice chocolate simmering, to refresh her before she went to bed – not much less miserable than her mistress, for she was dreadfully out of humor – and thought no hardship upon earth could equal that she endured – forced to sit up in consequence of another's whim when she wanted so sadly to go to bed.

While, thus, all that the most abundant possession of the world's goods could bestow, was marred by the weakness of the mistress and the ill-temper of the maid – the plentiful gifts of fortune rendered valueless by the erroneous facility upon one side, and insolent love of domination on the other; how many in the large metropolis, only a few miles distant, and of which the innumerable lights might be seen brightening, like an Aurora, the southern sky; how many laid down their heads supperless that night! Stretched upon miserable pallets, and ignorant where food was to be found on the morrow to satisfy the cravings of hunger; yet, in the midst of their misery, more miserable, also, because they were not exempt from those pests of existence – our own faults and infirmities.

And even, as it was, how many poor creatures *did* actually lay down their heads that night, far less miserable than poor Mrs. Melwyn. The tyranny of a servant is noticed by the wise man, if I recollect right, as one of the most irritating and insupportable of mortal miseries.

Two young women inhabited one small room of about ten feet by eight, in the upper story of a set of houses somewhere near Mary-le-bone street. These houses appear to have been once intended for rather substantial persons, but have gradually sunk into lodging-houses for the very poor. The premises look upon an old grave-yard; a dreary prospect enough, but perhaps preferable to a close street, and are filled, with decent but very poor people. Every room appears to serve a whole family, and few of the rooms are much larger than the one I have described.

It was now half-past twelve o'clock, and still the miserable dip tallow candle burned in a dilapidated tin candlestick. The wind whistled with that peculiar wintry sound which betokens that snow is falling; it was very, very cold; the fire was out; and the girl who sat plying her needle by the hearth, which was still a little warmer than the rest of the room, had wrapped up her feet in an old worn-out piece of flannel, and had an old black silk wadded cloak thrown over her to keep her from being almost perished. The room was scantily furnished, and bore an air of extreme poverty, amounting almost to absolute destitution. One by one the little articles of property possessed by its inmates had disappeared to supply the calls of urgent want. An old four-post bedstead, with curtains of worn-out serge, stood in one corner; one mattress, with two small thin pillows, and a bolster that was almost flat; three old blankets, cotton sheets of the coarsest description upon it: three rush-bottomed chairs, an old claw-table, very ancient dilapidated chest of drawers – at the top of which were a few battered band-boxes – a miserable bit of carpet before the fire-place; a wooden box for coals; a little low tin fender, a poker, or rather half a poker; a shovel and tongs, much the worse for wear, and a very few kitchen utensils, was all the furniture in the room. What there was, however, was

kept clean; the floor was clean, the yellow paint was clean; and, I forgot to say, there was a washing-tub set aside in one corner.

The wind blew shrill, and shook the window, and the snow was heard beating against the panes; the clock went another quarter, but still the indefatigable toiler sewed on. Now and then she lifted up her head, as a sigh came from that corner of the room where the bed stood, and some one might be heard turning and tossing uneasily upon the mattress – then she returned to her occupation and plied her needle with increased assiduity.

The workwoman was a girl of from eighteen to twenty, rather below the middle size, and of a face and form little adapted to figure in a story. One whose life, in all probability, would never be diversified by those romantic adventures which *real* life in general reserves to the beautiful and the highly-gifted. Her features were rather homely, her hair of a light brown, *without* golden threads through it, her hands and arms rough and red with cold and labor; her dress ordinary to a degree – her clothes being of the cheapest materials – but then, these clothes were so neat, so carefully mended where they had given way; the hair was so smooth, and so closely and neatly drawn round the face; and the face itself had such a sweet expression, that all the defects of line and color were redeemed to the lover of expression, rather than beauty.

She did not look patient, she did not look resigned; she *could* not look cheerful exactly. She looked earnest, composed, busy, and exceedingly kind. She had not, it would seem, thought enough of self in the midst of her privations, to require the exercise of the virtues of patience and resignation; she was so occupied with the sufferings of others that she never seemed to think of her own.

She was naturally of the most cheerful, hopeful temper in the world – those people without selfishness usually are. And, though sorrow had a little lowered the tone of her spirits to composure, and work and disappointment had faded the bright colors of hope; still hope was not entirely gone, nor cheerfulness exhausted. But, the predominant expression of every word, and look, and tone, and gesture, was kindness – inexhaustible kindness.

I said she lifted up her head from time to time, as a sigh proceeded from the bed, and its suffering inhabitant tossed and tossed: and at last she broke silence and said,

"Poor Myra, can't you get to sleep?"

"It is so fearfully cold," was the reply; "and when *will* you have done, and come to bed?"

"One quarter of an hour more, and I shall have finished it. Poor Myra, you are so nervous, you never can get to sleep till all is shut up – but have patience, dear, one little quarter of an hour, and then I will throw my clothes over your feet, and I hope you will be a little warmer."

A sigh for all answer; and then the *true* heroine – for she was extremely beautiful, or rather had been, poor thing, for she was too wan and wasted to be beautiful now – lifted up her head, from which fell a profusion of the fairest hair in the world, and leaning her head upon her arm, watched in a sort of impatient patience the progress of the indefatigable needle-woman.

"One o'clock striking, and you hav'n't done yet, Lettice? how slowly you *do* get on."

"I can not work fast and neatly too, dear Myra. I can not get through as some do – I wish I could. But my hands are not so delicate and nimble as yours, such swelled clumsy things," she said, laughing a little, as she looked at them – swelled, indeed, and all mottled over with the cold! "I can not get over the ground nimbly and well at the same time. You are a fine race-horse, I am a poor little drudging pony – but I will make as much haste as I possibly can."

Myra once more uttered an impatient, fretful sigh, and sank down again, saying, "My feet are so dreadfully cold!"

"Take this bit of flannel then, and let me wrap them up."

"Nay, but you will want it."

"Oh, I have only five minutes more to stay, and I can wrap the carpet round my feet."

And she laid down her work and went to the bed, and wrapped her sister's delicate, but now icy feet, in the flannel; and then she sat down; and at last the task was finished. And oh, how glad

she was to creep to that mattress, and to lay her aching limbs down upon it! Hard it might be, and wretched the pillows, and scanty the covering, but little felt she such inconveniences. She fell asleep almost immediately, while her sister still tossed and murmered. Presently Lettice, for Lettice it was, awakened a little, and said, "What is it, love? Poor, poor Myra! Oh, that you could but sleep as I do."

And then she drew her own little pillow from under her head, and put it under her sister's, and tried to make her more comfortable; and she partly succeeded, and at last the poor delicate suffering creature fell asleep, and then Lettice slumbered like a baby.

# CHAPTER II

"Oh, blest with temper whose unclouded ray
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day:
····And can hear
Sighs for a sister with unwounded ear."

*Pope. —Characters of Women.*

Early in the morning, before it was light, while the wintry twilight gleamed through the curtainless window, Lettice was up, dressing herself by the scanty gleam cast from the street lamps into the room, for she could not afford the extravagance of a candle.

She combed and did up her hair with modest neatness; put on her brown stuff only gown, and then going to the chest of drawers – opening one with great precaution, lest she should make a noise, and disturb Myra, who still slumbered – drew out a shawl, and began to fold it as if to put it on.

Alas! poor thing, as she opened it, she became first aware that the threadbare, time-worn fabric had given way in two places. Had it been in one, she might have contrived to conceal the injuries of age: but it was in two.

She turned it; she folded and unfolded: it would not do. The miserable shawl seemed to give way under her hands. It was already so excessively shabby that she was ashamed to go out in it; and it seemed as if it was ready to fall to pieces in sundry other places, this dingy, thin, brown, red, and green old shawl. Mend it would not: besides, she was pressed for time; so, with the appearance of considerable reluctance, she put her hand into the drawer, and took out another shawl.

This was a different affair. It was a warm, and not very old, plaid shawl, of various colors, well preserved and clean looking, and, this cold morning, *so* tempting.

Should she borrow it? Myra was still asleep, but she would be horridly cold when she got up, and she would want her shawl, perhaps; but then Lettice must go out, and must be decent, and there seemed no help for it.

But if she took the shawl, had she not better light the fire before she went out? Myra would be so chilly. But then, Myra seldom got up till half-past eight or nine, and it was now not seven.

An hour and a half's, perhaps two hour's, useless fire would never do. So after a little deliberation, Lettice contented herself with "laying it," as the housemaids say; that is, preparing the fire to be lighted with a match: and as she took out coal by coal to do this, she perceived with terror how very, very low the little store of fuel was.

"We must have a bushel in to-day," she said. "Better without meat and drink than fire, in such weather as this."

However, she was cheered with the reflection that she should get a little more than usual by the work that she had finished. It had been ordered by a considerate and benevolent lady, who, instead of going to the ready-made linen warehouses for what she wanted, gave herself a good deal of trouble to get at the poor workwomen themselves who supplied these houses, so that they should receive the full price for their needle-work, which otherwise must of necessity be divided.

What she should get she did not quite know, for she had never worked for this lady before; and some ladies, though she always got more from private customers than from the shops, would beat her down to the last penny, and give her as little as they possibly could.

Much more than the usual price of such matters people can not, I suppose, habitually give; they should, however, beware of driving hard bargains with the very poor.

Her bonnet looked dreadfully shabby, as poor little Lettice took it out from one of the dilapidated band-boxes that stood upon the chest of drawers; yet it had been carefully covered with a sheet of paper, to guard it from the injuries of the dust and the smoke-loaded air.

The young girl held it upon her hand, turning it round, and looking at it, and she could not help sighing when she thought of the miserably shabby appearance she should make; and she going to a private house, too: and the errand! – linen for the trousseau of a young lady who was going to be married.

What a contrast did the busy imagination draw between all the fine things that young lady was to have and her own destitution! She must needs be what she was – a simple-hearted, God-fearing, generous girl, to whom envious comparisons of others with herself were as impossible as any other faults of the selfish – not to feel as if the difference was, to use the common word upon such occasions, "very hard."

She did not take it so. She did not think that it was very *hard* that others should be happy and have plenty, because she was poor and had nothing. They had not robbed *her*. What they had was not taken from *her*. Nay, at this moment their wealth was overflowing toward her. She should gain in her little way by the general prosperity. The thought of the increased pay came into her mind at this moment in aid of her good and simple-hearted feelings, and she brightened up, and shook her bonnet, and pulled out the ribbons, and made it look as tidy as she could; bethinking herself that if it possibly could be done, she would buy a bit of black ribbon, and make it a little more spruce when she got her money.

And now the bonnet is on, and she does not think it looks so *very* bad, and Myra's shawl, as reflected in the little threepenny glass, looks quite neat. Now she steals to the bed in order to make her apologies to Myra about the shawl and fire, but Myra still slumbers. It is half-past seven and more, and she must be gone.

The young lady for whom she made the linen lived about twenty miles from town, but she had come up about her things, and was to set off home at nine o'clock that very morning. The linen was to have been sent in the night before, but Lettice had found it impossible to get it done. It must *per force* wait till morning to be carried home. The object was to get to the house as soon as the servants should be stirring, so that there would be time for the things to be packed up and accompany the young lady upon her return home.

Now, Lettice is in the street. Oh, what a morning it was! The wind was intensely cold the snow was blown in buffets against her face; the street was slippery: all the mud and mire turned into inky-looking ice. She could scarcely stand; her face was blue with the cold; her hands, in a pair of cotton gloves, so numbed that she could hardly hold the parcel she carried.

She had no umbrella. The snow beat upon her undefended head, and completed the demolition of the poor bonnet; but she comforted herself with the thought that its appearance would now be attributed to the bad weather having spoiled it. Nay (and she smiled as the idea presented itself), was it not possible that she might be supposed to have a better bonnet at home?

So she cheerfully made her way; and at last she entered Grosvenor-square, where lamps were just dying away before the splendid houses, and the wintry twilight discovered the garden, with its trees plastered with dirty snow, while the wind rushed down from the Park colder and bitterer than ever. She could hardly get along at all. A few ragged, good-for-nothing boys were almost the only people yet to be seen about; and they laughed and mocked at her, as, holding her bonnet down with one hand, to prevent its absolutely giving way before the wind, she endeavored to carry her parcel, and keep her shawl from flying up with the other.

The jeers and the laughter were very uncomfortable to her. The things she found it the most difficult to reconcile herself to in her fallen state were the scoffs, and the scorns, and the coarse jests of those once so far, far beneath her; so far, that their very existence, as a class, was once almost unknown, and who were now little, if at all, worse off than herself.

The rude brutality of the coarse, uneducated, and unimproved Saxon, is a terrible grievance to those forced to come into close quarters with such.

At last, however, she entered Green-street, and raised the knocker, and gave one timid, humble knock at the door of a moderate-sized house, upon the right hand side as you go up to the Park.

Here lived the benevolent lady of whom I have spoken, who took so much trouble to break through the barriers which in London separate the employers and the employed, and to assist the poor stitchers of her own sex, by doing away with the necessity of that hand, or those many hands, through which their ware has usually to pass, and in each of which something of the recompense thereof must of necessity be detained.

She had never been at the house before; but she had sometimes had to go to other genteel houses, and she had too often found the insolence of the pampered domestics harder to bear than even the rude incivility of the streets.

So she stood feeling very uncomfortable; still more afraid of the effect her bonnet might produce upon the man that should open the door, than upon his superiors.

But "like master, like man," is a stale old proverb, which, like many other old saws of our now despised as *childish* ancestors, is full of pith and truth.

The servant who appeared was a grave, gray-haired man, of somewhat above fifty. He stooped a little in his gait, and had *not* a very fashionable air; but his countenance was full of kind meaning, and his manner so gentle, that it seemed respectful even to a poor girl like this.

Before hearing her errand, observing how cold she looked, he bade her come in and warm herself at the hall stove; and shutting the door in the face of the chill blast, that came rushing forward as if to force its way into the house, he then returned to her, and asked her errand.

"I come with the young lady's work. I was so sorry that I could not possibly get it done in time to send it in last night; but I hope I have not put her to any inconvenience. I hope her trunks are not made up. I started almost before it was light this morning."

"Well, my dear, I hope not; but it was a pity you could not get it done last night. Mrs. Danvers likes people to be exact to the moment and punctual in performing promises, you must know. However, I'll take it up without loss of time, and I dare say it will be all right."

"Is it come at last?" asked a sweet, low voice, as Reynolds entered the drawing-room. "My love, I really began to be frightened for your pretty things, the speaker went on, turning to a young lady who was making an early breakfast before a noble blazing fire, and who was no other a person than Catherine Melwyn.

"Oh, madam! I was not in the least uneasy about them, I was quite sure they would come at last."

"I wish, my love," said Mrs. Danvers, sitting down by the fire, "I could have shared in your security. Poor creatures! the temptation is sometimes so awfully great. The pawnbroker is dangerously near. So easy to evade all inquiry by changing one miserably obscure lodging for another, into which it is almost impossible to be traced. And, to tell the truth, I had not used you quite well, my dear; for I happened to know nothing of the previous character of these poor girls, but that they were certainly very neat workwomen; and they were so out of all measure poor, that I yielded to temptation. And that you see, my love, had its usual effect of making me suspicious of the power of temptation over others."

Mrs. Danvers had once been one of the loveliest women that had ever been seen: the face of an angel, the form of the goddess of beauty herself; manners the softest, the most delightful. A dress that by its exquisite good taste and elegance enhanced every other charm, and a voice so sweet and harmonious that it made its way to every heart.

Of all this loveliness the sweet, harmonious voice alone remained. Yet had the sad eclipse of so much beauty been succeeded by a something so holy, so saint-like, so tender, that the being who stood now shorn by sorrow and suffering of all her earthly charms, seemed only to have progressed nearer to heaven by the exchange.

Her life had, indeed, been one shipwreck, in which all she prized had gone down. Husband, children, parents, sister, brother – all! – every one gone. It had been a fearful ruin. That she could not survive this wreck of every earthly joy was expected by all her friends: but she had lived on. She stood there, an example of the triumph of those three: faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these was charity.

In faith she rested upon the "unseen," and the world of things "seen" around her shrunk into insignificance. In hope she looked forward to that day when tears should be wiped from all eyes, and the lost and severed meet to part never again. In charity – in other words, love – she filled that aching, desolate heart with fresh affections, warm and tender, if not possessing the joyous gladness of earlier days.

Every sorrowing human being, every poor sufferer, be they who they might, or whence they might, found a place in that compassionate heart. No wonder it was filled to overflowing: there are so many sorrowing sufferers in this world.

She went about doing good. Her whole life was one act of pity.

Her house was plainly furnished. The "mutton chops with a few greens and potatoes" – laughed at in a recent trial, as if indifference to one's own dinner were a crime – might have served her. She often was no better served. Her dress was conventual in its simplicity. Every farthing she could save upon herself was saved for her poor.

You must please to recollect that she stood perfectly alone in the world, and that there was not a human creature that could suffer by this exercise of a sublime and universal charity. Such peculiar devotion to one object is only permitted to those whom God has severed from their kind, and marked out, as it were, for the generous career.

Her days were passed in visiting all those dismal places in this great city, where lowly want "repairs to die," or where degradation and depravity, the children of want, hide themselves. She sat by the bed of the inmate of the hospital, pouring the soft balm of her consolations upon the suffering and lowly heart. In such places her presence was hailed as the first and greatest of blessings. Every one was melted, or was awed into good behavior by her presence. The most hardened of brandy-drinking nurses was softened and amended by her example.

The situation of the young women who have to gain their livelihood by their needle had peculiarly excited her compassion, and to their welfare she more especially devoted herself. Her rank and position in society gave her a ready access to many fine ladies who had an immensity to be done for them: and to many fine dress-makers who had this immensity to do.

She was indefatigable in her exertions to diminish the evils to which the young ladies – "improvers," I believe, is the technical term – are in too many of these establishments exposed. She it was who got the work-rooms properly ventilated, and properly warmed. She it was who insisted upon the cruelty and the wretchedness of keeping up these poor girls hour after hour from their natural rest, till their strength was exhausted; the very means by which they were to earn their bread taken away; and they were sent into decline and starvation. She made fine ladies learn to allow more time for the preparation of their dresses; and fine ladies' dress makers to learn to say, "No."

One of the great objects of her exertions was to save the poor plain-sewers from the necessary loss occasioned by the middlemen. She did not say whether the shops exacted too much labor, or not, for their pay; with so great a competition for work, and so much always lying unsold upon their boards, it was difficult to decide. But she spared no trouble to get these poor women employed direct by those who wanted sewing done; and she taught to feel ashamed of themselves those indolent fine ladies who, rather than give themselves a little trouble to increase a poor creature's gains, preferred going to the ready-made shops, "because the other was such a bore."

In one of her visits among the poor of Mary-lebone, she had accidentally met with these two sisters, Lettice Arnold and Myra. There was something in them both above the common stamp, which might be discerned in spite of their squalid dress and miserable chamber; but she had not had

time to inquire into their previous history – which, indeed, they seemed unwilling to tell. Catherine, preparing her wedding clothes, and well knowing how anxious Mrs. Danvers was to obtain work, had reserved a good deal for her; and Mrs. Danvers had entrusted some of it to Lettice, who was too wretchedly destitute to be able to give any thing in the form of a deposit. Hence her uneasiness when the promised things did not appear to the time.

And hence the rather grave looks of Reynolds, who could not endure to see his mistress vexed.

"Has the workwoman brought her bill with her, Reynolds?" asked Mrs. Danvers.

"I will go and ask."

"Stay, ask her to come up; I should like to inquire how she is going on, and whether she has any other work in prospect."

Reynolds obeyed; and soon the door opened, and Lettice, poor thing, a good deal ashamed of her own appearance, was introduced into this warm and comfortable breakfast-room, where, however, as I have said, there was no appearance of luxury, except the pretty, neat breakfast, and the blazing fire.

"Good morning, my dear," said Mrs. Danvers, kindly; "I am sorry you have had such a wretched walk this morning. Why did you not come last night? Punctuality, my dear, is the soul of business, and if you desire to form a private connection for yourself, you will find it of the utmost importance to attend to it. This young lady is just going off, and there is barely time to put up the things."

Catherine had her back turned to the door, and was quietly continuing her breakfast. She did not even look round as Mrs. Danvers spoke, but when a gentle voice replied:

"Indeed, madam, I beg your pardon. Indeed, I did my very best, but – "

She started, looked up, and rose hastily from her chair. Lettice started, too, on her side, as she did so; and, advancing a few steps, exclaimed, "Catherine!"

"It must – it is – it is you!" cried Catherine hastily, coming forward and taking her by the hand. She gazed with astonishment at the worn and weather-beaten face, the miserable attire, the picture of utter wretchedness before her. "You!" she kept repeating, "Lettice! Lettice Arnold! Good Heavens! where are they all? Where is your father? Your mother? Your sister?"

"Gone!" said the poor girl. "Gone – every one gone but poor Myra!"

"And she – where is *she*? The beautiful creature, that used to be the pride of poor Mrs. Price's heart. How lovely she was! And you, dear, dear Lettice, how can you, how have you come to this?"

Mrs. Danvers stood like one petrified with astonishment while this little scene was going on. She kept looking at the two girls, but said nothing.

"Poor, dear Lettice!" Catherine went on in a tone of the most affectionate kindness, "have you come all through the streets and alone this most miserable morning? And working – working for me! Good Heavens! how has all this come about?"

"But come to the fire first," she continued, taking hold of the almost frozen hand.

Mrs. Danvers now came forward.

"You seem to have met with an old acquaintance, Catherine. Pray come to the fire, and sit down and warm yourself; and have you breakfasted?"

Lettice hesitated. She had become so accustomed to her fallen condition, that it seemed to her that she could no longer with propriety sit down to the same table with Catherine.

Catherine perceived this, and it shocked and grieved her excessively. "Do come and sit down," she said, encouraged by Mrs. Danvers's invitation, "and tell us, have you breakfasted? But though you have, a warm cup of tea this cold morning must be comfortable."

And she pressed her forward, and seated her, half reluctant, in an arm-chair that stood by the fire: then she poured out a cup of tea, and carried it to her, repeating,

"Won't you eat? Have you breakfasted?"

The plate of bread-and-butter looked delicious to the half-starved girl: the warm cup of tea seemed to bring life into her. She had been silent from surprise, and a sort of humiliated

embarrassment; but now her spirits began to revive, and she said, "I never expected to have seen you again, Miss Melwyn!"

"*Miss Melwyn!* What does that mean? Dear Lettice, how has all this come about?"

"My father was ill the last time you were in Nottinghamshire, do you not recollect, Miss Melwyn? He never recovered of that illness; but it lasted nearly two years. During that time, your aunt, Mrs. Montague, died; and her house was sold, and new people came; and you never were at Castle Rising afterward."

"No – indeed – and from that day to this have never chanced to hear any thing of its inhabitants. But Mrs. Price, your aunt, who was so fond of Myra, what is become of her?"

"She died before my poor father."

"Well; but she was rich. Did she do nothing?"

"Every body thought her rich, because she spent a good deal of money; but hers was only income. Our poor aunt was no great economist – she made no savings."

"Well; and your mother? I can not understand it. No; I can not understand it," Catherine kept repeating. "So horrible! dear, dear Lettice – and your shawl is quite wet, and so is your bonnet, poor, dear girl. Why did you not put up your umbrella?"

"For a very good reason, dear Miss Melwyn; because I do not possess one."

"Call me Catherine, won't you? or I will not speak to you again." But Mrs. Danvers's inquiring looks seemed now to deserve a little attention. She seemed impatient to have the enigma of this strange scene solved. Catherine caught her eye, and, turning from her friend, with whom she had been so much absorbed as to forget every thing else, she said:

"Lettice Arnold is a clergyman's daughter, ma'am."

"I began to think something of that sort," said Mrs. Danvers; "but, my dear young lady, what can have brought you to this terrible state of destitution?"

"Misfortune upon misfortune, madam. My father was, indeed, a clergyman, and held the little vicarage of Castle Rising. There Catherine," looking affectionately up at her, "met me upon her visits to her aunt, Mrs. Montague."

"We have known each other from children," put in Catherine.

The door opened, and Reynolds appeared —

"The cab is waiting, if you please, Miss Melwyn."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I can't go just this moment. Bid the man wait."

"It is late already," said Reynolds, taking out his watch. "The train starts in twenty minutes."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! and when does the next go? I can't go by this. Can I, dear Mrs. Danvers? It is impossible."

"Another starts in an hour afterward."

"Oh! that will do – tell Sarah to be ready for that. Well, my dear, go on, go on – dear Lettice, you were about to tell us how all this happened – but just another cup of tea. Do you like it strong?"

"I like it any way," said Lettice, who was beginning to recover her spirits, "I have not tasted any thing so comfortable for a very long time."

"Dear me! dear me!"

"You must have suffered very much, I fear, my dear young lady," said Mrs. Danvers, in a kind voice of interest, "before you could have sunk to the level of that miserable home where I found you."

"Yes," said Lettice. "Every one suffers very much, be the descent slow or rapid, when he has to fall so far. But what were my sufferings to poor Myra's!"

"And why were your sufferings as nothing in comparison with poor Myra's?"

"Ah, madam, there are some in this world not particularly favored by nature or fortune, who were born to be denied; who are used to it from their childhood – it becomes a sort of second nature to them, as it were. They scarcely feel it. But a beautiful girl, adored by an old relation, accustomed

to every sort of indulgence and luxury! They doated upon the very ground she trod on. Oh! to be cast down to such misery, that *is* dreadful."

"I don't see – I don't know," said Catherine, who, like the world in general, however much they might admire, and however much too many might flatter Myra, greatly preferred Lettice to her sister.

"I don't know," said she, doubtingly.

"Ah! but you would know if you could see!" said the generous girl. "If you could see what she suffers from every thing – from things that I do not even feel, far less care for – you would be so sorry for her."

Mrs. Danvers looked with increasing interest upon the speaker. She seemed to wish to go on with the conversation about this sister, so much pitied; so she said, "I believe what you say is very true. Very true, Catherine, in spite of your skeptical looks. Some people really do suffer very much more than others under the same circumstances of privation."

"Yes, selfish people like Myra," thought Catherine, but she said nothing.

"Indeed, madam, it is so. They seem to feel every thing so much more. Poor Myra – I can sleep like a top in our bed, and she very often can not close her eyes – and the close room, and the poor food. I can get along – I was made to rough it, my poor aunt always said – but Myra!"

"Well but," rejoined Catherine, "do pray tell us how you came to this cruel pass? Your poor father – "

"His illness was very lingering and very painful – and several times a surgical operation was required. My mother could not bear – could any of us? – to have it done by the poor blundering operator of that remote village. To have a surgeon from Nottingham was very expensive; and then the medicines; and the necessary food and attendance. The kindest and most provident father can not save much out of one hundred and ten pounds a year, and what was saved was soon all gone."

"Well, well," repeated Catherine, her eyes fixed with intense interest upon the speaker.

"His deathbed was a painful scene," Lettice went on, her face displaying her emotion, while she with great effort restrained her tears: "he trusted in God; but there was a fearful prospect before us, and he could not help trembling for his children. Dear, dear father! he reproached himself for his want of faith, and would try to strengthen us, 'but the flesh,' he said, 'was weak.' He could not look forward without anguish. It was a fearful struggle to be composed and confiding – he could not help being anxious. It was for us, you know, not for himself."

"Frightful!" cried Catherine, indignantly; "frightful! that a man of education, a scholar, a gentleman, a man of so much activity in doing good, and so much power in preaching it, should be brought to this. One hundred and ten pounds a year, was that all? How could you exist?"

"We had the house and the garden besides, you know, and my mother was such an excellent manager; and my father! No religious of the severest order was ever more self-denying, and there was only me. My aunt Price, you know, took Myra – Myra had been delicate from a child, and was so beautiful, and she was never made to rough it, my mother and my aunt said. Now I seemed made expressly for the purpose," she added, smiling with perfect simplicity.

"And his illness, so long! and so expensive!" exclaimed Catherine, with a sort of cry.

"Yes, it was – and to see the pains he took that it should not be expensive. He would be quite annoyed if my mother got any thing nicer than usual for his dinner. She used to be obliged to make a mystery of it; and we were forced almost to go down upon our knees to get him to have the surgeon from Nottingham. Nothing but the idea that his life would be more secure in such hands could have persuaded him into it. He knew how important that was to us. As for the pain which the bungling old doctor hard by would have given him, he would have borne that rather than have spent money. Oh, Catherine! there have been times upon times when I have envied the poor. They have hospitals to go to; they are not ashamed to ask for a little wine from those who have it; they can beg when they are in want of a morsel of bread. It is natural. It is right – they feel it to be right. But oh! for those,

as they call it, better born, and educated to habits of thought like those of my poor father!.. Want is, indeed, like an armed man, when he comes into *their* dwellings."

"Too true, my dear young lady," said Mrs. Danvers, whose eyes were by this time moist; "but go on, if it does not pain you too much, your story is excessively interesting. There is yet a wide step between where your relation leaves us, and where I found you."

"We closed his eyes at last in deep sorrow. Excellent man, he deserved a better lot! So, at least, it seems to me – but who knows? Nay, he would have reproved me for saying so. He used to say of *himself*, so cheerfully, 'It's a rough road, but it leads to a good place.' Why could he not feel this for his wife and children? He found that so very difficult!"

"He was an excellent and a delightful man," said Catherine. "Well?"…

"Well, my dear, when he had closed his eyes, there was his funeral. We *could* not have a parish funeral. The veriest pauper has a piety toward the dead which revolts at that. We did it as simply as we possibly could, consistently with common decency; but they charge so enormously for such things: and my poor mother would not contest it. When I remonstrated a little, and said I thought it was right to prevent others being treated in the same way, who could no better afford it than we could, I shall never forget my mother's face: 'I dare say – yes, you are right, Lettice; quite right – but not this – not *his*. I can not debate that matter. Forgive me, dear girl; it is weak – but I can not.'

"This expense exhausted all that was left of our little money: only a few pounds remained when our furniture had been sold, and we were obliged to give up possession of that dear, dear, little parsonage, and we were without a roof to shelter us. You remember it, Catherine!"

"Remember it! to be sure I do. That sweet little place. The tiny house, all covered over with honey-suckles and jasmines. How sweet they *did* smell. And your flower-garden, Lettice, how you used to work in it. It was that which made you so hale and strong, aunt Montague said. She admired your industry so, you can't think. She used to say you were worth a whole bundle of fine ladies."

"Did she?" and Lettice smiled again. She was beginning to look cheerful, in spite of her dismal story. There was something so inveterately cheerful in that temper, that nothing could entirely subdue it. The warmth of her generous nature it was that kept the blood and spirits flowing.

"It was a sad day when we parted from it. My poor mother! How she kept looking back – looking back – striving not to cry; and Myra was drowned in tears."

"And what did you do?"

"I am sure I don't know; I was so sorry for them both; I quite forget all the rest."

"But how came you to London?" asked Mrs. Danvers. "Every body, without other resource, seem to come to London. The worst place, especially for women, they can possibly come to. People are so completely lost in London. Nobody dies of want, nobody is utterly and entirely destitute of help or friends, except in London."

"A person we knew in the village, and to whom my father had been very kind, had a son who was employed in one of the great linen-warehouses, and he promised to endeavor to get us needle-work; and we flattered ourselves, with industry, we should, all three together, do pretty well. So we came to London, and took a small lodging, and furnished it with the remnant of our furniture. We had our clothes, which, though plain enough, were a sort of little property, you know. But when we came to learn the prices they actually paid for work, it was really frightful! Work fourteen hours a day apiece, and we could only gain between three and four shillings a week each – sometimes hardly that. There was our lodging to pay, three shillings a week, and six shillings left for firing and food for three people; this was in the weeks of *plenty*. Oh! it was frightful!"

"Horrible!" echoed Catherine.

"We could not bring ourselves down to it at once. We hoped and flattered ourselves that by-and-by we should get some work that would pay better; and when we wanted a little more food, or in very cold days a little more fire, we were tempted to sell or pawn one article after another. At last

my mother fell sick, and then all went; she died, and she *had* a pauper's funeral," concluded Lettice, turning very pale.

They were all three silent. At last Mrs. Danvers began again.

"That was not the lodging I found you in?"

"No, madam, that was too expensive. We left it, and we only pay one-and-sixpence a week for this, the furniture being our own."

"The cab is at the door, Miss Melwyn," again interrupted Reynolds.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I can't go, indeed, Mrs. Danvers, I can't go;" with a pleading look, "may I stay one day longer?"

"Most gladly would I keep you, my dearest love; but your father and mother… And they will have sent to meet you."

"And suppose they have, John must go back, but stay, stay, Sarah shall go and take all my boxes, and say I am coming to-morrow; that will do."

"And you travel alone by railway? Your mother will never like that."

"I am ashamed," cried Catherine, with energy, "to think of such mere conventional difficulties, when here I stand in the presence of real misery. Indeed, my dear Mrs. Danvers, my mother will be quite satisfied when she hears why I staid. I must be an insensible creature if I could go away without seeing more of dear Lettice."

Lettice looked up so pleased, so grateful, so happy.

"Well, my love, I think your mother will not be uneasy, as Sarah goes; and I just remember Mrs. Sands travels your way to-morrow, so she will take care of you; for taken care of you must be, my pretty Catherine, till you are a little less young, and somewhat less handsome."

And she patted the sweet, fall, rosy cheek.

Catherine was very pretty indeed, if you care to know that, and so it was settled.

And now, Lettice having enjoyed a happier hour than she had known for many a long day, began to recollect herself, and to think of poor Myra.

She rose from her chair, and taking up her bonnet and shawl, which Catherine had hung before the fire to dry, seemed preparing to depart.

Then both Catherine and Mrs. Danvers began to think of her little bill, which had not been settled yet. Catherine felt excessively awkward and uncomfortable at the idea of offering her old friend and companion money; but Mrs. Danvers was too well acquainted with real misery, had too much approbation for that spirit which is not above *earning*, but is above begging, to have any embarrassment in such a case.

"Catherine, my dear," she said, "you owe Miss Arnold some money. Had you not better settle it before she leaves?"

Both the girls blushed.

"Nay, my dears," said Mrs. Danvers, kindly; "why this? I am sure," coming up to them, and taking Lettice's hand, "I hold an honest hand here, which is not ashamed to labor, when it has been the will of God that it shall be by her own exertions that she obtains her bread, and part of the bread of another, if I mistake not. What you have nobly earned as nobly receive. Humiliation belongs to the idle and the dependent, not to one who maintains herself."

The eyes of Lettice glistened, and she could not help gently pressing the hand which held hers.

Such sentiments were congenial to her heart. She had never been able to comprehend the conventional distinctions between what is honorable or degrading, under the fetters of which so many lose the higher principles of independence – true honesty and true honor. To work for her living had never lessened her in her own eyes; and she had found, with a sort of astonishment, that it was to sink her in the eyes of others. To deny herself every thing in food, furniture, clothing, in order to escape debt, and add in her little way to the comforts of those she loved, had ever appeared to her noble and praiseworthy. She was as astonished, as many such a heart has been before her, with the course of

this world's esteem, too often measured by what people *spend* upon themselves, rather than by what they spare. I can not get that story in the newspaper – the contempt expressed for the dinner of one mutton chop, potatoes, and a few greens – out of my head.

Catherine's confusion had, in a moment of weakness, extended to Lettice. She had felt ashamed to be paid as a workwoman by one once her friend, and in social rank her equal; but now she raised her head, with a noble frankness and spirit.

"I am very much obliged to you for recollecting it, madam, for in truth the money is very much wanted; and if – " turning to her old friend, "my dear Catherine can find me a little more work, I should be very greatly obliged to her."

Catherine again changed color. Work! she was longing to offer her money. She had twenty pounds in her pocket, a present from her godmother, to buy something pretty for her wedding. She was burning with desire to put it into Lettice's hand.

She stammered – she hesitated.

"Perhaps you *have* no more work just now," said Lettice. "Never mind, then; I am sure when there is an opportunity, you will remember what a pleasure it will be to me to work for you; and that a poor needlewoman is very much benefited by having private customers."

"My dear, dear Lettice!" and Catherine's arms were round her neck. She could not help shedding a few tears.

"But to return to business," said Mrs. Danvers, "for I see Miss Arnold is impatient to be gone. What is your charge, my dear? These slips are tucked and beautifully stitched and done."

"I should not get more than threepence, at most fourpence, at the shops for them. Should you think ninepence an unreasonable charge? I believe it is what you would pay if you had them done at the schools."

"Threepence, fourpence, ninepence! Good Heavens!" cried Catherine; "so beautifully done as these are; and then your needles and thread, you have made no charge for them."

"We pay for those ourselves," said Lettice.

"But my dear," said Mrs. Danvers, "what Catherine would have to pay for this work, if bought from a linen warehouse, would at least be fifteen pence, and not nearly so well done, for these are beautiful. Come, you must ask eighteen pence; there are six of them; nine shillings, my dear."

The eyes of poor Lettice quite glistened. She could not refuse. She felt that to seem over delicate upon this little enhancement of price would be really great moral indelicacy. "Thank you," said she, "you are very liberal; but it must only be for this once. If I am to be your needlewoman in ordinary, Catherine, I must only be paid what you would pay to others."

She smiled pleasantly as she said this; but Catherine could not answer the smile. She felt very sad as she drew the nine shillings from her purse, longing to make them nine sovereigns. But she laid the money at last before Lettice upon the table.

Lettice took it up, and bringing out an old dirty leathern purse, was going to put it in.

"At least, let me give you a better purse," said Catherine, eagerly, offering her own handsome one, yet of a strong texture, for it was her business purse.

"They would think I had stolen it," said Lettice, putting it aside. "No, thank you, dear, kind Catherine. Consistency in all things; and my old leather convenience seems to me much more consistent with my bonnet than your beautiful one. Not but that I shall get myself a decent bonnet *now*, for really this is a shame to be seen. And so, good-by; and farewell, madam. When you *have* work, you won't forget me, will you, dear?"

"Oh, Catherine has plenty of work," put in Mrs. Danvers, "but somehow she is not quite herself this morning" – again looking at her very kindly. "You can not wonder, Miss Arnold, that she is much more agitated by this meeting than you can be. My dear, there are those pocket-handkerchiefs to be marked, which we durst not trust to an unknown person. That will be a profitable job. My dear, you would have to pay five shillings apiece at Mr. Morris's for having them embroidered according to

that pattern you fixed upon, and which I doubt not your friend and her sister can execute. There are six of them to be done."

"May I look at the pattern? Oh, yes! I think I can do it. I will take the greatest possible pains. Six at five shillings each! Oh! madam! – Oh, Catherine! – what a benefit this will be."

Again Catherine felt it impossible to speak. She could only stoop down, take the poor hand, so roughened with hardships, and raise it to her lips.

The beautiful handkerchiefs were brought.

"I will only take one at a time, if you please. These are too valuable to be risked at our lodgings. When I have done this, I will fetch another, and so on. I shall not lose time in getting them done, depend upon it," said Lettice, cheerfully.

"Take two, at all events, and then Myra can help you."

"No, only one at present, at least, thank you."

She did not say what she knew to be very true, that Myra could not help her. Myra's fingers were twice as delicate as her own; and Myra, before their misfortunes, had mostly spent her time in ornamental work – her aunt holding plain sewing to be an occupation rather beneath so beautiful and distinguished a creature. Nevertheless, when work became of so much importance to them all, and fine work especially, as gaining so much better a recompense in proportion to the time employed, Myra's accomplishments in this way proved very useless. She had not been accustomed to that strenuous, and, to the indolent, painful effort, which is necessary to do any thing *well*. To exercise self-denial, self-government, persevering industry, virtuous resistance against weariness, disgust, aching fingers and heavy eyes – temptations which haunt the indefatigable laborer in such callings, she was incapable of: the consequence was, that she worked in a very inferior manner. While Lettice, as soon as she became aware of the importance of this accomplishment as to the means of increasing her power of adding to her mother's comforts, had been indefatigable in her endeavors to accomplish herself in the art, and was become a very excellent workwoman.

# CHAPTER III

"Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light." – Pope.

And now she is upon her way home. And oh! how lightly beats that honest simple heart in her bosom: and oh! how cheerily sits her spirit upon its throne. How happily, too, she looks about at the shops, and thinks of what she shall buy; not what she can possibly do without; not of the very cheapest and poorest that is to be had for money, but upon what she shall *choose*!

Then she remembers the fable of the Maid and the Milk-pail, and grows prudent and prosaic; and resolves that she will not spend her money till she has got it. She begins to limit her desires, and to determine that she will only lay out six shillings this morning, and keep three in her purse, as a resource for contingencies. Nay, she begins to grow a little Martha-like and careful, and to dream about savings-banks; and putting half-a-crown in, out of the way of temptation, when she is paid for her first pocket-handkerchief.

Six shillings, however, she means to expend for the more urgent wants. Two shillings coals; one shilling a very, very coarse straw bonnet; fourpence ribbon to trim it with; one shilling bread, and sixpence potatoes, a half-pennyworth of milk, and then, what is left? – one shilling and a penny-half-penny. Myra shall have a cup of tea, with sugar in it; and a muffin, that she loves so, and a bit of butter. Four-pennyworth of tea, three-pennyworth of sugar, two-pennyworth of butter, one penny muffin; and threepence-halfpenny remains in the good little manager's hands.

She came up the dark stairs of her lodgings so cheerfully, followed by a boy lugging up her coals, she carrying the other purchases herself – so happy! quite radiant with joy – and opened the door of the miserable little apartment.

It was a bleak wintry morning. Not a single ray of the sun could penetrate the gray fleecy covering in which the houses were wrapped; yet the warmth of the smoke and fires was sufficient so far to assist the temperature of the atmosphere as to melt the dirty snow; which now kept dripping from the roofs in dreary cadence, and splashing upon the pavement below.

The room looked so dark, so dreary, so dismal! Such a contrast to the one she had just left! Myra was up, and was dressed in her miserable, half-worn, cotton gown, which was thrown round her in the most untidy, comfortless manner. She could not think it worth while to care how *such* a gown was put on. Her hair was dingy and disordered; to be sure there was but a broken comb to straighten it with, and who could do any thing with *such* a comb? She was cowering over the fire, which was now nearly extinguished, and, from time to time, picking up bit by bit of the cinders, as they fell upon the little hearth, putting them on again – endeavoring to keep the fire alive. Wretchedness in the extreme was visible in her dress, her attitude, her aspect.

She turned round as Lettice entered, and saying pettishly, "I thought you never *would* come back, and I do *so* want my shawl," returned to her former attitude, with her elbows resting upon her knees, and her chin upon the palms of her hands.

"I have been a sad long time, indeed," said Lettice, good-humoredly; "you must have been tired to death of waiting for me, and wondering what I *could* be about. But I've brought something back which will make you amends. And, in the first place, here's your shawl," putting it over her, "and thank you for the use of it – though I would not ask your leave, because I could not bear to waken you. But I was *sure* you would lend it me – and now for the fire. For once in a way we *will* have a good one. There, Sim, bring in the coals, put them in that wooden box there. Now for a good lump or two." And on they went; and the expiring fire began to crackle and sparkle, and make a pleased noise, and a blaze soon caused even that room to look a little cheerful.

"Oh dear! I am so glad we may for *once* be allowed to have coal enough to put a spark of life into us," said Myra.

Lettice had by this time filled the little old tin kettle, and was putting it upon the fire, and then she fetched an old tea-pot with a broken spout, a saucer without a cup, and a cup without a saucer; and putting the two together, for they were usually divided between the sisters, said:

"I have got something for you which I know you will like still better than a blaze, a cup of tea. And to warm your poor fingers, see if you can't toast yourself this muffin," handing it to her upon what was now a two-pronged, but had once been a three-pronged fork.

"But what have you got for yourself?" Myra had, at least, the grace to say.

"Oh! I have had *such* a breakfast. And such a thing has happened! but I can not and will not tell you till you have had your own breakfast, poor, dear girl. You must be ravenous – at least, I should be in your place – but you never seem so hungry as I am, poor Myra. However, I was sure you could eat a muffin."

"That was very good-natured of you, Lettice, to think of it. It *will* be a treat. But oh! to think that we should be brought to this – to think a muffin —*one* muffin – a treat!" she added dismally.

"Let us be thankful when we get it, however," said her sister: "upon my word. Mrs. Bull has given us some very good coals. Oh, how the kettle does enjoy them! It must be quite a treat to our kettle to feel *hot*– poor thing! Lukewarm is the best it mostly attains to. Hear how it buzzes and hums, like a pleased child."

And so she prattled, and put a couple of spoonfuls of tea into the cracked tea-pot. There were but about six in the paper, but Myra liked her tea strong, and she should have it as she pleased this once. Then she poured out a cup, put in some milk and sugar, and, with a smile of ineffable affection, presented it, with the muffin she had buttered, to her sister. Myra *did* enjoy it. To the poor, weedy, delicate thing, a cup of good tea, with something to eat that she could relish, *was* a real blessing. Mrs. Danvers was right so far: things did really go much harder with her than with Lettice; but then she made them six times worse by her discontent and murmuring spirit, and Lettice made them six times better by her cheerfulness and generous disregard of self.

While the one sister was enjoying her breakfast, the other, who really began to feel tired, was very glad to sit down and enjoy the fire. So she took the other chair, and, putting herself upon the opposite side of the little table, began to stretch out her feet to the fender, and feel herself quite comfortable. Three shillings in her purse, and three-pence halfpenny to do just what she liked with! perhaps buy Myra a roll for tea: there would be butter enough left.

Then she began her story. But the effect it produced was not exactly what she had expected. Instead of sharing in her sister's thankful joy for this unexpected deliverance from the most abject want, through the discovery of a friend – able and willing to furnish employment herself, and to recommend them, as, in her hopeful view of things, Lettice anticipated, to others, and promising them work of a description that would pay well, and make them quite comfortable – Myra began to draw a repining contrast between Catherine's situation and her own.

The poor beauty had been educated by her silly and romantic old aunt to look forward to making some capital match. "She had such a sweet pretty face, and so many accomplishments of mind and manner," for such was the way the old woman loved to talk. Accomplishments of mind and manner, by the way, are indefinite things; any body may put in a claim for them on the part of any one. As for the more positive acquirements which are to be seen, handled, or heard and appreciated – such as dancing, music, languages, and so forth, Myra had as slender a portion of those as usually falls to the lot of indulged, idle, nervous girls. The poor beauty felt all the bitterness of the deepest mortification at what she considered this cruel contrast of her fate as compared to Catherine's. She had been indulged in that pernicious habit of the mind – the making claims. "With claims no better than her own" was her expression for though Catherine had more money, every body said Catherine was *only*

pretty, which last sentence implied that there was another person of Catherine's acquaintance, who was positively and extremely beautiful.

Lettice, happily for herself, had never been accustomed to make "claims." She had, indeed, never distinctly understood whom such claims were to be made upon. She could not quite see why it was very *hard* that other people should be happier than herself. I am sure she would have been very sorry if she had thought that every body was as uncomfortable.

She was always sorry when she heard her sister talking in this manner, partly because she felt it could not be quite right, and partly because she was sure it did no good, but made matters a great deal worse; but she said nothing. Exhortation, indeed, only made matters worse: nothing offended Myra so much as an attempt to make her feel more comfortable, and to reconcile her to the fate she complained of as so *hard*.

Even when let alone, it would often be some time before she recovered her good humor; and this was the case now. I am afraid she was a little vexed that Lettice and not herself had met with the good luck first to stumble upon Catherine, and also a little envious of the pleasing impression it was plain her sister had made. So she began to fall foul of Lettice's new bonnet, and to say, in a captious tone,

"You got money enough to buy yourself a new bonnet, I see."

"Indeed, I did," Lettice answered with simplicity. "It was the very first thing I thought of. Mine was such a wretched thing, and wetted with the snow – the very boys hooted at it. Poor old friend!" said she, turning it upon her hand, "you have lost even the shape and pretension to be a bonnet. What must I do with thee? The back of the fire? Sad fate! No, generous companion of my cares and labors, that shall *not* be thy destiny. Useful to the last, thou shalt *light* to-morrow's fire; and that will be the best satisfaction to thy generous manes."

"*My* bonnet is not so *very* much better," said Myra, rather sulkily.

"*Not* so *very* much, alas! but better, far better than mine. And, besides, confess, please, my dear, that you had the last bonnet. Two years ago, it's true; but mine had seen three; and then, remember, I am going into grand company again to-morrow, and *must* be decent."

This last remark did not sweeten Myra's temper.

"Oh! I forgot. Of course you'll keep your good company to yourself. I am, indeed, not fit to be seen in it. But you'll want a new gown and a new shawl, my dear, though, indeed, you can always take mine, as you did this morning."

"Now, Myra!" said Lettice, "can you really be so naughty? Nay, you are cross; I see it in your face, though you won't look at me. Now don't be so foolish. Is it not all the same to us both? Are we not in one box? If you wish for the new bonnet, take it, and I'll take yours: I don't care, my dear. You were always used to be more handsomely dressed than me – it must seem quite odd for you not to be so. I only want to be decent when I go about the work, which I shall have to do often, as I told you, because I dare not have two of these expensive handkerchiefs in my possession at once. Dear me, girl! Have we not troubles enough? For goodness' sake don't let us *make* them. There, dear, take the bonnet, and I'll take yours; but I declare, when I look at the two, this is so horridly coarse, yours, old as it is looks the genteeler to my mind," laughing.

So thought Myra, and kept her own bonnet, Lettice putting upon it the piece of new ribbon she had bought, and after smoothing and rubbing the faded one upon her sister's, trimming with it her own.

The two friends in Green-street sat silently for a short time after the door had closed upon Lettice; and then Catherine began.

"More astonishing things happen in the real world than one ever finds in a book. I am sure if such a reverse of fortune as this had been described to me in a story, I should at once have declared it to be impossible. I could not have believed it credible that, in a society such as ours – full of all sorts of kind, good-natured people, who are daily doing so much for the poor – an amiable girl like this, the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England, could be suffered to sink into such abject poverty."

"Ah! my dear Catherine, that shows you have only seen life upon one side, and that its fairest side – as it presents itself in the country. You can not imagine what a dreadful thing it may prove in large cities. It can not enter into the head of man to conceive the horrible contrasts of large cities – the dreadful destitution of large cities – the awful solitude of a crowd. In the country, I think, such a thing hardly could have happened, however great the difficulty is of helping those who still preserve the delicacy and dignity with regard to money matters, which distinguishes finer minds – but in London what *can* be done? Like lead in the mighty waters, the moneyless and friendless sink to the bottom, Society in all its countless degrees closes over them: they are lost in its immensity, hidden from every eye, and they perish as an insect might perish; amid the myriads of its kind, unheeded by every other living creature. Ah, my love! if your walks lay where mine have done, your heart would bleed for these destitute women, born to better hopes, and utterly shipwrecked."

"She was such a dear, amiable girl," Catherine went on, "so cheerful, so sweet-tempered – so clever in all that one likes to see people clever about! Her mother was a silly woman."

"So she showed, I fear, by coming to London," said Mrs. Danvers.

"She was so proud of Myra's beauty, and she seemed to think so little of Lettice. She was always prophesying that Myra would make a great match; and so did her aunt, Mrs. Price, who was no wiser than Mrs. Arnold; and they brought up the poor girl to such a conceit of herself – to 'not to do this,' and 'it was beneath her to do that' – and referring every individual thing to her comfort and advancement, till, poor girl, she could hardly escape growing, what she certainly did grow into, a very spoiled, selfish creature. While dear Lettice in her simplicity – that simplicity 'which thinketh no evil' – took it so naturally, that so it was, and so it ought to be; that sometimes one laughed, and sometimes one felt provoked, but one loved her above all things. I never saw such a temper."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Danvers, "that your intention in staying in town to-day was to pay them a visit, which, indeed, we had better do. I had only a glance into their apartment the other day, but it occurred to me that they wanted common necessaries. Ignorant as I was of who they were, I was thinking to get them put upon Lady A – 's coal and blanket list, but that can not very well be done now. However, presents are always permitted under certain conditions, and the most delicate receive them; and, really, this is a case to waive a feeling of that sort in some measure. As you are an old friend and acquaintance, there can be no harm in a few presents before you leave town."

"So I was thinking, ma'am, and I am very impatient to go and see them, and find out what they may be most in want of."

"Well, my dear, I do not see why we should lose time, and I will order a cab to take us, for it is rather too far to walk this terrible day."

They soon arrived at the place I have described, and, descending from their cab, walked along in front of this row of lofty houses looking upon the grave-yard, and inhabited by so much human misery. The doors of most of the houses stood open, for they were all let in rooms, and the entrance and staircase were common as the street. What forms of human misery and degradation presented themselves during one short walk which I once took there with a friend employed upon a mission of mercy!

Disease in its most frightful form, panting to inhale a little fresh air. Squalid misery, the result of the gin-shop – decent misery ready to starve. Women shut up in one room with great heartless, brutal, disobedient boys – sickness resting untended upon its solitary bed. Wailing infants – scolding mothers – human nature under its most abject and degraded forms. No thrift, no economy, no attempt at cleanliness and order. Idleness, recklessness, dirt, and wretchedness. Perhaps the very atmosphere of towns; perhaps these close, ill-ventilated rooms; most certainly the poisonous gin-shop, engender a relaxed state of nerves and muscles, which deprives people of the spirits ever to attempt to make themselves a little decent. Then water is so dear, and dirt so pervading the very atmosphere. Poor things, they give it up; and acquiesce in, and become accustomed to it, and "*avec un mal heur sourd dont l'on ne se rend pas compte*," gradually sink and sink into the lowest abyss of habitual degradation.

It is difficult to express the painful sensations which Catherine experienced when she entered the room of the two sisters. To her the dirty paper, the carpetless floor, the miserable bed, the worm-eaten and scanty furniture, the aspect of extreme poverty which pervaded every thing, were so shocking, that she could hardly restrain her tears. Not so Mrs. Danvers.

Greater poverty, even she, could rarely have seen; but it was too often accompanied with what grieved her more, reckless indifference, and moral degradation. Dirt and disorder, those agents of the powers of darkness, were almost sure to be found where there was extreme want; but here the case was different. As her experienced eye glanced round the room, she could perceive that, poor as was the best, the best *was* made of it; that a cheerful, active spirit – the "How to make the best of it" – that spirit which is like the guardian angel of the poor, had been busy here.

The floor, though bare, was clean; the bed, though so mean, neatly arranged and made; the grate was bright; the chairs were dusted; the poor little plenishing neatly put in order. No dirty garments hanging about the room; all carefully folded and put away they were; though she could not, of course, see that, for there were no half-open drawers of the sloven, admitting dust and dirt, and offending the eye. Lettice herself, with hair neatly braided, her poor worn gown carefully put on, was sitting by the little table, busy at her work, looking the very picture of modest industry. Only one figure offended the nice moral sense of Mrs. Danvers: that of Myra, who sat there with her fine hair hanging round her face, in long, dirty, disheveled ringlets, her feet stretched out and pushed slip-shod into her shoes. With her dress half put on, and hanging over her, as the maids say, "no how," she was leaning back in the chair, and sewing very languidly at a very dirty piece of work which she held in her hand.

Both sisters started up when the door opened. Lettice's cheeks flushed with joy, and her eye sparkled with pleasure as she rose to receive her guests, brought forward her other only chair, stirred the fire, and sent the light of a pleasant blaze through the room. Myra colored also, but her first action was to stoop down hastily to pull up the heels of her shoes; she then east a hurried glance upon her dress, and arranged it a little – occupied as usual with herself, her own appearance was the first thought – and never in her life more disagreeably.

Catherine shook hands heartily with Lettice, saying, "We are soon met again, you see;" and then went up to Myra, and extended her hand to her. The other took it, but was evidently so excessively ashamed of her poverty, and her present appearance, before one who had seen her in better days, that she could not speak, or make any other reply to a kind speech of Catherine's, but by a few unintelligible murmurs.

"I was impatient to come," said Catherine – she and Mrs. Danvers having seated themselves upon the two smaller chairs, while the sisters sat together upon the larger one – "because, you know, I must go out of town so very soon, and I wanted to call upon you, and have a little chat and talk of old times – and, really – really – " she hesitated. Dear, good thing, she was so dreadfully afraid of mortifying either of the two in their present fallen state.

"And, really – really," said Mrs. Danvers, smiling, "out with it, my love – really – really, Lettice, Catherine feels as I am sure you would feel if the cases were reversed. She can not bear the thoughts of her own prosperity, and at the same time think of your misfortunes. I told her I was quite sure you would not be hurt if she did for you, what I was certain you would have done in such a case for her, and would let her make you a little more comfortable before she went. The poor thing's wedding-day will be quite spoiled by thinking about you, if you won't, Lettice."

Lettice stretched out her hand to Catherine by way of answer; and received in return the most warm and affectionate squeeze. Myra was very glad to be made more comfortable – there was no doubt of that; but half offended, and determined to be as little obliged as possible. And then, Catherine going to be married too. How hard! – every kind of good luck to be heaped upon *her*, and she herself so unfortunate in every way.

But nobody cared for her ungracious looks. Catherine knew her of old, and Mrs. Danvers understood the sort of thing she was in a minute. Her walk had lain too long amid the victims of

false views and imperfect moral training, to be surprised at this instance of their effects. The person who surprised her was Lettice.

"Well, then," said Catherine, now quite relieved, and looking round the room, "where shall we begin? What will you have? What do you want most? I shall make you wedding presents, you see, instead of you making them to me. When your turn comes you shall have your revenge."

"Well," Lettice said, "what must be must be, and it's nonsense playing at being proud. I am very much obliged to you, indeed, Catherine, for thinking of us at this time; and if I must tell you what I should be excessively obliged to you for, it is a pair of blankets. Poor Myra can hardly sleep for the cold."

"It's not the cold – it's the wretched, hard, lumpy bed," muttered Myra.

This hint sent Catherine to the bed-side.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried she, piteously, "poor dear things, how could you sleep at all? Do they call this a bed? and such blankets! Poor Myra!" her compassion quite overcoming her dislike. "No wonder. My goodness! my goodness! it's very shocking indeed." And the good young thing could not help crying.

"Blankets, dear girls! and a mattress, and a feather bed, and two pillows. How have you lived through it? And you, poor Myra, used to be made so much of. Poor girl! I am so sorry for you."

And oh! how her heart smote her for all she had said and thought to Myra's disadvantage. And oh! how the generous eyes of Lettice beamed with pleasure as these compassionate words were addressed to her sister. Myra was softened and affected. She could almost forgive Catherine for being so fortunate.

"You are very kind, indeed, Catherine," she said.

Catherine, now quite at her ease, began to examine into their other wants; and without asking many questions, merely by peeping about, and forming her own conclusions, was soon pretty well aware of what was of the most urgent necessity. She was now quite upon the fidget to be gone, that she might order and send in the things; and ten of the twenty pounds given her for wedding lace was spent before she and Mrs. Danvers reached home; that lady laughing, and lamenting over the wedding gown, which would certainly not be flounced with Honiton, as Catherine's good god-mother had intended, and looking so pleased, contented, and happy, that it did Catherine's heart good to see her.

# CHAPTER IV

"The swain in barren deserts with surprise
Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise:
And starts amid the thirsty wilds to hear
New falls of water murm'ring in his ear." – Pope.

In the evening Mrs. Danvers seemed rather tired, and the two sat over the fire a long time, without a single word being uttered; but, at last, when tea was finished, and they had both taken their work, Catherine, who had been in profound meditation all this time, began:

"My dear Mrs. Danvers, are you rested? I have a great deal to talk to you about, if you will let me."

"I must be very much tired, indeed, Catherine, when I do not like to hear *you* talk," was the kind reply.

Mrs. Danvers reposed very comfortably in her arm-chair, with her feet upon a footstool before the cheerful blazing fire; and now Catherine drew her chair closer, rested her feet upon the fender, and seemed to prepare herself for a regular confidential talk with her beloved old friend.

"My dear Mrs. Danvers, you are such a friend both of my dear mother's and mine, that I think I may, without scruple, open my whole heart to you upon a matter in which more than myself are concerned. If you think me wrong stop me," said she, laying her hand affectionately upon that of her friend, and fixing those honest, earnest eyes of hers upon her face.

Mrs. Danvers pressed the hand, and said:

"My love, whatever you confide to me you know is sacred; and if I can be of any assistance to you, dear girl, I think you need not scruple opening your mind; for you know I am a sort of general mother-confessor to all my acquaintance, and am as secret as such a profession demands."

Catherine lifted up the hand; she held it, pressed it, and continued to hold it; then she looked at the fire a little while, and at last spoke.

"Did you never in your walk in life observe one evil under the sun, which appears to me to be a most crying one in many families, the undue influence exercised by, and the power allowed to servants?"

"Yes, my dear, there are few of the minor evils – if minor it can be called – that I have thought productive of more daily discomforts than that. At times the evils assume a much greater magnitude, and are very serious indeed. Alienated hearts – divided families – property to a large amount unjustly and unrighteously diverted from its natural channel – and misery, not to be told, about old age and a dying bed."

Catherine slightly shuddered, and said:

"I have not had an opportunity of seeing much of the world, you know; what you say is rather what I feared it might be, than what I have actually observed; but I have had a sort of divination of what might in future arise. It is inexplicable to me the power a servant may gain, and the tyrannical way in which she will dare to exercise it. The unaccountable way in which those who have every title to command, may be brought to obey is scarcely to be believed, and to me inexplicable."

"Fear and indolence, my dear. Weak spirits and a weak body, upon the one side; on the other, that species of force which want of feeling, want of delicacy, want of a nice conscience, want even of an enlarged understanding – which rough habits and coarse perceptions bestow. Believe me, dear girl, almost as much power is obtained in this foolish world by the absence of certain qualities as by the possession of others. Silly people think it so nice and easy to govern, and so hard to obey. It requires many higher qualities, and much more rule over the spirit to command obedience than to pay it."

"Yes, no doubt one does not think enough of that. Jeremy Taylor, in his fine prayers, has one for a new married wife just about to enter a family: he teaches her to pray for 'a right judgment in all things; not to be annoyed at trifles; nor discomposed by contrariety of accidents;' a spirit 'to overcome all my infirmities, and comply with and bear with the infirmities of others; giving offense to none, but doing good to all I can, but I think he should have added a petition for strength to rule and guide that portion of the household which falls under her immediate care with a firm and righteous hand, not yielding feebly to the undue encroachment of others, not suffering, through indolence or a mistaken love of peace, evil habits to creep over those who look up to us and depend upon us, to their own infinite injury as well as to our own.' Ah! that is the part of a woman's duty hardest to fulfill; and I almost tremble," said the young bride elect, "when I think how heavy the responsibility; and how hard I shall find it to acquit myself as I desire."

"In this as in other things," answered Mrs. Danvers, affectionately passing her hand over her young favorite's smooth and shining hair, "I have ever observed there is but one portion of real strength; one force alone by which we can move mountains. But, in that strength we assuredly are able to move mountains. Was this all that you had to say, my dear?"

"Oh, no – but – it is so disagreeable – yet I think. Did you ever notice how things went on at home, my dear friend?"

"Yes – a little I have. One can not help, you know, if one stays long in a house, seeing the relation in which the different members of a family stand to each other."

"I thought you must have done so; that makes it easier for me – well, then, *that* was one great reason which made me so unwilling to leave mamma."

"I understand."

"There is a vast deal of that sort of tyranny exercised in our family already. Ever since I have grown up I have done all in my power to check it, by encouraging my poor, dear mamma, to exert a little spirit; but she is so gentle, so soft, so indulgent, and so affectionate – for even *that* comes in her way… She gets attached to every thing around her. She can not bear new faces, she says, and this I think the servants know, and take advantage of. They venture to do as they like, because they think it will be too painful an exertion for her to change them."

"Yes, my dear, that is exactly as things go on; not in your family alone, but in numbers that I could name if I chose. It is a very serious evil. It amounts to a sin in many households. The waste, the almost vicious luxury, the idleness that is allowed! The positive loss of what might be so much better bestowed upon those who really want it, to the positive injury of those who enjoy it! The demoralizing effect of pampered habits – the sins which are committed through the temptation of having nothing to do, will make, I fear, a dark catalogue against the masters and mistresses of families; who, because they have money in abundance, and hate trouble, allow all this misrule, and its attendant ill consequences upon their dependents. Neglecting 'to rule with diligence,' as the Apostle commands us, and satisfied, provided they themselves escape suffering from the ill consequences, except as far as an overflowing plentiful purse is concerned. Few people seem to reflect upon the mischief they may be doing to these their half-educated fellow creatures by such negligence."

Catherine looked very grave, almost sorrowful, at this speech – she said:

"Poor mamma – but she *can not* help it – indeed she can not. She is all love, and is gentleness itself. The blessed one 'who thinketh no evil.' How can that Randall find the heart to tease her! as I am sure she does – though mamma never complains. And then, I am afraid, indeed, I feel certain, when I am gone the evil will very greatly increase. You, perhaps, have observed," added she, lowering her voice, "that poor papa makes it particularly difficult in our family – doubly difficult. His old wounds, his injured arm, his age and infirmities, make all sorts of little comforts indispensable to him. He suffers so much bodily, and he suffers, too, so much from little inconveniences, that he can not bear to have any thing done for him in an unaccustomed way. Randall and Williams have lived with us ever since I was five years old – when poor papa came back from Waterloo almost cut to pieces. And

he is so fond of them he will not hear a complaint against them – not even from mamma. Oh! it is not her fault – poor, dear mamma!"

"No, my love, such a dreadful sufferer as the poor general too often is, makes things very difficult at times. I understand all that quite well; but we are still only on the preamble of your discourse, my Catherine; something more than vain lamentation is to come of it, I feel sure."

"Yes, indeed. Dear generous mamma! She would not hear of my staying with her and giving up Edgar; nor would she listen to what he was noble enough to propose, that he should abandon his profession and come and live at the Hazels, rather than that I should feel I was tampering with my duty, for his sake, dear fellow!"

And the tears stood in Catherine's eyes.

"Nothing I could say would make her listen to it. I could hardly be sorry for Edgar's sake. I knew what a sacrifice it would be upon his part – more than a woman ought to accept from a *lover*, I think – a man in his dotage, as one may say. Don't you think so, too, ma'am?"

"Yes, my dear, indeed I do. Well, go on."

"I have been so perplexed, so unhappy, so undecided what to do – so sorry to leave this dear, generous mother to the mercy of those servants of hers – whose influence, when she is alone, and with nobody to hearten her up a little, will be so terribly upon the increase – that I have not known what to do. But to-day, while I was dressing for dinner, a sudden, blessed thought came into my mind – really, just like a flash of light that seemed to put every thing clear at once – and it is about that I want to consult you, if you will let me. That dear Lettice Arnold! – I knew her from a child. You can not think what a creature she is. So sensible, so cheerful, so sweet-tempered, so self-sacrificing, yet so clever, and firm, and steady, when necessary. Mamma wants a daughter, and papa wants a reader and a backgammon prayer. Lettice Arnold is the very thing."

Mrs. Danvers made no answer.

"Don't you think so? Are you not sure? Don't you see it?" asked poor Catherine, anxiously.

"Alas! my dear, there is one thing I can scarcely ever persuade myself to do; and that is – advise any one to undertake the part of humble friend."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I know it's a terrible part in general; and I can't think why."

"Because neither party in general understands the nature of the relation, nor the exchange of duties it implies. For want of proper attention to this, the post of governess is often rendered so unsatisfactory to one side, and so very uncomfortable to the other, but in that case at least *something* is defined. In the part of the humble friend there is really nothing – every thing depends upon the equity and good-nature of the first party, and the candor and good-will of the second. Equity not to exact too much – good-nature to consult the comfort and happiness of the dependent. On that dependent's side, candor in judging of what *is* exacted; and good-will cheerfully to do the best in her power to be amiable and agreeable."

"I am not afraid of mamma. She will never be exacting *much*. She will study the happiness of all who depend upon her; she only does it almost too much, I sometimes think, to the sacrifice of her own comfort, and to the spoiling of them – and though papa is sometimes so suffering that he can't help being a little impatient, yet he is a perfect gentleman, you know. As for Lettice Arnold, if ever there was a person who knew 'how to make the best of it,' and sup cheerfully upon fried onions when she had lost her piece of roast kid, it is she. Besides, she is so uniformly good-natured, that it is quite a pleasure to her to oblige. The only danger between dearest mamma and Lettice will be – of their quarreling which shall give up most to the other. But, joking apart, she is a vast deal more than I have said – she is a remarkably clever, spirited girl, and shows it when she is called upon. You can not think how discreet, how patient, yet how firm, she can be. Her parents, poor people, were very difficult to live with, and were always running wrong. If it had not been for Lettice, affairs would have got into dreadful confusion. There is that in her so *right*, such an inherent downright sense

of propriety and justice – somehow or other I am confident she will not let Randall tyrannize over mamma when I am gone."

"Really," said Mrs. Danvers, "what you say seems very reasonable. There are exceptions to every rule. It certainly is one of mine to have as little as possible to do in recommending young women to the situation of humble friends. Yet in some cases I have seen all the comfort you anticipate arise to both parties from such a connection; and I own I never saw a fairer chance presented than the present; provided Randall is not too strong for you all; which may be feared."

"Well, then, you do not *dis*advise me to talk to mamma about it, and I will write to you as soon as I possibly can; and you will be kind enough to negotiate with Lettice, if you approve of the terms. As for Randall, she shall *not* be too hard for me. Now is my hour; I am in the ascendant, and I will win this battle or perish; that is, I will tell mamma I *won't* be married upon any other terms; and to have 'Miss' married is quite as great a matter of pride to Mrs. Randall as to that dearest of mothers."

The contest with Mrs. Randall was as fierce as Catherine, in her worst anticipations, could have expected. She set herself most doggedly against the plan. It, indeed, militated against all her schemes. She had intended to have every thing far more than ever her own way when "Miss Catherine was gone;" and though she had no doubt but that she should "keep the creature in her place," and "teach her there was only one mistress here" (which phrase usually means the maid, though it implies the lady), yet she had a sort of a misgiving about it. There would be one at her (Mrs. Melwyn's) ear as well as herself, and at, possibly, her master's, too, which was of still more importance. And then "those sort of people are so artful and cantankerous. Oh! she'd seen enough of them in her day! Poor servants couldn't have a moment's peace with a creature like that in the house, spying about and telling every thing in the parlor. One can't take a walk, or see a poor friend, or have a bit of comfort, but all goes up there. Well, those may put up with it who like. Here's one as won't, and that's me myself; and so I shall make bold to tell Miss Catherine. General and Mrs. Melwyn must choose between me and the new-comer."

Poor Catherine! Mrs. Melwyn cried, and said her daughter was very right; but she was sure Randall never *would* bear it. And the general, with whom Randall had daily opportunity for private converse while she bound up his shattered arm, and dressed the old wound, which was perpetually breaking out afresh, and discharging splinters of bone, easily talked her master into the most decided dislike to the scheme.

But Catherine stood firm. She had the support of her own heart and judgment; and the greater the difficulty, the more strongly she felt the necessity of the measure. Edgar backed her, too, with all his might. He could hardly keep down his vexation at this weakness on one side, and indignation at the attempted tyranny on the other, and he said every thing he could think of to encourage Catherine to persevere.

She talked the matter well over with her father. The general was the most testy, cross, and unreasonable of old men; always out of humor, because always suffering, and always jealous of every body's influence and authority, because he was now too weak and helpless to rule his family with a rod of iron, such as he, the greatest of martinets, had wielded in better days in his regiment and in his household alike. He suffered himself to be governed by Randall, and by nobody else; because in yielding to Randall, there was a sort of consciousness of the exercise of free will. He *ought* to be influenced by his gentle wife, and clever, sensible daughter; but there was no reason on earth, but because he *chose* to do it, that he should mind what Randall said.

"I hate the whole pack of them! I know well enough what sort of a creature you'll bring among us, Catherine. A whining, methodistical old maid, with a face like a hatchet, and a figure as if it had been pressed between two boards, dressed in a flimsy cheap silk, of a dingy brown color, with a cap like a grenadier's. Your mother and she will be sitting moistening their eyes all day long over the sins of mankind; and, I'll be bound, my own sins won't be forgotten among them. Oh! I know the pious

creatures, of old. Nothing they hate like a poor old veteran, with a naughty word or two in his mouth now and then. Never talk to me, Catherine, I can't abide such cattle."

"Dearest papa, what a picture you *do* draw! just to frighten yourself. Why, Lettice Arnold is only about nineteen, I believe; and though she's not particularly pretty, she's the pleasantest-looking creature you ever saw. And as for bemoaning herself over her neighbors' sins, I'll be bound she's not half such a Methodist as Randall."

"Randall is a very pious, good woman, I'd have you to know, Miss Catherine."

"I'm sure I hope she is, papa; but you must own she makes a great fuss about it. And I really believe, the habit she has of whispering and turning up the whites of her eyes, when she hears of a neighbor's peccadillos, is one thing which sets you so against the righteous, dearest papa; now, you know it is."

"You're a saucy baggage. How old is this thing you're trying to put upon us, did you say?"

"Why, about nineteen, or, perhaps, twenty. And then, who's to read to you, papa, when I am gone, and play backgammon? You know mamma must *not* read, on account of her chest, and she plays so badly, you say, at backgammon; and it's so dull, husband and wife playing, you know." (Poor Mrs. Melwyn dreaded, of all things, backgammon; she invariably got ridiculed if she played ill, and put her husband into a passion if she beat him. Catherine had long taken this business upon herself.)

"Does she play backgammon tolerably? and can she read without drawling or galloping?"

"Just at your own pace, papa, whatever that may be. Besides, you can only try her; she's easily sent away if you and mamma don't like her. And then think, she is a poor clergyman's daughter; and it would be quite a kind action."

"A poor parson's! It would have been more to the purpose if you had said a poor officer's. I pay tithes enough to the black coated gentlemen, without being bothered with their children, and who ever pays tithes to us, I wonder? I don't see what right parsons have to marry at all; and then, forsooth, come and ask other people to take care of their brats!"

"Ah! but she's not to be taken care of for nothing; only think what a comfort she'll be."

"To your mamma, perhaps, but not to me. And *she's* always the first person to be considered in this house, I know very well; and I know very well who it is that dresses the poor old soldier's wounds, and studies his comforts – and he'll study hers; and I won't have her vexed to please any of you."

"But why should she be vexed? It's nothing to *her*. *She's* not to live with Lettice. And I must say, if Randall sets herself against this measure, she behaves in a very unreasonable and unworthy manner, in my opinion."

"Hoity toity! *To* be sure; and who's behaving in an unreasonable and unworthy manner now, I wonder, abusing her behind her back, a worthy, attached creature, whose sole object it is to study the welfare of us all? She's told me so a thousand times."

"I daresay. Well, now, papa, listen to me. I'm going away from you for good – your little Catherine. Just for once grant me this as a favor. Only try Lettice. I'm sure you'll like her; and if, after she's been here a quarter of a year, you don't wish to keep her, why part with her, and I'll promise not to say a word about it. Randall has her good qualities, I suppose, like the rest of the world; but Randall must be taught to keep her place, and that's not in this drawing-room. And it's *here* you want Lettice, not in your dressing-room. Randall shall have it all her own way *there*, and that *ought* to content her. And besides, papa, do you know, I can't marry Edgar till you have consented, because I can not leave mamma and you with nobody to keep you company."

"Edgar and you be d – d! Well, do as you like. The sooner you're out of the house the better. I shan't have my own way till you're gone. You're a sad coaxing baggage, but you *have* a pretty face of your own, Miss Catherine."

If the debate upon the subject ran high at the Hazels, so did it in the little humble apartment which the two sisters occupied.

"A humble friend! No," cried Myra, "that I would never, never be; rather die of hunger first."

"Dying of hunger is a very horrible thing," said Lettice, quietly, "and much more easily said than done. We have not, God be thanked for it, ever been quite so badly off as that; but I have stood near enough to the dreadful gulf to look down, and to sound its depth and its darkness. I am very thankful, deeply thankful, for this offer, which I should gladly accept, only what is to become of you?"

"Oh! never mind me. It's the fashion now, I see, for every body to think of *you*, and nobody to think of me. I'm not worth caring for, now those who cared for me are gone. Oh! pray, if you like to be a domestic slave yourself, let *me* be no hindrance."

"A domestic slave! why should I be a domestic slave? I see no slavery in the case."

"*I* call it slavery, whatever you may do, to have nothing to do all day but play toad-eater and flatterer to a good-for-nothing old woman; to bear all her ill-humors, and be the butt for all her caprices. That's what humble friends are expected to do, I believe; what else are they hired for?"

"I should neither toady nor flatter, I hope," said Lettice; "and as for bearing people's ill-humors, and being now and then the sport of their caprices, why that, as you say, is very disagreeable, yet, perhaps, it is what we must rather expect. But Mrs. Melwyn, I have always heard, is the gentlest of human beings. And if she is like Catherine, she must be free from caprice, and nobody could help quite loving her."

"Stuff! – love! love! A humble friend love her *un*humble friend; for I suppose one must not venture to call one's mistress a tyrant. Oh, no, a friend! a dear friend!" in a taunting, ironical voice.

"Whomever it might be my fate to live with, I should *try* to love; for I believe if one tries to love people, one soon finds something lovable about them, and Mrs. Melwyn, I feel sure, I should soon love very much."

"So like you! ready to love any thing and every thing. I verily believe if there was nothing else to love but the little chimney-sweeper boy, you'd fall to loving him, rather than love nobody."

"I am sure that's true enough," said Lettice, laughing; "I have more than once felt very much inclined to love the little boy who carries the soot-bag for the man who sweeps these chimneys – such a saucy-looking, little sooty rogue."

"As if a person's love *could* be worth having," continued the sister, "who is so ready to love any body."

"No, that I deny. Some few people I *do* find it hard to love."

"Me for one."

"Oh, Myra!"

"Well, I beg your pardon. You're very kind to me. But I'll tell you who it will be impossible for you to love – if such a thing can be: that's that testy, cross, old general."

"I don't suppose I shall have much to do with the old general, if I go."

"*If* you go. Oh, you're sure to go. You're so sanguine; every new prospect is so promising. But pardon me, you seem quite to have forgotten that reading to the old general, and playing backgammon with him, are among your specified employments."

"Well, I don't see much harm in it if they are. A man can't be very cross with one when one's reading to him – and as for the backgammon, I mean to lose every game, if that will please him."

"Oh, a man can't be cross with a reader? I wish you knew as much of the world as I do, and had heard people read. Why, nothing on earth puts one in such a fidget. I'm sure I've been put into such a worry by people's way of reading, that I could have pinched them. Really, Lettice, your simplicity would shame a child of five years old."

"Well, I shall do my best, and besides I shall take care to set my chair so far off that I can't get pinched, at least; and as for a poor, ailing, suffering old man being a little impatient and cross, why one can't expect to get fifty pounds a year for just doing nothing. – I do suppose it is expected that I should bear a few of these things in place of Mrs. Melwyn; and I don't see why I should not."

"Oh, dear! Well, my love, you're quite made for the place, I see; you always had something of the spaniel in you, or the walnut-tree, or any of those things which are the better for being ill-used. It was quite a proverb with our poor mother, 'a worm will turn, but not Lettice.'"

Lettice felt very much inclined to turn now. But the mention of her mother – that mother whose mismanagement and foolish indulgence had contributed so much to poor Myra's faults – faults for which she now paid so heavy a penalty – silenced the generous girl, and she made no answer.

No answer, let it proceed from never so good a motive, makes cross people often more cross; though perhaps upon the whole it is the best plan.

So Myra in a still more querulous voice went on:

"This room will be rather dismal all by one's self, and I don't know how I'm to go about, up and down, fetch and carry, and work as you are able to do… I was never used to it. It comes very hard upon me." And she began to cry.

"Poor Myra! dear Myra! don't cry: I never intended to leave you. Though I talked as if I did, it was only in the way of argument, because I thought more might be said for the kind of life than you thought; and I felt sure if people were tolerably kind and candid, I could get along very well and make myself quite comfortable. Dear me! after such hardships as we have gone through, a little would do that. But do you think, poor dear girl, I could have a moment's peace, and know you were here alone? No, no."

And so when she went in the evening to carry her answer to Mrs. Danvers, who had conveyed to her Catherine's proposal, Lettice said, "that she should have liked exceedingly to accept Catherine's offer, and was sure she should have been very happy herself, and would have done every thing in her power to make Mrs. Melwyn happy, but that it was impossible to leave her sister."

"If that is your only difficulty, my dear, don't make yourself uneasy about that. I have found a place for your sister which I think she will like very well. It is with Mrs. Fisher, the great milliner in Dover-street, where she will be taken care of, and may be very comfortable. Mrs. Fisher is a most excellent person, and very anxious, not only about the health and comfort of those she employs, but about their good behavior and their security from evil temptation. Such a beautiful girl as your sister is, lives in perpetual danger, exposed as she is without protection in this great town."

"But Myra has such an abhorrence of servitude, as she calls it – such an independent high spirit – I fear she will never like it."

"It will be very good for her, whether she likes it or not. Indeed, my dear, to speak sincerely, the placing your sister out of danger in the house of Mrs. Fisher ought to be a decisive reason with you for accepting Catherine's proposal – even did you dislike it much more than you seem to do."

"Oh! to tell the truth, I should like the plan very much indeed – much more than I have wished to say, on account of Myra: but she never, never will submit to be ruled, I fear, and make herself happy where, of course, she must obey orders and follow regulations, whether she likes them or not. Unfortunately, poor dear, she has been so little accustomed to be contradicted."

"Well, then, it is high time she should begin; for contradicted, sooner or later, we all of us are certain to be. Seriously, again, my dear, good Lettice – I must call you Lettice – your innocence of heart prevents you from knowing what snares surround a beautiful young woman like your sister. I like you best, I own; but I have thought much more of her fate than yours, upon that account. Such a situation as is offered to you she evidently is quite unfit to fill: but I went – the very day Catherine and I came to your lodgings and saw you both – to my good friend Mrs. Fisher, and, with great difficulty, have persuaded her at last to take your sister. She disliked the idea very much; but she's an excellent woman: and when I represented to her the peculiar circumstances of the case, she promised she would consider the matter. She took a week to consider of it – for she is a very cautious person is Mrs. Fisher; and some people call her very cold and severe. However, she has decided in our favor, as I expected she would. Her compassion always gets the better of her prudence, when the two are at issue. And so you would not dislike to go to Mrs. Melwyn's?"

"How could I? Why, after what we have suffered, it must be like going into Paradise."

"Nay, nay – a little too fast. No dependent situation is ever exactly a Paradise. I should be sorry you saw things in a false light, and should be disappointed."

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.