

THE CAXTONS - PART 18

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PART XVIII.

CHAPTER I.

Adieu, thou beautiful land, Canaan of the exiles, and Ararat to many a shattered ark! Fair cradle of a race for whom the unbounded heritage of a future that no sage can conjecture, no prophet divine, lies afar in the golden promise-light of Time!—destined, perchance, from the sins and sorrows of a civilization struggling with its own elements of decay, to renew the youth of the world, and transmit the great soul of England through the cycles of Infinite Change. All climates that can best ripen the products of earth or form into various character and temper the different families of man is "rain influences" from the heaven that smiles so benignly on those who had once shrunk, ragged, from the wind, or scowled on the thankless sun. Here, the hard air of the chill Mother Isle,—there, the mild warmth of Italian autumns or the breathless glow of the tropics. And with the beams of every climate, glides subtle Hope. Of her there, it may be said, as of Light itself, in those exquisite lines of a neglected poet,—

"Through the soft ways of heaven and air and sea,
Which open all their pores to thee,
Like a clear river thou dost glide.
All the world's bravery that delights our eyes
Is but thy several liveries;
Thou the rich dye on them bestowest;
Thy nimble pencil paints the landscape as thou goest." (1)

Adieu, my kind nurse and sweet foster-mother,—a long and a last adieu!
Never had I left thee but for that louder voice of Nature which calls the child to the parent, and woos us from the labors we love the best by the chime in the sabbath-bells of Home.

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No one can tell how dear the memory of that wild Bush life becomes to him who has tried it with a fitting spirit. How often it haunts him in the commonplace of more civilized scenes! Its dangers, its risks, its sense of animal health, its bursts of adventure, its intervals of careless repose,—the fierce gallop through a very sea of wide, rolling plains; the still saunter, at night, through woods never changing their leaves, with the moon, clear as sunshine, stealing slant through their clusters of flowers. With what an effort we reconcile ourselves to the trite cares and vexed pleasures, "the quotidian ague of frigid impertinences," to which we return! How strong and black stands my pencil-mark in this passage of the poet from whom I have just quoted before!—

"We are here among the vast and noble scenes of Nature,—we are there among the pitiful shifts of policy; we walk here in the light and open ways of the Divine Bounty,—we grope there in the dark and confused labyrinth of human malice." (2)

But I weary you, reader. The New World vanishes,—now a line, now a speck; let us turn away, with the face to the Old. Amongst my fellow-passengers how many there are returning home disgusted, disappointed, impoverished, ruined, throwing themselves again on those unsuspecting poor friends who thought they had done with the luckless good-for-nothings forever. For don't let me deceive thee, reader, into supposing that every adventurer to Australia has the luck of Pisistratus. Indeed, though the poor laborer, and especially the poor operative from London and the great trading towns (who has generally more of the quick knack of learning,—the adaptable faculty,—required in a new colony, than the simple agricultural laborer), are pretty sure to succeed, the class to which I belong is one in which failures are numerous and success the exception,—I mean young men with scholastic education and the habits of gentlemen; with small capital and sanguine hopes. But this, in ninety-nine times out of a hundred, is not the fault of the colony, but of the emigrants. It requires not so much intellect as a peculiar turn of intellect, and a fortunate combination of physical qualities, easy temper, and quick mother-wit, to make a small capitalist a prosperous Bushman. (3) And if you could see the sharks that swim round a man just dropped at Adelaide or Sydney, with one or two thousand pounds in his pocket! Hurry out of the towns as fast as you can, my young emigrant; turn a deaf ear, for the present at least, to all jobbers and speculators; make friends with some practised old Bushman; spend several months at his station before you hazard your capital; take with you a temper to bear everything and sigh for nothing; put your whole heart in what you are about; never call upon Hercules when your cart sticks in the rut,—and whether you feed sheep or breed cattle, your success is but a question of time.

But whatever I owed to Nature, I owed also something to Fortune. I bought my sheep at little more than 7s. each. When I left, none were worth less than 15s., and the fat sheep were worth L1. (4) I had an excellent shepherd, and my whole care, night and day, was the improvement

of the flock. I was fortunate, too, in entering Australia before the system miscalled "The Wakefield" (5) had diminished the supply of labor and raised the price of land. When the change came (like most of those with large allotments and surplus capital), it greatly increased the value of my own property, though at the cost of a terrible blow on the general interests of the colony. I was lucky, too, in the additional venture of a cattle-station, and in the breed of horses and herds, which, in the five years devoted to that branch establishment, trebled the sum invested therein, exclusive of the advantageous sale of the station. (6) I was lucky, also, as I have stated, in the purchase and resale of lands, at Uncle Jack's recommendation. And, lastly, I left in time, and escaped a very disastrous crisis in colonial affairs, which I take the liberty of attributing entirely to the mischievous crotchets of theorists at home who want to set all clocks by Greenwich time, forgetting that it is morning in one part of the world at the time they are tolling the curfew in the other.

- (1) Cowley: Ode to Light.
- (2) Cowley on Town and Country. (Discourse on Agriculture.)
- (3) How true are the following remarks:–

Action is the first great requisite of a colonist (that is, a pastoral or

agricultural settler). With a young man, the tone of his mind is more important than his previous pursuits. I have known men of an active, energetic, contented disposition, with a good flow of animal spirits, who had been bred in luxury and refinement, succeed better than men bred as farmers who were always hankering after bread and beer, and market ordinaries of Old England... To be dreaming when you should be looking after your cattle is a terrible drawback... There are certain persons who, too lazy and too extravagant to succeed in Europe, sail for Australia under the idea that fortunes are to be made there by a sort of legerdemain, spend or lose their capital in a very short space of time, and return to England to abuse the place, the people, and everything connected with colonization.–Sydney. Australian Handbook (admirable for its wisdom and compactness).

(4) Lest this seem an exaggeration, I venture to annex an extract from a manuscript letter to the author from Mr. George Blakeston Wilkinson, author of "South Australia" –

"I will instance the case of one person who had been a farmer in England, and emigrated with about L2,000 about seven years since. On his arrival

he found that the prices of sheep had fallen from about 30s. to 5s. or 6s. per head, and he bought some well-bred flocks at these prices. He was fortunate in obtaining a good and extensive run, and he devoted the whole of his time to improving his flocks, and encouraged his shepherds by rewards; so that in about four years his original number of sheep had increased from twenty-five hundred (which cost him L700) to seven thousand; and the breed and wool were also so much improved that he could obtain L1 per head for two thousand fat sheep, and 15s. per head for the other five thousand,—and this at a time when the general price of sheep was from 10s. to 16s. This alone increased his original capital, invested in sheep, from L700 to L5,700. The profits from the wool paid the whole of his expenses and wages for his men.”

(5) I felt sure from the first that the system called ”The Wakefield” could never fairly represent the ideas of Mr. Wakefield himself, whose singular breadth of understanding and various knowledge of mankind belied the notion that fathered on him the clumsy execution of a theory wholly inapplicable to a social state like Australia. I am glad to see that he has vindicated himself from the discreditable paternity. But I grieve to find that he still clings to one cardinal error of the system, in the discouragement of small holdings, and that he evades, more ingeniously than ingenuously, the important question: ”What should be the minimum price of land?”

(6) The profits of cattle-farming are smaller than those of the sheep-owner (if the latter have good luck; for much depends upon that), but cattle-farming is much more safe as a speculation, and less care, knowledge, and management are required. L2,000 laid out on seven hundred head of cattle, if good runs be procured, might increase the capital in five years from L2,000 to L6,000, besides enabling the owner to maintain himself, pay wages, etc.—Manuscript letter from G. B. Wilkinson.

Chapter II.

London once more! How strange, lone, and savage I feel in the streets! I am ashamed to have so much health and strength when I look at those slim forms, stooping backs, and pale faces. I pick my way through the crowd with the merciful timidity of a good-natured giant. I am afraid of jostling against a man, for fear the collision should kill him. I get out of the way of a thread-paper clerk, and ’t is a wonder I am not run over by the omnibuses,—I feel as if I could run over them! I perceive, too, that there is something outlandish, peregrinate, and lawless about me. Beau Brummel would certainly have denied me all pretension to the simple air of a gentleman, for every third passenger turns back to look at me. I retreat to my hotel; send for boot-maker, hatter, tailor, and hair-cutter. I humanize myself from head to foot. Even Ulysses is

obliged to have recourse to the arts of Minerva, and, to speak unmetaphorically, "smarten himself up," before the faithful Penelope condescends to acknowledge him.

The artificers promise all despatch. Meanwhile I hasten to re-make acquaintance with my mother-country over files of the "Times," "Post," "Chronicle," and "Herald." Nothing comes amiss to me but articles on Australia; from those I turn aside with the true pshaw supercilious of your practical man.

No more are leaders filled with praise and blame of Trevanion. "Percy's spur is cold." Lord Ulverstone figures only in the "Court Circular," or "Fashionable Movements." Lord Ulverstone entertains a royal duke at dinner, or dines in turn with a royal duke, or has come to town, or gone out of it. At most (faint Platonic reminiscence of the former life), Lord Ulverstone says in the House of Lords a few words on some question, not a party one, and on which (though affecting perhaps the interests of some few thousands, or millions, as the case may be) men speak without "hears," and are inaudible in the gallery; or Lord Ulverstone takes the chair at an agricultural meeting, or returns thanks when his health is drunk at a dinner at Guildhall. But the daughter rises as the father sets, though over a very different kind of world.

"First ball of the season at Castleton House,"—long description of the rooms and the company; above all, of the hostess. Lines on the Marchioness of Castleton's picture in the "Book of Beauty," by the Hon. Fitzroy Fiddledum, beginning with "Art thou an angel from," etc.: a paragraph that pleased me more, on "Lady Castleton's Infant School at Raby Park;" then again, "Lady Castleton, the new patroness at Almack's;" a criticism, more rapturous than ever gladdened living poet, on Lady Castleton's superb diamond stomacher, just reset by Storr & Mortimer; Westmacott's bust of Lady Castleton; Landseer's picture of Lady Castleton and her children in the costume of the olden time. Not a month in that long file of the "Morning Post" but what Lady Castleton shone forth from the rest of womankind,—

"Velut inter ignes Luna minores."

The blood mounted to my cheek. Was it to this splendid constellation in the patrician heaven that my obscure, portionless youth had dared to lift its presumptuous eyes? But what is this? "Indian Intelligence: Skilful retreat of the Sepoys under Captain de Caxton"! A captain already! What is the date of the newspaper!—three months ago. The leading article quotes the name with high praise. Is there no leaven of envy amidst the joy at my heart? How obscure has been my career,—how laurelless my poor battle with adverse fortune! Fie, Pisistratus! I am ashamed of thee. Has this accursed Old World, with its feverish rivalries, diseased thee already? Get thee home, quick, to the arms of thy mother, the embrace of thy father; hear Roland's low blessing that thou hast helped to minister to the very fame of that son. If thou wilt have ambition, take it,—not

soiled and foul with the mire of London. Let it spring fresh and hardy in the calm air of wisdom, and fed, as with dews, by the loving charities of Home.

CHAPTER III.

It was at sunset that I stole through the ruined court-yard, having left my chaise at the foot of the hill below. Though they whom I came to seek knew that I had arrived in England, they did not, from my letter, expect me till the next day. I had stolen a march upon them; and now, in spite of all the impatience which had urged me thither, I was afraid to enter, –afraid to see the change more than ten years had made in those forms for which, in my memory, Time had stood still. And Roland had, even when we parted, grown old before his time. Then my father was in the meridian of life, now he had approached to the decline. And my mother, whom I remembered so fair, as if the freshness of her own heart had preserved the soft bloom to the cheek, –I could not bear to think that she was no longer young. Blanche, too, whom I had left a child, –Blanche, my constant correspondent during those long years of exile, in letters crossed and recrossed, with all the small details that make the eloquence of letter-writing, so that in those epistles I had seen her mind gradually grow up in harmony with the very characters, at first vague and infantine, then somewhat stiff with the first graces of running-hand, then dashing off free and facile; and for the last year before I left, so formed yet so airy, so regular yet so unconscious of effort, though in truth, as the calligraphy had become thus matured, I had been half vexed and half pleased to perceive a certain reserve creeping over the style, –wishes for my return less expressed from herself than as messages from others, words of the old child-like familiarity repressed, and "Dearest Sisty" abandoned for the cold form of "Dear Cousin." Those letters, coming to me in a spot where maiden and love had been as myths of the bygone, phantasms and eidola only vouchsafed to the visions of fancy, had by little and little crept into secret corners of my heart; and out of the wrecks of a former romance, solitude and revery had gone far to build up the fairy domes of a romance yet to come. My mother's letters had never omitted to make mention of Blanche, –of her forethought and tender activity, of her warm heart and sweet temper, –and in many a little home picture presented her image where I would fain have placed it, not "crystal seeing," but joining my mother in charitable visits to the village, instructing the young and tending on the old, or teaching herself to illuminate, from an old missal in my father's collection, that she might surprise my uncle with a new genealogical table, with all shields and quarterings, blazoned or, sable, and argent; or flitting round my father where he sat, and watching when he looked round for some book he was too lazy to rise for. Blanche had made a new catalogue and got it by heart, and knew at once from what corner of the Heraclea to

summon the ghost. On all these little traits had my mother been eulogistically minute; but somehow or other she had never said, at least for the last two years, whether Blanche was pretty or plain. That was a sad omission. I had longed just to ask that simple question, or to imply it delicately and diplomatically; but, I know not why, I never dared,—for Blanche would have been sure to have read the letter; and what business was it of mine? And if she was ugly, what question more awkward both to put and to answer? Now, in childhood Blanche had just one of those faces that might become very lovely in youth, and would yet quite justify the suspicion that it might become gryphonesque, witch-like, and grim. Yes, Blanche, it is perfectly true! If those large, serious black eyes took a fierce light instead of a tender; if that nose, which seemed then undecided whether to be straight or to be aquiline, arched off in the latter direction, and assumed the martial, Roman, and imperative character of Roland's manly proboscis; if that face, in childhood too thin, left the blushes of youth to take refuge on two salient peaks by the temples (Cumberland air, too, is famous for the growth of the cheekbone!),—if all that should happen, and it very well might, then, O Blanche, I wish thou hadst never written me those letters; and I might have done wiser things than steel my heart so obdurately to pretty Ellen Bolding's blue eyes and silk shoes. Now, combining together all these doubts and apprehensions, wonder not, O reader, why I stole so stealthily through the ruined court-yard, crept round to the other side of the tower, gazed wistfully on the sun setting slant, on the high casements of the hall (too high, alas! to look within), and shrank yet to enter,—doing battle, as it were, with my heart.

Steps—one's sense of hearing grows so quick in the Bushland!—steps, though as light as ever brushed the dew from the harebell! I crept under the shadow of the huge buttress mantled with ivy. A form comes from the little door at an angle in the ruins,—a woman's form. Is it my mother? It is too tall, and the step is more bounding. It winds round the building, it turns to look back, and a sweet voice—a voice strange, yet familiar—calls, tender but chiding, to a truant that lags behind. Poor Juba! he is trailing his long ears on the ground; he is evidently much disturbed in his mind: now he stands still, his nose in the air. Poor Juba! I left thee so slim and so nimble,—

”Thy form, that was fashioned as light as a fay's,
Has assumed a proportion more round;”

years have sobered thee strangely, and made thee obese and Primmins-like. They have taken too good care of thy creature-comforts, O sensual Mauritanian! Still, in that mystic intelligence we call instinct thou art chasing something that years have not swept from thy memory. Thou art deaf to thy lady's voice, however tender and chiding. That's right! Come near,—nearer,—my cousin Blanche; let me have a fair look at thee. Plague take the dog! he flies off from her; he has found the scent; he is making up to the buttress! Now—pounce—he is caught, whining ungallant discontent! Shall I not yet see the face? It is buried in Juba's black

curls! Kisses too! Wicked Blanche, to waste on a dumb animal what, I heartily hope, many a good Christian would be exceedingly glad of! Juba struggles in vain, and is borne off! I don't think that those eyes can have taken the fierce turn, and Roland's eagle nose can never go with that voice, which has the coo of the dove.

I leave my hiding-place and steal after the Voice and its owner. Where can she be going? Not far. She springs up the hill whereon the lords of the castle once administered justice,—that hill which commands the land far and wide, and from which can be last caught the glimpse of the westering sun. How gracefully still is that attitude of wistful repose! Into what delicate curves do form and drapery harmoniously flow! How softly distinct stands the lithe image against the purple hues of the sky! Then again comes the sweet voice, gay and carolling as a bird's,—now in snatches of song, now in playful appeals to that dull four-footed friend. She is telling him something that must make the black ears stand on end, for I just catch the words, "He is coming," and "home."

I cannot see the sun set where I lurk in my ambush amidst the brake and the ruins, but I feel that the orb has passed from the landscape, in the fresher air of the twilight, in the deeper silence of eve. Lo! Hesper comes forth; at his signal, star after star, come the hosts,—

"Ch' eran con lui, quando l' amor divino,
Mosse da prima quelle cose belle!"

And the sweet voice is hushed.

Then slowly the watcher descends the hill on the opposite side; the form escapes from my view. What charm has gone from the twilight? See, again, where the step steals through the ruins and along the desolate court. Ah! deep and true heart, do I divine the remembrance that leads thee? I pass through the wicket, down the dell, skirt the laurels, and behold the face looking up to the stars,—the face which had nestled to my breast in the sorrow of parting years, long years ago; on the grave where we had sat,—I the boy, thou the infant,—there, O Blanche, is thy fair face, fairer than the fondest dream that had gladdened my exile, vouchsafed to my gaze!

"Blanche, my cousin! again, again,—soul with soul, amidst the dead! Look up, Blanche; it is I."

CHAPTER IV.

"Go in first and prepare them, dear Blanche; I will wait by the door. Leave it ajar, that I may see them."

Roland is leaning against the wall, old armor suspended over the gray head of the soldier. It is but a glance that I give to the dark cheek and high brow: no change there for the worse,—no new sign of decay. Rather, if anything, Roland seems younger than when I left. Calm is the brow,—no shame on it now, Roland; and the lips, once so compressed, smile with ease,—no struggle now, Roland, "not to complain." A glance shows me all this.

"Papoe!" says my father, and I hear the fall of a book, "I can't read a line. He is coming to-morrow,—to-morrow! If we lived to the age of Methuselah, Kitty, we could never reconcile philosophy and man; that is, if the poor man's to be plagued with a good, affectionate son!"

And my father gets up and walks to and fro. One minute more, father, one minute more, and I am on thy breast! Time, too, has dealt gently with thee, as he doth with those for whom the wild passions and keen cares of the world never sharpen his scythe. The broad front looks more broad, for the locks are more scanty and thin, but still not a furrow. Whence comes that short sigh?

"What is really the time, Blanche? Did you look at the turret-clock? Well, just go and look again."

"Kitty," quoth my father, "you have not only asked what time it is thrice within the last ten minutes, but you have got my watch, and Roland's great chronometer, and the Dutch clock out of the kitchen, all before you, and they all concur in the same tale,—to-day is not to-morrow."

"They are all wrong, I know," said my mother, with mild firmness; "and they've never gone right since he left." Now out comes a letter, for I hear the rustle, and then a step glides towards the lamp, and the dear, gentle, womanly face—fair still, fair ever for me, fair as when it bent over my pillow in childhood's first sickness, or when we threw flowers at each other on the lawn at sunny noon! And now Blanche is whispering; and now the flutter, the start, the cry,—"It is true! it is true! Your arms, mother. Close, close round my necks as in the old time. Father! Roland too! Oh, joy! joy! joy! home again,—home till death!"

CHAPTER V.

From a dream of the Bushland, howling dingoes,(1) and the war-whoop of the wild men, I wake and see the sun shining in through the jasmine that Blanche herself has had trained round the window; old school-books neatly ranged round the wall; fishing-rods, cricket-bats, foils, and the old-fashioned gun; and my mother seated by the bed-side; and Juba whining and

scratching to get up. Had I taken thy murmured blessing, my mother, for the whoop of the blacks, and Juba's low whine for the howl of the dingoes?

Then what days of calm, exquisite delight,—the interchange of heart with heart; what walks with Roland, and tales of him once our shame, now our pride; and the art with which the old man would lead those walks round by the village, that some favorite gossips might stop and ask, "What news of his brave young honor?"

I strive to engage my uncle in my projects for the repair of the ruins, for the culture of those wide bogs and moorlands why is it that he turns away and looks down embarrassed? Ah! I guess,—his true heir now is restored to him. He cannot consent that I should invest this dross, for which (the Great Book once published) I have no other use, in the house and the lands that will pass to his son. Neither would he suffer me so to invest even his son's fortune, the bulk of which I still hold in trust for that son. True, in his career my cousin may require to have his money always forthcoming. But I, who have no career,—pooh! these scruples will rob me of half the pleasure my years of toil were to purchase. I must contrive it somehow or other: what if he would let me house and moorland on a long improving lease? Then, for the rest, there is a pretty little property to be sold close by, on which I can retire, when my cousin, as heir of the family, comes, perhaps with a wife, to reside at the Tower. I must consider of all this, and talk it over with Bolt, when my mind is at leisure from happiness to turn to such matters; meanwhile I fall back on my favorite proverb,—"Where there's a will there's a way."

What smiles and tears, and laughter and careless prattle with my mother, and roundabout questions from her to know if I had never lost my heart in the Bush; and evasive answers from me, to punish her for not letting out that Blanche was so charming. "I fancied Blanche had grown the image of her father, who has a fine martial head certainly, but not seen to advantage in petticoats! How could you be so silent with a theme so attractive?"

"Blanche made me promise."

Why, I wonder. Therewith I fell musing.

What quiet, delicious hours are spent with my father in his study, or by the pond, where he still feeds the carps, that have grown into Cyprinidian leviathans. The duck, alas! has departed this life,—the only victim that the Grim King has carried off; so I mourn, but am resigned to that lenient composition of the great tribute to Nature. I am sorry to say the Great Book has advanced but slowly,—by no means yet fit for publication; for it is resolved that it shall not come out as first proposed, a part at a time, but, totus, teres, atque rotundus. The matter has spread beyond its original compass; no less than five volumes

—and those of the amplest—will contain the History of Human Error. However, we are far in the fourth, and one must not hurry Minerva.

My father is enchanted with Uncle Jack's "noble conduct," as he calls it; but he scolds me for taking the money, and doubts as to the propriety of returning it. In these matters my father is quite as Quixotical as Roland. I am forced to call in my mother as umpire between us, and she settles the matter at once by an appeal to feeling. "Ah, Austin! do you not humble me if you are too proud to accept what is due to you from my brother?"

"Velit, nolit, quod amica," answered my father, taking off and rubbing his spectacles,—which means, Kitty, that when a man's married he has no will of his own. To think," added Mr. Caxton, musingly, "that in this world one cannot be sure of the simplest mathematical definition. You see, Pisistratus, that the angles of a triangle so decidedly scalene as your Uncle Jack's may be equal to the angles of a right-angled triangle after all!" (2)

The long privation of books has quite restored all my appetite for them. How much I have to pick up; what a compendious scheme of reading I and my father chalk out! I see enough to fill up all the leisure of life. But, somehow or other, Greek and Latin stand still; nothing charms me like Italian. Blanche and I are reading *Metastasio*, to the great indignation of my father, who calls it "rubbish," and wants to substitute *Dante*. I have no associations at present with the souls

"Che son contenti
Nel fuoco;"

I am already one of the "beate gente." Yet, in spite of *Metastasio*, Blanche and I are not so intimate as cousins ought to be. If we are by accident alone, I become as silent as a Turk, as formal as Sir Charles Grandison. I caught myself calling her Miss Blanche the other day.

I must not forget thee, honest Squills, nor thy delight at my health and success, nor thy exclamation of pride (one hand on my pulse and the other griping hard the "ball" of my arm)! "It all comes of my citrate of iron: nothing like it for children; it has an effect on the cerebral developments of hope and combativeness." Nor can I wholly omit mention of poor Mrs. Primmis, who still calls me "Master Sisty," and is breaking her heart that I will not wear the new flannel waistcoats she had such pleasure in making,—"Young gentlemen just growing up are so apt to go off in a galloping 'sumption! She knew just such another as Master Sisty, when she lived at Torquay, who wasted away and went out like a snuff, all because he would not wear flannel waistcoats." Therewith my mother looks grave, and says, "One can't take too much precaution." Suddenly the whole neighborhood is thrown into commotion. Trevanion—I beg his pardon, Lord Ulverstone—is coming to settle for good at Compton. Fifty hands are employed daily in putting the grounds into hasty order.

Four-gons and wagons and vans have disgorged all the necessaries a great man requires where he means to eat, drink, and sleep,—books, wines, pictures, furniture. I recognize my old patron still. He is in earnest, whatever he does. I meet my friend, his steward, who tells me that Lord Ulverstone finds his favorite seat, near London, too exposed to interruption; and moreover that, as he has there completed all improvements that wealth and energy can effect, he has less occupation for agricultural pursuits, to which he has grown more and more partial, than on the wide and princely domain which has hitherto wanted the master's eye. "He is a bra' farmer, I know," quoth the steward, "so far as the theory goes; but I don't think we in the North want great lords to teach us how to follow the pleugh." The steward's sense of dignity is hurt; but he is an honest fellow, and really glad to see the family come to settle in the old place.

They have arrived, and—with them the Castletons and a whole posse comitatus of guests. The county paper is full of fine names.

"What on earth did Lord Ulverstone mean by pretending to get out of the way of troublesome visitors?"

"My dear Pisistratus," answered my father to that exclamation, "it is not the visitors who come, but the visitors who stay away that most trouble the repose of a retired minister. In all the procession he sees but the images of Brutus and Cassius that are not there! And depend on it also, a retirement so near London did not make noise enough. You see, a retiring statesman is like that fine carp,—the farther he leaps from the water, the greater splash he makes in falling into the weeds! But," added Mr. Caxton, in a repentant tone, "this jesting does not become us; and if I indulged it, it is only because I am heartily glad that Trevanion is likely now to find out his true vocation. And as soon as the fine people he brings with him have left him alone in his library, I trust he will settle to that vocation, and be happier than he has been yet."

"And that vocation, sir, is—"

"Metaphysics," said my father. "He will be quite at home in puzzling over Berkeley, and considering whether the Speaker's chair and the official red boxes were really things whose ideas of figure, extension, and hardness were all in the mind. It will be a great consolation to him to agree with Berkeley, and to find that he has only been baffled by immaterial phantasma!"

My father was quite right. The repining, subtle, truth-weighting Trevanion, plagued by his conscience into seeing all sides of a question (for the least question has more than two sides, and is hexagonal at least), was much more fitted to discover the origin of ideas than to convince Cabinets and Nations that two and two make four,—a proposition on which he himself would have agreed with Abraham Tucker where that most

ingenious and suggestive of all English metaphysicians observes, "Well, persuaded as I am that two and two make four, if I were to meet with a person of credit, candor, and understanding who should sincerely call it in question, I would give him a hearing; for I am not more certain of that than of the whole being greater than a part. And yet I could myself suggest some considerations that might seem to controvert this point." (3) I can so well imagine Trevanion listening to "some person of credit, candor, and understanding" in disproof of that vulgar proposition that twice two make four! But the news of this arrival, including that of Lady Castleton, disturbed me greatly, and I took to long wanderings alone. In one of these rambles they all called at the Tower,—Lord and Lady Ulverstone, the Castletons, and their children. I escaped the visit; and on my return home there was a certain delicacy respecting old associations that restrained much talk, before me, on so momentous an event. Roland, like me, had kept out of the way. Blanche, poor child, ignorant of the antecedents, was the most communicative. And the especial theme she selected was the grace and beauty of Lady Castleton!

A pressing invitation to spend some days at the castle had been cordially given to all. It was accepted only by myself: I wrote word that I would come.

Yes, I longed to prove the strength of my own self-conquest, and accurately test the nature of the feelings that had disturbed me. That any sentiment which could be called "love" remained for Lady Castleton, the wife of another, and that other a man with so many claims on my affection as her lord, I held as a moral impossibility. But with all those lively impressions of early youth still engraved on my heart,—impressions of the image of Fanny Trevanion as the fairest and brightest of human beings,—could I feel free to love again? Could I seek to woo, and rivet to myself forever, the entire and virgin affections of another while there was a possibility that I might compare and regret? No; either I must feel that if Fanny were again single, could be mine without obstacle, human or divine, she had ceased to be the one I would single out of the world; or, though regarding love as the dead, I would be faithful to its memory and its ashes. My mother sighed, and looked fluttered and uneasy all the morning of the day on which I was to repair to Compton. She even seemed cross, for about the third time in her life, and paid no compliment to Mr. Stultz when my shooting-jacket was exchanged for a black frock which that artist had pronounced to be "splendid;" neither did she honor me with any of those little attentions to the contents of my portmanteau, and the perfect "getting up" of my white waistcoats and cravats, which made her natural instincts on such memorable occasions. There was also a sort of querulous, pitying tenderness in her tone, when she spoke to Blanche, which was quite pathetic; though, fortunately, its cause remained dark and impenetrable to the innocent comprehension of one who could not see where the past filled the urns of the future at the fountain of life. My father understood me better, shook me by the hand as I got into the chaise, and muttered, out of Seneca: "Non tanquam transfuga, sed tanquam explorator"

("Not to desert, but examine").

Quite right.

(1) "Dingoes"—the name given by Australian natives to the wild dogs.

(2) Not having again to advert to Uncle Jack, I may be pardoned for informing the reader, by way of annotation, that he continues to prosper surprisingly in Australia, though the Tibbets' Wheal stands still for want of workmen. Despite of a few ups and downs, I have had no fear of his success until this year (1849), when I tremble to think what effect the discovery of the gold mines in California may have on his lively imagination. If thou escapest that snare, Uncle Jack, res age, tutus eris—thou art safe for life!

(3) "Light of Nature,"—chapter on Judgment.—See the very ingenious illustration of doubt, "whether the part is always greater than the whole,"—taken from time, or rather eternity.

CHAPTER VI.

Agreeably to the usual custom in great houses, as soon as I arrived at Compton I was conducted to my room to adjust my toilet or compose my spirits by solitude,—it wanted an hour to dinner. I had not, however, been thus left ten minutes before the door opened and Trevanion himself (as I would fain still call him) stood before me. Most cordial were his greeting and welcome; and seating himself by my side, he continued to converse in his peculiar way—bluntly eloquent and carelessly learned—till the half-hour bell rang. He talked on Australia, the Wakefield system, cattle, books, his trouble in arranging his library, his schemes for improving his property and embellishing his grounds, his delight to find my father look so well, his determination to see a great deal of him, whether his old college friend would or not; he talked, in short, of everything except politics and his own past career,—showing only his soreness in that silence. But—independently of the mere work of time—he looked yet more worn and jaded in his leisure than he had done in the full tide of business; and his former abrupt quickness of manner now seemed to partake of feverish excitement. I hoped that my father would see much of him, for I felt that the weary mind wanted soothing.

Just as the second bell rang I entered the drawing-room. There were at least twenty guests present,—each guest, no doubt, some planet of fashion or fame, with satellites of its own. But I saw only two forms distinctly: first, Lord Castleton, conspicuous with star and garter,—somewhat ampler and portlier in proportions, and with a frank dash of gray in the silky waves of his hair, but still as pre-eminent as ever for

that beauty, the charm of which depends less than any other upon youth, arising, as it does, from a felicitous combination of bearing and manner, and that exquisite suavity of expression which steals into the heart and pleases so much that it becomes a satisfaction to admire! Of Lord Castleton, indeed, it might be said, as of Alcibiades, "that he was beautiful at every age." I felt my breath come thick, and a mist passed before my eyes as Lord Castleton led me through the crowd, and the radiant vision of Fanny Trevanion—how altered, and how dazzling!—burst upon me.

I felt the light touch of that hand of snow; but no guilty thrill shot through my veins. I heard the voice, musical as ever,—lower than it was once, and more subdued in its key, but steadfast and untremulous: it was no longer the voice that made "my soul plant itself in the ears." (1) The event was over, and I knew that the dream had fled from the waking world forever.

"Another old friend!" as Lady Ulverstone came forth from a little group of children, leading one fine boy of nine years old, while one, two or three years younger, clung to her gown. "Another old friend! and," added Lady Ulverstone, after the first kind greetings, "two new ones when the old are gone." The slight melancholy left the voice as, after presenting to me the little viscount, she drew forward the more bashful Lord Albert, who indeed had something of his grandsire and namesake's look of refined intelligence in his brow and eyes.

The watchful tact of Lord Castleton was quick in terminating whatever embarrassment might belong to these introductions, as, leaning lightly on my arm, he drew me forward and presented me to the guests more immediately in our neighborhood, who seemed by their earnest cordiality to have been already prepared for the introduction.

Dinner was now announced, and I welcomed that sense of relief and segregation with which one settles into one's own "particular" chair at your large miscellaneous entertainment.

I stayed three days at that house. How truly had Trevanion said that Fanny would make "an excellent great lady." What perfect harmony between her manners and her position! just retaining enough of the girl's seductive gayety and bewitching desire to please, to soften the new dignity of bearing she had unconsciously assumed,—less, after all, as great lady, than as wife and mother; with a fine breeding, perhaps a little languid and artificial as compared with her lord's,—which sprang, fresh and healthful, wholly from nature,—but still so void of all the chill of condescension or the subtle impertinence that belongs to that order of the inferior noblesse which boasts the name of "exclusives;" with what grace, void of prudery, she took the adulation of the flatterers, turning from them to her children, or escaping lightly to Lord Castleton, with an ease that drew round her at once the protection of hearth and home!

And certainly Lady Castleton was more incontestably beautiful than Fanny Trevanion had been.

All this I acknowledged, not with a sigh and a pang, but with a pure feeling of pride and delight. I might have loved madly and presumptuously; as boys will do; but I had loved worthily,—the love left no blush on my manhood; and Fanny's very happiness was my perfect and total cure of every wound in my heart not quite scarred over before. Had she been discontented, sorrowful, without joy in the ties she had formed, there might have been more danger that I should brood over the past and regret the loss of its idol. Here there was none. And the very improvement in her beauty had so altered its character—so altered—that Fanny Trevanion and Lady Castleton seemed two persons. And thus observing and listening to her, I could now dispassionately perceive such differences in our natures as seemed to justify Trevanion's assertion, which once struck me as so monstrous, "that we should not have been happy had fate permitted our union." Pure-hearted and simple though she remained in the artificial world, still that world was her element; its interests occupied her; its talk, though just chastened from scandal, flowed from her lips. To borrow the words of a man who was himself a courtier, and one so distinguished that he could afford to sneer at Chesterfield, (2) "She had the routine of that style of conversation which is a sort of gold leaf, that is a great embellishment where it is joined to anything else." I will not add, "but makes a very poor figure by itself,"—for that Lady Castleton's conversation certainly did not do,—perhaps, indeed, because it was not "by itself,"—and the gold leaf was all the better for being thin, since it could not cover even the surface of the sweet and amiable nature over which it was spread. Still, this was not the mind in which now, in maturer experience, I would seek to find sympathy with manly action, or companionship in the charms of intellectual leisure.

There was about this same beautiful favorite of nature and fortune a certain helplessness, which had even its grace in that high station, and which, perhaps, tended to insure her domestic peace, for it served to attach her to those who had won influence over her, and was happily accompanied by a most affectionate disposition. But still, if less favored by circumstances, less sheltered from every wind that could visit her too roughly; if, as the wife of a man of inferior rank, she had failed of that high seat and silken canopy reserved for the spoiled darlings of fortune,—that helplessness might have become querulous. I thought of poor Ellen Bolding and her silken shoes. Fanny Trevanion seemed to have come into the world with silk shoes,—not to walk where there was a stone or a brier. I heard something, in the gossip of those around, that confirmed this view of Lady Castleton's character, while it deepened my admiration of her lord, and showed me how wise had been her choice, and how resolutely he had prepared himself to vindicate his own. One evening, as I was sitting, a little apart from the rest, with two men of the London world, to whose talk—for it ran upon the on-dits and

anecdotes of a region long strange to me—I was a silent but amused listener, one of the two said: "Well, I don't know anywhere a more excellent creature than Lady Castleton: so fond of her children, and her tone to Castleton so exactly what it ought to be,—so affectionate, and yet, as it were, respectful. And the more credit to her if, as they say, she was not in love with him when she married (to be sure, handsome as he is, he is twice her age)! And no woman could have been more flattered and courted by Lotharios and lady-killers than Lady Castleton has been. I confess, to my shame, that Castleton's luck puzzles me, for it is rather an exception to my general experience."

"My dear—," said the other, who was one of those wise men of pleasure who occasionally startle us into wondering how they come to be so clever, and yet rest contented with mere drawing-room celebrity,—men who seem always idle, yet appear to have read everything; always indifferent to what passes before them, yet who know the character and divine the secrets of everybody, "my dear," said the gentleman, "you would not be puzzled if you had studied Lord Castleton, instead of her ladyship. Of all the conquests ever made by Sedley Beaudesert,—when the two fairest dames of the Faubourg are said to have fought for his smiles in the Bois de Boulogne,—no conquest ever cost him such pains, or so tasked his knowledge of women, as that of his wife after marriage. He was not satisfied with her hand, he was resolved to have her whole heart,—'one entire and perfect chrysolite;' and he has succeeded! Never was husband so watchful and so little jealous, never one who confided so generously in all that was best in his wife, yet was so alert in protecting and guarding her wherever she was weakest. When in the second year of marriage that dangerous German Prince Von Leibenfels attached himself so perseveringly to Lady Castleton, and the scandal-mongers pricked up their ears, in hopes of a victim, I watched Castleton with as much interest as if I had been looking over Deschappelles playing at chess. You never saw anything so masterly; he pitted himself against his highness with the cool confidence, not of a blind spouse, but a fortunate rival. He surpassed him in the delicacy of his attentions, he outshone him by his careless magnificence. Leibenfels had the impertinence to send Lady Castleton a bouquet of some rare flowers just in fashion. Castleton, an hour before, had filled her whole balcony with the same costly exotics, as if they were too common for nosegays, and only just worthy to bloom for her a day. Young and really accomplished as Leibenfels is, Castleton eclipsed him by his grace, and fooled him with his wit; he laid little plots to turn his mustache and guitar into ridicule; he seduced him into a hunt with the buckhounds (though Castleton himself had not hunted before since he was thirty), and drew him, spluttering German oaths, out of the slough of a ditch; he made him the laughter of the clubs; he put him fairly out of fashion,—and all with such suavity, and politeness, and bland sense of superiority, that it was the finest piece of high comedy you ever beheld. The poor prince, who had been coxcomb enough to lay a bet with a Frenchman as to his success with the English in general, and Lady Castleton in particular, went away with a face as long as Don Quixote's. If you had but seen him at S— House, the night before he

took leave of the island, and his comical grimace when Castleton offered him a pinch of the Beaudesert mixture! No; the fact is that Castleton made it the object of his existence, the masterpiece of his art, to secure to himself a happy home and the entire possession of his wife's heart. The first two or three years, I fear, cost him more trouble than any other man ever took,—with his own wife, at least; but he may now rest in peace,—Lady Castleton is won, and forever.”

As my gentleman ceased, Lord Castleton's noble head rose above the group standing round him; and I saw Lady Castleton turn with a look of well-bred fatigue from a handsome young fop who had affected to lower his voice while he spoke to her, and, encountering the eyes of her husband, the look changed at once into one of such sweet, smiling affection, such frank, unmistakable wife-like pride, that it seemed a response to the assertion,—”Lady Castleton is won, and forever.”

Yes, that story increased my admiration for Lord Castleton; it showed me with what forethought and earnest sense of responsibility he had undertaken the charge of a life, the guidance of a character yet undeveloped; it lastingly acquitted him of the levity that had been attributed to Sedley Beaudesert. But I felt more than ever contented that the task had devolved on one whose temper and experience had so fitted him to discharge it. That German prince made me tremble from sympathy with the husband, and in a sort of relative shudder for myself! Had that episode happened to me, I could never have drawn ”high comedy” from it; I could never have so happily closed the fifth act with a pinch of the Beaudesert mixture! No, no; to my homely sense of man's life and employment there was nothing alluring in the prospect of watching over the golden tree in the garden, with a ”woe to the Argus if Mercury once lull him to sleep!” Wife of mine shall need no watching, save in sickness and sorrow! Thank Heaven that my way of life does not lead through the roseate thoroughfares, beset with German princes laying bets for my perdition, and fine gentlemen admiring the skill with which I play at chess for so terrible a stake! To each rank and each temper, its own laws. I acknowledge that Fanny is an excellent marchioness, and Lord Castleton an incomparable marquis. But, Blanche! if I can win thy true, simple heart, I trust I shall begin at the fifth act of high comedy, and say at the altar,—

”Once won, won forever.”

(1) Sir Philip Sidney.

(2) Lord Hervey's Memoirs of George II.

CHAPTER VII.

I rode home on a horse my host lent me; and Lord Castleton rode part of the way with me, accompanied by his two boys, who bestrode manfully their Shetland ponies and cantered on before us. I paid some compliment to the spirit and intelligence of these children,—a compliment they well deserved.

"Why, yes," said the marquis, with a father's becoming pride, "I hope neither of them will shame his grandsire, Trevanion. Albert (though not quite the wonder poor Lady Ulverstone declares him to be) is rather too precocious, and it is all I can do to prevent his being spoilt by flattery to his cleverness, which, I think, is much worse than even flattery to rank,—a danger to which, despite Albert's destined inheritance, the elder brother is more exposed. Eton soon takes out the conceit of the latter and more vulgar kind. I remember Lord — (you know what an unpretending, good-natured fellow he is now) strutting into the play-ground, a raw boy, with his chin up in the air, and burly Dick Johnson (rather a tuft-hunter now, I'm afraid) coming up and saying, 'Well, sir, and who the deuce are you?' 'Lord —,' says the poor devil unconsciously, 'eldest son of the Marquis of —.'

'Oh, indeed!' cries Johnson; 'then there's one kick for my lord, and two for the marquis!' I am not fond of kicking, but I doubt if anything ever did—more good than those three kicks. But," continued Lord Castleton, "when one flatters a boy for his cleverness, even Eton itself cannot kick the conceit out of him. Let him be last in the form, and the greatest dunce ever flogged, there are always people to say that your public schools don't do for your great geniuses. And it is ten to one but what the father is plagued into taking the boy home and giving him a private tutor, who fixes him into a prig forever. A coxcomb in dress," said the marquis, smiling, "is a trifle it would ill become me to condemn, and I own that I would rather see a youth a fop than a sloven; but a coxcomb in ideas—why, the younger he is, the more unnatural and disagreeable. Now, Albert, over that hedge, sir."

"That hedge, papa? The pony will never do it."

"Then," said Lord Castleton, taking off his hat with politeness. "I fear you will deprive us of the pleasure of your company."

The boy laughed, and made gallantly for the hedge, though I saw by his change of color that it a little alarmed him. The pony could not clear the hedge, but it was a pony of tact and resources, and it scrambled through like a cat, inflicting sundry rents and tears on a jacket of Raphael blue.

Lord Castleton said, smiling, "You see, I teach them to get through a

difficulty one way or the other. Between you and me," he added seriously, "I perceive a very different world rising round the next generation from that in which I first went forth and took my pleasure. I shall rear my boys accordingly. Rich noblemen must nowadays be useful men; and if they can't leap over briars, they must scramble through them. Don't you agree with me?"

"Yes, heartily."

"Marriage makes a man much wiser," said the marquis, after a pause. "I smile now to think how often I sighed at the thought of growing old. Now I reconcile myself to the gray hairs without dreams of a wig, and enjoy youth still; for," pointing to his sons, "it is there!"

"He has very nearly found out the secret of the saffron bag now," said my father, pleased and rubbing his hands, when I repeated this talk with Lord Castleton. "But I fear poor Trevanion," he added, with a compassionate change of countenance, "is still far away from the sense of Lord Bacon's receipt. And his wife, you say, out of very love for him, keeps always drawing discord from the one jarring wire."

"You must talk to her, sir."

"I will," said my father, angrily, "and scold her too, foolish woman! I shall tell her Luther's advice to the Prince of Anhalt."

"What was that, sir?"

"Only to throw a baby into the River Maldon because it had sucked dry five wet-nurses besides the mother, and must therefore be a changeling. Why, that ambition of hers would suck dry all the mother's milk in the genus mammalian. And such a withered, rickety, malign little changeling too! She shall fling it into the river, by all that is holy!" cried my father; and, suiting the action to the word, away into the pond went the spectacles he had been rubbing indignantly for the last three minutes. "Papoe!" faltered my father, aghast, while the Cyprinidae, mistaking the dip of the spectacles for an invitation to dinner, came scudding up to the bank. "It is all your fault," said Mr. Caxton, recovering himself. "Get me the new tortoise-shell spectacles and a large slice of bread. You see that when fish are reduced to a pond they recognize a benefactor, which they never do when rising at flies or groping for worms in the waste world of a river. Hem!—a hint for the Ulverstones. Besides the bread and the spectacles, just look out and bring me the old black-letter copy of Saint Anthony's 'Sermon to Fishes.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

Some weeks now have passed since my return to the Tower; the Castletons are gone, and all Trevanion's gay guests. And since these departures, visits between the two houses have been interchanged often, and the bonds of intimacy are growing close. Twice has my father held long conversations apart with Lady Ulverstone (my mother is not foolish enough to feel a pang now at such confidences), and the result has become apparent. Lady Ulverstone has ceased all talk against the world and the public, ceased to fret the galled pride of her husband with irritating sympathy. She has made herself the true partner of his present occupations, as she was of those in the past; she takes interest in farming, and gardens, and flowers, and those philosophical peaches which come from trees academical that Sir William Temple reared in his graceful retirement. She does more,—she sits by her husband's side in the library, reads the books he reads, or if in Latin, coaxes him into construing them. Insensibly she leads him into studies farther and farther remote from the Blue Books and Hansard; and taking my father's hint,—

”Allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way.”

They are inseparable. Darby-and-Joan-like, you see them together in the library, the garden, or the homely little pony-phaeton for which Lord Ulverstone has resigned the fasttrotting cob once identified with the eager looks of the busy Trevanion. It is most touching, most beautiful! And to think what a victory over herself the proud woman must have obtained! Never a thought that seems to murmur, never a word to recall the ambitious man back from the philosophy into which his active mind flies for refuge. And with the effort her brow has become so serene! That careworn expression which her fine features once wore, is fast vanishing. And what affects me most, is to think that this change (which is already settling into happiness) has been wrought by Austin's counsels and appeals to her sense and affection. ”It is to you,” he said, ”that Trevanion must look for more than comfort,—for cheerfulness and satisfaction. Your child is gone from you; the world ebbs away: you two should be all in all to each other. Be so.” Thus, after paths so devious, meet those who have parted in youth, now on the verge of age,—there, in the same scenes where Austin and Ellinor had first formed acquaintance; he aiding her to soothe the wounds inflicted by the ambition that had separated their lots, and both taking counsel to insure the happiness of the rival she had preferred.

After all this vexed public life of toil and care and ambition, to see Trevanion and Ellinor drawing closer and closer to each other, knowing private life and its charms for the first time,—verily, it would have been a theme for an elegiast like Tibullus.

But all this while a younger love, with no blurred leaves to erase from the chronicle, has been keeping sweet account of the summer time. "Very near are two hearts that have no guile between them," saith a proverb, traced back to Confucius. O ye days of still sunshine, reflected back from our selves! O ye haunts endeared evermore by a look, tone, or smile, or rapt silence, when more and more with each hour unfolded before me that nature, so tenderly coy, so cheerful though serious, so attuned by simple cares to affection, yet so filled, from soft musings and solitude, with a poetry that gave grace to duties the homeliest, setting life's trite things to Music! Here nature and fortune concurred alike,—equal in birth and pretensions, similar in tastes and in objects, loving the healthful activity of purpose, but content to find it around us, neither envying the wealthy nor vying with the great, each framed by temper to look on the bright side of life and find founts of delight and green spots fresh with verdure where eyes but accustomed to cities could see but the sands and the mirage. While afar, as man's duty, I had gone through the travail that, in wrestling with fortune, gives pause to the heart to recover its losses and know the value of love in its graver sense of life's earnest realities, Heaven had reared, at the thresholds of home, the young tree that should cover the roof with its blossoms and embalm with its fragrance the daily air of my being.

It had been the joint prayer of those kind ones I left that such might be my reward, and each had contributed, in his or her several way, to fit that fair life for the ornament and joy of the one that now asked to guard and to cherish it. From Roland came that deep, earnest honor,—a man's in its strength, and a woman's in its delicate sense of refinement. From Roland, that quick taste for all things noble in poetry and lovely in nature,—the eye that sparkled to read how Bayard stood alone at the bridge and saved an army; or wept over the page that told how the dying Sidney put the bowl from his burning lips. Is that too masculine a spirit for some? Let each please himself. Give me the woman who can echo all thoughts that are noblest in men! And that eye, too,—like Roland's,—could pause to note each finer mesh in the wonderful web-work of beauty. No landscape to her was the same yesterday and to-day: a deeper shade from the skies could change the face of the moors; the springing up of fresh wild-flowers, the very song of some bird unheard before, lent variety to the broad rugged heath. Is that too simple a source of pleasure for some to prize? Be it so to those who need the keen stimulants that cities afford. But if we were to pass all our hours in those scenes, it was something to have the tastes which own no monotony in Nature.

All this came from Roland; and to this, with thoughtful wisdom, my father had added enough knowledge from books to make those tastes more attractive, and to lend to impulsive perception of beauty and goodness the culture that draws finer essence from beauty, and expands the Good into the Better by heightening the sight of the survey: hers knowledge enough to sympathize with intellectual pursuits, not enough to dispute on man's province,—Opinion. Still, whether in nature or in lore, still—

"The fairest garden in her looks,
And in her mind the choicest books!"

And yet, thou wise Austin,—and thou, Roland, poet that never wrote a verse,—yet your work had been incomplete; but then Woman stepped in, and the mother gave to her she designed for a daughter the last finish of meek, every-day charities,—the mild household virtues; "the soft word that turneth away wrath;" the angelic pity for man's rougher faults; the patience that bideth its time, and, exacting no "rights of woman," subjugates us, delighted, to the invisible thrall.

Dost thou remember, my Blanche, that soft summer evening when the vows our eyes had long interchanged stole at last from the lip? Wife mine, come to my side; look over me while I write: there, thy tears (happy tears are they not, Blanche?) have blotted the page! Shall we tell the world more? Right, my Blanche; no words should profane the place where those tears have fallen!

And here I would fain conclude; but alas and alas! that I cannot associate with our hopes, on this side the grave, him who, we fondly hoped (even on the bridal-day that gave his sister to my arms), would come to the hearth where his place now stood vacant, contented with glory, and fitted at last for the tranquil happiness which long years of repentance and trial had deserved.

Within the first year of my marriage, and shortly after a gallant share in a desperate action which had covered his name with new honors, just when we were most elated, in the blinded vanity of human pride, came the fatal news! The brief career was run. He died, as I knew he would have prayed to die, at the close of a day ever memorable in the annals of that marvellous empire which valor without parallel has annexed to the Throne of the Isles. He died in the arms of Victory, and his last smile met the eyes of the noble chief who, even in that hour, could pause from the tide of triumph by the victim it had cast on its bloody shore. "One favor," faltered the dying man; "I have a father at home,—he, too, is a soldier. In my tent is my will: it gives all I have to him,—he can take it without shame. That is not enough! Write to him—you, with your own hand—and tell him how his son fell! "And the hero fulfilled the prayer; and that letter is dearer to Roland than all the long roll of the ancestral dead! Nature has reclaimed her rights, and the forefathers recede before the son.

In a side chapel of the old Gothic church, amidst the mouldering tombs of those who fought at Acre and Agincourt, a fresh tablet records the death of Herbert De Caxton, with the simple inscription,—

He Fell on the Field
His Country Mourned Him,
And His Father Is Resigned.

Years have rolled away since that tablet was placed there, and changes have passed on that nook of earth which bounds our little world: fair chambers have sprung up amidst the desolate ruins; far and near, smiling corn-fields replace the bleak, dreary moors. The land supports more retainers than ever thronged to the pennon of its barons of old, and Roland can look from his Tower over domains that are reclaimed, year by year, from the waste, till the ploughshare shall win a lordship more opulent than those feudal chiefs ever held by the tenure of the sword. And the hospitable mirth that had fled from the ruin has been renewed in the Hall, and rich and poor, great and lowly, have welcomed the rise of an ancient house from the dust of decay. All those dreams of Roland's youth are fulfilled; but they do not gladden his heart like the thought that his son, at the last, was worthy of his line, and the hope that no gulf shall yawn between the two when the Grand Circle is rounded, and man's past and man's future meet where Time disappears. Never was that lost one forgotten; never was his name breathed but tears rushed to the eyes; and each morning the peasant going to his labor might see Roland steal down the dell to the deep-set door of the chapel. None presume there to follow his steps or intrude on his solemn thoughts; for there, in sight of that tablet, are his orisons made, and the remembrance of the dead forms a part of the commune with heaven. But the old man's step is still firm and his brow still erect; and you may see in his face that it was no hollow boast which proclaimed that the "father was resigned." And ye who doubt if too Roman a hardness might not be found in that Christian resignation, think what it is to have feared for a son the life of shame, and ask then if the sharpest grief to a father is in a son's death of honor!

Years have passed, and two fair daughters play at the knees of Blanche, or creep round the footstool of Austin, waiting patiently for the expected kiss when he looks up from the Great Book, now drawing fast to its close; or if Roland enter the room, forget all their sober demureness, and unawed by the terrible Papoe! run clamorous for the promised swing in the orchard, or the fiftieth recital of "Chevy Chase."

For my part, I take the goods the gods provide me, and am contented with girls that have the eyes of their mother; but Roland, ungrateful man, begins to grumble that we are so neglectful of the rights of heirs-male. He is in doubt whether to lay the fault on Mr. Squills or on us,—I am not sure that he does not think it a conspiracy of all three to settle the representation of the martial De Caxtons on the "spindle side." Whosoever be the right person to blame, an omission so fatal to the straight line in the pedigree is rectified at last, and Mrs. Primmins again rushes, or rather rolls—in the movement natural to forms globular and spherul—into my father's room with—

"Sir, sir, it is a boy!"

Whether my father asked also this time that question so puzzling to

metaphysical inquirers, "What is a boy?" I know not: I rather suspect he had not leisure for so abstract a question; for the whole household burst on him, and my mother, in that storm peculiar to the elements of the Mind Feminine—a sort of sunshiny storm between laughter and crying—whirled him off to behold the Neogilos.

Now, some months after that date, on a winter's evening, we were all assembled in the hall, which was still our usual apartment, since its size permitted to each his own segregated and peculiar employment. A large screen fenced off from interruption my father's erudite settlement; and quite out of sight, behind that impermeable barrier, he was now calmly winding up that eloquent peroration which will astonish the world whenever, by Heaven's special mercy, the printer's devils have done with "The History of Human Error." In another nook my uncle had ensconced himself, stirring his coffee (in the cup my mother had presented to him so many years ago, and which had miraculously escaped all the ills the race of crockery is heir to), a volume of "Ivanhoe" in the other hand, and, despite the charm of the Northern Wizard, his eye not on the page. On the wall behind him hangs the picture of Sir Herbert de Caxton, the soldier-comrade of Sidney and Drake, and at the foot of the picture Roland has slung his son's sword beside the letter that spoke of his death, which is framed and glazed,—sword and letter had become as the last, nor least honored, Penates of the hall; the son was grown an ancestor.

Not far from my uncle sat Mr. Squills, employed in mapping out phrenological divisions on a cast he had made from the skull of one of the Australian aborigines,—a ghastly present, which (in compliance with a yearly letter to that effect) I had brought him over, together with a stuffed "wombat" and a large bundle of sarsaparilla. (For the satisfaction of his patients, I may observe, parenthetically, that the skull and the "wombat"—that last is a creature between a miniature pig and a very small badger—were not precisely packed up with the sarsaparilla!) Farther on stood open, but idle, the new pianoforte, at which, before my father had given his preparatory hem, and sat down to the Great Book, Blanche and my mother had been trying hard to teach me to bear the third in the glee of "The Chough and the Crow to roost have gone,"—vain task, in spite of all flattering assurances that I have a very fine "bass" if I could but manage to humor it. Fortunately for the ears of the audience, that attempt is now abandoned. My mother is hard at work on her tapestry,—the last pattern in fashion, to wit, a rosy-cheeked young troubadour playing the lute under a salmon-colored balcony; the two little girls look gravely on, prematurely in love, I suspect, with the troubadour; and Blanche and I have stolen away into a corner, which, by some strange delusion, we consider out of sight, and in that corner is the cradle of the Neogilos. Indeed, it is not our fault that it is there,—Roland would have it so; and the baby is so good, too, he never cries,—at least so say Blanche and my mother; at all events, he does not cry tonight. And, indeed, that child is a wonder! He seems to know and respond to what was uppermost at our hearts when he was born;

and yet more when Roland (contrary, I dare say, to all custom) permitted neither mother nor nurse nor creature of womankind to hold him at the baptismal font, but bent over the new Christian his own dark, high-featured face; reminding one of the eagle that hid the infant in its nest and watched over it with wings that had battled with the storm: and from that moment the child, who took the name of Herbert, seemed to recognize Roland better than his nurse or even mother,—seemed to know that in giving him that name we sought to give Roland his son once more! Never did the old man come near the infant but it smiled and crowed and stretched out its little arms; and then the mother and I would press each other's hand secretly, and were not jealous. Well, then, Blanche and Pisistratus were seated near the cradle and talking in low whispers, when my father pushed aside the screen and said,—

”There, the work is done! And now it may go to press as soon as you will.”

Congratulations poured in; my father bore them with his usual equanimity; and standing on the hearth, his hand in his waistcoat, he said, musingly, ”Among the last delusions of Human Error I have had to notice Rousseau's phantasy of Perpetual Peace, and all the like pastoral dreams, which preceded the bloodiest wars that have convulsed the earth for more than a thousand years!”

”And to judge by the newspapers,” said I, ”the same delusions are renewed again. Benevolent theorists go about prophesying peace as a positive certainty, deduced from that sibyl-book the ledger; and we are never again to buy cannons, provided only we can exchange cotton for corn.”

Mr. Squills (who, having almost wholly retired from general business, has, from want of something better to do, attended sundry ”Demonstrations in the North,” since which he has talked much about the march of improvement, the spirit of the age, and ”Us of the nineteenth century”).—”I heartily hope that those benevolent theorists are true prophets. I have found, in the course of my professional practice, that men go out of the world quite fast enough, without hacking them into pieces or blowing them up into the air. War is a great evil.”

Blanche (passing by Squills, and glancing towards Roland).—”Hush!”

Roland remains silent.

Mr. Caxton.—”War is a great evil; but evil is admitted by Providence into the agency of creation, physical and moral. The existence of evil has puzzled wiser heads than ours, Squills. But, no doubt, there is One above who has his reasons for it. The combative bump seems as common to the human skull as the philoprogenitive,—if it is in our organization, be sure it is not there without cause. Neither is it just to man, nor wisely submissive to the Disposer of all events, to suppose that war is wholly and wantonly produced by human crimes and follies,—that it

conduces only to ill, and does not as often arise from the necessities interwoven in the framework of society, and speed the great ends of the human race, conformably with the designs of the Omniscient. Not one great war has ever desolated the earth, but has left behind it seeds that have ripened into blessings incalculable!"

Mr. Squills (with the groan of a dissentient at a "Demonstration").—"Oh! oh! oh!"

Luckless Squills! Little could he have foreseen the shower-bath, or rather douche, of erudition that fell splash on his head as he pulled the string with that impertinent Oh! oh! Down first came the Persian war, with Median myriads disgorging all the rivers they had drunk up in their march through the East; all the arts, all the letters, all the sciences, all the notions of liberty that we inherit from Greece,—my father rushed on with them all, sousing Squills with his proofs that without the Persian war Greece would never have risen to be the teacher of the world. Before the gasping victim could take breath, down came Hun, Goth, and Vandal on Italy and Squills.

"What, sir!" cried my father, "don't you see that from those irruptions on demoralized Rome came the regeneration of manhood, the re-baptism of earth from the last soils of paganism, and the remote origin of whatever of Christianity yet exists free from the idolatries with which Rome contaminated the faith?"

Squills held up his hands and made a splutter. Down came Charlemagne, paladins and all! There my father was grand! What a picture he made of the broken, jarring, savage elements of barbaric society. And the iron hand of the great Frank,—settling the nations and founding existent Europe. Squills was now fast sinking into coma or stupefaction; but catching at a straw as he heard the word "Crusades," he stuttered forth, "Ah! there I defy you."

"Defy me there!" cries my father; and one would think the ocean was in the shower-bath, it came down with such a rattle. My father scarcely touched on the smaller points in excuse for the Crusades, though he recited very volubly all the humaner arts introduced into Europe by that invasion of the East, and showed how it had served civilization by the vent it afforded for the rude energies of chivalry, by the element of destruction to feudal tyranny that it introduced, by its use in the emancipation of burghs and the disrapture of serfdom. But he painted, in colors vivid as if caught from the skies of the East, the great spread of Mahometanism and the danger it menaced to Christian Europe, and drew up the Godfreys and Tancreds and Richards as a league of the Age and Necessity against the terrible progress of the sword and the Koran. "You call them madmen," cried my father; "but the frenzy of nations is the statemanship of fate! How know you that—but for the terror inspired by the hosts who marched to Jerusalem—how know you that the Crescent had not waved over other realms than those which Roderic lost to the Moor?"

If Christianity had been less a passion, and the passion had less stirred up all Europe, how know you that the creed of the Arab (which was then, too, a passion) might not have planted its mosques in the forum of Rome and on the site of Notre Dame? For in the war between creeds,—when the creeds are embraced by vast races,—think you that the reason of sages can cope with the passion of millions? Enthusiasm must oppose enthusiasm. The crusader fought for the tomb of Christ, but he saved the life of Christendom.”

My father paused. Squills was quite passive; he struggled no more,—he was drowned.

”So,” resumed Mr. Caxton, more quietly, ”so, if later wars yet perplex us as to the good that the All-wise One draws from their evils, our posterity may read their uses as clearly as we now read the finger of Providence resting on the barrows of Marathon, or guiding Peter the Hermit to the battlefields of Palestine. Nor, while we admit the evil to the passing generation, can we deny that many of the virtues that make the ornament and vitality of peace sprang up first in the convulsion of war!” Here Squills began to evince faint signs of resuscitation, when my father let fly at him one of those numberless waterworks which his prodigious memory kept in constant supply. ”Hence,” said he, ”hence, not unjustly has it been remarked by a philosopher, shrewd at least in worldly experience [Squills again closed his eyes, and became exanimate]: ’It is strange to imagine that war, which of all things appears the most savage, should be the passion of the most heroic spirits. But ’t is in war that the knot of fellowship is closest drawn; ’t is in war that mutual succor is most given, mutual danger run, and common affection most exerted and employed: for heroism and philanthropy are almost one and the same!’” (1)

My father ceased, and mused a little. Squills, if still living, thought it prudent to feign continued extinction.

”Not,” said Mr. Caxton, resuming, ”not but what I hold it our duty never to foster into a passion what we must rather submit to as an awful necessity. You say truly, Mr. Squills,—war is an evil; and woe to those who, on slight pretences, open the gates of Janus,—

”’The dire abode,
And the fierce issues of the furious god.’”

Mr. Squills, after a long pause,—employed in some of the more handy means for the reanimation of submerged bodies, supporting himself close to the fire in a semi-erect posture, with gentle friction, self-applied, to each several limb, and copious recourse to certain steaming stimulants which my compassionate hands prepared for him,—stretches himself and says feebly, ”In short, then, not to provoke further discussion, you would go to war in defence of your country. Stop, sir, stop, for Heaven’s sake! I agree with you, I agree with you! But, fortunately,

there is little chance now that any new Boney will build boats at Boulogne to invade us.”

Mr. Caxton.—“I am not so sure of that, Mr. Squills. [Squills falls back with a glassy stare of deprecating horror.] I don’t read the newspapers very often, but the past helps me to judge of the present.”

Therewith my father earnestly recommended to Mr. Squills the careful perusal of certain passages in Thucydides, just previous to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war (Squills hastily nodded the most servile acquiescence), and drew an ingenious parallel between the signs and symptoms foreboding that outbreak and the very apprehension of coming war which was evinced by the recent lo pawns to peace. (2) And after sundry notable and shrewd remarks, tending to show where elements for war were already ripening, amidst clashing opinions and disorganized states, he wound up with saying: “So that, all things considered, I think we had better just keep up enough of the bellicose spirit not to think it a sin if we are called upon to fight for our pestles and mortars, our three-percents, goods, chattels, and liberties. Such a time must come, sooner or later, even though the whole world were spinning cotton and printing sprigged calicoes. We may not see it, Squills, but that young gentleman in the cradle whom you have lately brought into light, may.”

“And if so,” said my uncle, abruptly, speaking for the first time,—“if indeed it be for altar and hearth!” My father suddenly drew in and pished a little, for he saw that he was caught in the web of his own eloquence.

Then Roland took down from the wall his son’s sword. Stealing to the cradle, he laid it in its sheath by the infant’s side, and glanced from my father to us with a beseeching eye. Instinctively Blanche bent over the cradle, as if to protect the Neogilos; but the child, waking, turned from her, and attracted by the glitter of the hilt, laid one hand lustily thereon, and pointed with the other, laughingly, to Roland.

“Only on my uncle’s proviso,” said I, hesitatingly. “For hearth and altar,—nothing less!”

“And even in that case,” said my father, “add the shield to the sword!” and on the other side of the infant he placed Roland’s well-worn Bible, blistered in many a page with secret tears.

There we all stood, grouping round the young centre of so many hopes and fears, in peace or in war, born alike for the Battle of Life. And he, unconscious of all that made our lips silent and our eyes dim, had already left that bright bauble of the sword and thrown both arms round Roland’s bended neck.

“Herbert!” murmured Roland; and Blanche gently drew away the sword—and left the Bible.

(1) Shaftesbury.

(2) When this work was first published, Mr. Caxton was generally deemed
a
very false prophet in these anticipations, and sundry critics were
pleased to consider his apology for war neither seasonable nor
philosophical. That Mr. Caxton was right, and the politicians opposed to
him have been somewhat ludicrously wrong, may be briefly accounted for,—
Mr. Caxton had read history.