THE BROWNS AND THE SMITHS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"ANNE DYSART," "ONWARDS,"

&c., &c.

"Nurse: His name is Romeo, and a Montague;
The only son of your great enemy."
Romeo and Juliet.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE BROWNS AND THE SMITHS.

CHAPTER I.

GOSLINGFORD AGAIN.

As soon as Miss Clara Wellby returned home, the great duty of morning visits recommenced. She had to call on everybody, and everybody had to call on her. Miss Wellby did not stand on ceremony about morning visits with her old friends. She never waited till people returned her calls, if it suited her.
mood to call on them. She was naturally anxious, after so great an event as a tour in North Wales, to tell all her adventures to everybody, and more especially was she desirous to tell of the charming acquaintance she had made in the person of the young clergyman of Llan Gwdd. Nor were her friends otherwise than pleased to receive her visits, and hear her news. Any little bit of gossiping excitement in a country town is generally hailed as a godsend, and the pleasure of hearing it, is only inferior to the pleasure of telling it. Everybody, of course, had been deeply interested in so unwonted an occurrence as Hannah Brown's and Miss Wellby's taking a tour in Wales, and everybody had wondered how they would get on.
Miss Clara was, as we know, a very orderly person, and so she got over her unpacking, and her setting to rights, and her scolding of her maid Susan—to whom, however, she was much attached—with wonderful celerity, and, the day being fine, she donned a silk dress and her best bonnet—such a pretty bonnet—and set out, first of all, to call on some of the Smithites. Why she called on the Smithites first, rather than on the Brownites, with whom she had more in common, I will leave my readers to guess. To all, however, she said, what a charming trip she and Miss Brown had had—how fortunate they had been in weather—how they had been delighted with the scenery—how much good it had done Hannah—and how charmingly they had
finished off with ten days’ rest in the sweet vale of Llan Gwdd. Of course, Llan Gwdd could hardly be spoken of without Mr. Edwards’ name also being mentioned. And this Miss Clara did, in so mysterious a manner, with so many nods and knowing looks, and hints, and smiles, that her auditors did not find it difficult to surmise her meaning.

"So very like Miss Wellby," said Mrs. Westcote, "always magnifying and puffing off her own favourites in the most ridiculous and disgusting way. I wonder who in the world she will ever get to believe that Hannah Brown is such a queen of hearts, when our own eyes tell us so much the contrary. When I see this Mr. Edwards follow her here, I may believe it—certainly not before."
And Mrs. Westcote concluded with a tone and look of triumph. This speech was made at a ladies' tea-party, at Mrs. Splint's—a party, which she had taken the opportunity of her husband's absence for a day at Buttonborough, to give. It was, indeed, supposed that the doctor would have been home in time for tea, as some of his best lady-patients were among the guests; but it turned out unfortunately, but, perhaps, not very much to the surprise of Mrs. Splint, that he was unavoidably detained at Buttonborough, till a late train, so that he was at home only just in time for supper.

"I do not doubt," said Mrs. Smith, to whom this speech was addressed, for lately Mrs. Westcote was generally to be found beside Mrs. Smith—paying court
to her, as some of the less amiable among the Brownites said—"I do not doubt that Miss Brown has had a flirtation with this young clergyman, as Miss Wellby could not quite invent such a romance from beginning to end, but I doubt if it was anything more. Miss Brown is certainly a great flirt, and you cannot wonder much at young men taking advantage of such a disposition, to amuse themselves."

But Miss Richards looked grave at this speech of her friend, Mrs. Smith; and said timidly, but feeling as one called on to bear witness for the truth,—

"I do not think any really Christian young man would. And as this young man was a minister of the Gospel, I do hope he would not so far forget his sacred calling. Nor can I think so ill of Hannah Brown. I do not consider her altogether
enlightened; but I don't believe she is really a flirt.”

“Nor I,” said Mrs. Splint, warmly. “She has too much feeling.”

So, even among the Smithites—for there is some justice, after all, in the world—Hannah was not without advocates. Mrs. Smith said no more, but only coloured up. She would not have liked to have offended Miss Richards. But Mrs. Westcote continued to whisper—

“Our dear, excellent friend, Miss Richards, knows so little of the world, and she has the strangest infatuation about Hannah Brown. Depend upon it, we shall never see Mr. Edwards here.”

Mrs. Smith nodded assent, and the two ladies endeavoured to dismiss the subject from their thoughts, as being satisfactorily settled. But both of them
possibly felt a little uncomfortable misgiving.

In the meantime, the Brownites were triumphant. Miss Clara’s hints were magnified in an outrageous manner. It was reported that Hannah Brown was engaged to a young clergyman of high family, most fascinating manner, extremely handsome, and with an excellent living. "It had been love at first sight," some people said; "he had saved her life in a thunderstorm; and, what a good thing it was she had not thrown herself away on Edgar Smith." And then, again, Hannah began to be spoken of as a pretty girl, as one who was much admired, though nobody could say exactly by whom; and, altogether, she was more talked about than was agreeable to Mrs. and Miss Westcote, or to herself, had she known it. This,
of course, the Westcotes would not have believed. To Mary Westcote, to be in the mouth of the public, was the summit of human glory. No great conqueror, or orator, or actor, ever coveted notoriety more than she, and it was a puzzle that her stylish figure, her Buttonborough dresses, and the musical "execution" she had gained at Miss Slater's, had done nothing for her, compared with Hannah Brown's shy face, and, as she considered it, dowdy style. What could it be? Mary Westcote was an unfortunate person; and merit, we know, is often in the shade, though I doubt if the kind of merit meant, be that which consists in fine dresses and pianoforte execution.

Miss Richards, like other people, heard all the talk, and was deeply interested, and a little annoyed because her friend,
Miss Wellby, had told so much more to others than to her. So, a little hurt, but too amiable to be angry, she walked down to Clara’s to have a good gossip, and be no longer behind other people, for, though so good a woman, Miss Richards had her little human weaknesses.

“Why did you not tell me, Clara, dear? I am sure you might have known how interested I should be that this affair of the Welsh clergyman was really settled.”

“Settled! Who said it was settled? I wish it were. I wish Hannah would take him?”

“It is not settled then? Well, what nonsense people do talk.”

“Of course, my dear, people talk nonsense. That is no news.”

“But it is very sad to think of the falsehoods.”
"On the contrary, I think it very amusing."

"Oh, Clara! Clara! But I know you better, and how truthful you are."

"That is the very reason I am amused. But about Hannah. I tell you, Harriet, because I know you can keep a secret, that I am sure this young man will propose to her, and I hope she will take him."

"So do I; as he is a good young man. Is he a member of the Evangelical Alliance?"

"Oh, dear me, no. He is rather a High Churchman."

Miss Richards' countenance fell, then rallied a little.

"It is not a subject to jest on, Clara. I hope you are only saying so to tease me."

"I should not say what is not true to
tease you. I am stating a fact. But he is a very good young man for all that."

"Oh, Clara! a Tractarian!" cried Miss Richards, with the face with which she might have said, a murderer! "Then I hope Hannah Brown is too well-principled ever to think of such a thing. 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?'"

"My dear! Mr. Edwards is no more like Belial than you are. A better Christian I have seldom seen; if visiting the fatherless and the widow have anything to do with it. He is all quite right, too, about the creeds, and as to his nonsense about crosses and bowings, I don't know that it is greater nonsense than yours about dingy ribbons and no bonnet flowers."
Edgar Smith was the only person who had nothing to say about Hannah Brown. If her name was mentioned before him, he looked unconscious, and he seemed to take no cognizance of the existence of the much-talked of Welsh clergyman. His sister Julietta asked him if he had heard this story of Miss Wellby's about Hannah Brown having an admirer in Wales? He replied rather fiercely,—

“Of course I have; I must have been deaf if I had not.”

“You don’t believe it, of course?”

“Why not? I think it very likely. But what is the use of making such a talk about it? Cannot you let Miss Brown alone? What have we to do with it? People had best mind their own affairs.”

“How very cross you are! There is
no harm, I should hope, in talking about a marriage. It is not Mary Westcote who is going to be married."

"And suppose it were, what is that to me?"

"You know best."

"By no means. I cannot compete with the rest of Goslingford in the knowledge of other people's affairs. What a miserable, contemptible, gossiping little ant-hill it is."

But Miss Julietta, perceiving her brother was in a bad humour, said no more. She hardly knew what conclusion to draw from this circumstance, but at last made up her mind that he must be annoyed at Hannah Brown occupying so much more of the public attention than himself and Miss Westcote. He was probably jealous on Mary's account.
“And yet he always pretends to despise Goslingford,” thought Miss Julietta, with an inward smile at the illustration afforded even by so great a man as her brother, of the weakness of human nature.

Shortly after this conversation, Mr. Edgar Smith sauntered into the town, and dropped in upon the Westcotes just as they were sitting down to tea. Their unfeigned satisfaction at seeing him, felt soothing to him at that minute; yet there was something in Miss Westcote’s dreadfully fashionable flounces and exaggerated style of hair, which jarred upon his taste. Then she giggled, and there was such a want of repose about her. Still the warmth and cordiality of both the mother and daughter were now very pleasant to Edgar Smith. He had a sort of consciousness that
they were not people of much depth of mind or heart; but what women were? And must not one take the world as it goes?

And so the flirtation with Miss Westcote, which had languished during the absence of Hannah Brown, perhaps on account of the hot weather, began again afresh with renewed vigour: and in a short time, as Miss Wellby's news grew stale, had superseded the tale of the Welsh clergyman in public interest. Everybody expected every day to hear that it was going to be a match, and Mrs. Smith and her daughters were plied with many hints and questions. To these, they always replied they "knew nothing about it—they only knew what others did—Mary Westcote was a very nice girl—dressed well—was accomplished, and
was certainly a very nice girl." The Westcotes themselves denied that there was anything in it; but smiled and looked pleased, notwithstanding; and Mrs. Westcote declared, with emphasis, that Edgar Smith was "a charming young man, and with no airs, and that it was not everybody she should permit free access to her house."

And what said Hannah Brown to all this? Not much, certainly. Nothing except to Miss Clara Wellby, who was the only person that spoke to her on the subject, though others had mentioned it in her presence.

"You see, Hannah," said Clara, "how unworthy he has been of you, to turn so soon to Mary Westcote."

"I thought you wanted me to do the same."

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"That was a very different thing."
"I cannot see the difference."
"Don't you? I see a great difference between Mr. Edwards and Miss Westcote," said Clara, who always would have the last word. Hannah did not answer.

Hannah's feelings were very different from what they had been before her trip to Wales. If her heart was unchanged, her body was stronger, and her animal spirits more vigorous. In spite, too, of all her disapprobation of Mr. Edwards, perhaps the feeling that she had again inspired an attachment, was not altogether disagreeable to her; though it confirmed her in her opinion that man's affection was lightly won and lightly lost. She had still hours of depression, when life yet appeared long enough; but there were books and poetry, and, above all,
her pencil. To this favourite amusement Hannah returned with more zest than ever. Once, at a tea-party at Miss Wellby's, Edgar Smith, without knowing whose production it was, had seen one of her drawings, and had pronounced it full of talent and promise, and asked her eagerly if she knew who had done it. And when Hannah had confessed it was herself, he had looked in her face with genuine surprise, and said, but not at all as if he had been merely paying a compliment—

"Really, I did not think anybody in Goslingford could have drawn like that."

Now Edgar Smith had been abroad, and was considered a great authority in the fine arts, and Hannah, who had never been able to prefer Miss Venetia Smith's celebrated masterpiece of Tintern
Abbey by moonlight, to her own productions, though she had been quite ready to suppose her opinion in the matter had been a piece of self-delusion, now woke to a more confident appreciation of her own powers. But, for a time, drawing, like everything else, had possessed no charm. Now, however, in the restoration of her health, her interest in it revived. With her father's consent she went to Buttonborough once a week to take lessons. Her master gave her every encouragement; and Miss Clara Wellby spread it all over Goslingford that Mr. Parkes, the great Buttonborough artist, who exhibited every year somewhere or other in town, had said that Hannah Brown had a great talent for drawing, and was, in fact, quite a genius.
And the Goslingford world stared in demi-incredulity—all but Mr. Edgar Smith; and as that oracle gave no sign on the subject, it was supposed that he shared the incredulity, which became thereby confirmed.

"What a pity it is," said Mrs. Westcote, "that Miss Wellby should go about making such a fool of herself about that girl Hannah Brown. Mrs. Smith may well say that all Miss Wellby's geese are swans. And as to the Welsh clergyman, I told you he would never come, so something else must be invented to keep up the fuss about Hannah Brown."

But Hannah, in the solitude of the Old Red House, did not hear what the Goslingford people said. During the autumn, beginning with the one at home, she had
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resolved to sketch all the churches in the neighbourhood. They were very fine architecturally, in that county in general, and the situations of many very picturesque, and in coloured crayons they really formed a portfolio of considerable interest. And so passed the earlier autumn, the season which Hannah had so much dreaded, lest it should awaken associations which might be too much for her tranquillity.
CHAPTER II.

MR. EDGAR SMITH'S RIVAL.

Hannah Brown got bravely through the season of expected depression, with how much bitter memory, how much heart ache and struggle, we will not inquire; but the strength with which she had been enabled to maintain the conflict had been an encouragement to herself, and seemed to afford hope for the future.
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The gloomy season of the year had come round again. The November day was short and sunless, the November air raw and foggy, and strongly suggestive of catarrhs and sore throats. The autumn flowers and the rosy fruit were alike gone; dank, mouldering foliage strewed the paths, though a few stray yellow leaves yet hung on the espaliers, and on the row of lime-trees by the church path. There was no sunshine to throw the shadow of the church spire into Mr. Brown's garden now; but it rose cold and dim into the cold and dim atmosphere. How chill lay the moisture on the rank grass in the churchyard! and how damp looked the great flat gravestones! But why should I say any more? You all know as well as I do the aspect of a
raw and cloudy November, and can picture it to yourselves in all its discomfort and gloom. You all know the sound of its cold, plashing rain, and the sough of its sweeping blast. You all, too, know the moral of faded flowers and fallen leaves, so why should I allude to it? There is nothing new under the sun; and even this is a hackneyed lesson which Nature herself annually repeats to us; and yet, does it ever seem stale?—or, rather, each time that it is repeated, does it not appeal to us with increased strength—with deeper pathos? Are there not moments when it seems almost sad to think that our very sorrows have passed away into the dim region of forgetfulness?

Hannah Brown was almost too young, she had too few memories to be fully
alive to all the suggestions of the "Fall," as in some districts the season, which more than any other repeoples the present with the images of the past, is poetically called. It had hitherto given her only a vague feeling that life was passing away in nothingness; but, on the whole, she had generally experienced this sentiment more in the spring. Then it had sometimes seemed that everything awoke to hope, and activity, and gladness but herself. But Hannah knew such thoughts were wrong and unhealthy, and, until last spring, had always stifled them with more or less complete success.

It was just about the season I have mentioned above that Hannah's mind awoke by degrees to the presence of a new and real care. It was evident to her that her father's
health and spirits were failing. He had lost his appetite, his newspaper appeared no longer to interest him, and he would sit the whole evening silent and unoccupied, and with a face which daily looked more care-worn and aged. One could have fancied that ten days had made the difference of ten years in his appearance, so bent, and shrunken, and lined had he become. Often Hannah spoke to him and he did not answer, and once or twice, when she had chanced suddenly to look up from her needlework, she was almost frightened to observe with what a sad and wistful gaze his eyes were fixed on her. Sometimes it struck Hannah that her father was very ill, and, probably, thought himself dying. She longed to know if he had any special complaint, and once or twice had ven-
tured to ask him if he felt quite well, but he had answered, more especially on the last occasion—

"Quite well—of course,—why do you ask?" in a tone which, though not ungentle (for he was never ungentle to Hannah), was yet annoyed, and evidently intended to forbid any further questioning on the subject. So Hannah said no more; but the dreary winter days were made drearier by this new and uncommunicated anxiety. Some circumstances, however, occurred about this time which tended a little to distract her attention.

It was nearly Christmas time. There was a tea-party at Miss Wellby's. Miss Wellby could not afford to give quite so many tea-parties as Miss Richards. Her rooms were smaller, she had no plate but a teapot and teaspoons, and her viands were
not quite so indigestible. Still, they were very good. Miss Wellby’s parties were generally very merry parties.

On the present occasion there were, besides Harriet Richards and Hannah Brown, the Greenfield family, the Splint family, and two of the Miss Smiths. Mr. Edgar, much to the disgust of Miss Westcote (who had had her purple tabinette made up on purpose), had not been invited. The two Miss Smiths and Miss Westcote had sat down together in a window; Hannah Brown was close to them, but they showed no desire to make her one of their group. She could not avoid, however, hearing what they said.

“The handsomest young man I ever saw in my life, Mary!” said Miss Venetia.

“Indeed! Perhaps I should not think so.”
“Oh, yes, you would, unless”—with a smile—“something had thrown glamour in your eyes.”

Mary Westcote smiled too—a languid smile of pretended indifference.

“I don’t think many people handsome—men, I mean.”

“Oh, but he had such splendid dark eyes, so melancholy and poetical, and beautiful black hair.”

“Oh, but I always preferred blue eyes and brown hair for men—they are so much more—more—I like them better—I do, indeed.”

“It is a good thing,” remarked Miss Venetia, with more philosophy than originality, “that there are varieties of taste; but, for my part, I think I never saw anyone look so fascinating as this young clergyman.”
"Whom are you speaking of?" said Miss Clara, who happened just then to pass by.

"Venetia is speaking of a young clergyman who came down in the omnibus with her from Dustwhirl."

"What young clergyman?"

"That is exactly what I want to know, Miss Wellby. He had a broad crape round his hat, was most gentlemanly and interesting, and spoke as if he were to be in the neighbourhood for some weeks at least."

"Ah," said Mr. Greenfield, "the clergyman, I daresay, who has come to take poor Martin's duty at Halton, while he goes to the water-cure for his health."

"The water-kill—I call it," said Miss Clara. "How contrary it is to common sense!"
"But," said Miss Eliza Greenfield, in her matter-of-fact way, "I have myself, Miss Wellby, been much benefited by the wet pack."

"Then I shall never be benefited in that way, my dear, I assure you. I never thought I should have liked to be a dry Egyptian mummy when I was dead, and as for being a wet one, while I am alive—no, I thank you."

"My dear Miss Wellby, if you would not be prejudiced, if you would only listen to reason."

"If I would listen to you, Miss Eliza, you mean."

If Miss Clara Wellby had not been a privileged person, Miss Greenfield, good, pious young woman as she was, would not have stood this; for, to say the truth, she was accustomed to be
somewhat of a dictator. As it was, however, she merely lifted her eyes and looked round the room with an expression of wonder. The company in general smiled—Miss Greenfield imagined in sympathy with her; Miss Clara supposed in admiration for her wit. Just at that moment, the door-bell rang.

"Who can that be?" said Miss Clara in surprise.

"I should not wonder," said Miss Venetia Smith, "if it were Edgar. He talked of coming to fetch us home, but I did not think he would have come so soon."

"Just like the impudence of the Smiths," was the mental reflection of Miss Clara, and of all the Brownites present; while good Miss Harriet Richards fidgeted uneasily on her chair. Mary
Westcote meanwhile bridled and smiled. Hannah Brown said nothing, showed no emotion; but tender-hearted Miss Richards fancied she became pale.

The drawing-room door was opened, but instead of Mr. Edgar Smith, to the surprise of everyone present, Miss Clara’s well-trained maid announced, “Mr. Edward Edwards.”

A bombshell falling in the midst of the little party could scarcely have created a greater sensation. Miss Clara rushed forward with exclamations of surprise and welcome; and if Hannah Brown had been pale before, she became scarlet now. Miss Westcote frowned with disappointment, and all the rest of the party were more or less excited, for everyone guessed that the new comer was Miss Smith’s handsome clergyman, and a few suspected he might
be Hannah Brown's reputed lover. This opinion gained ground as he approached her, with sparkling eyes and a raised colour. Their mutual embarrassment was noticed by everybody.

Mr. Edwards was the first to recover his self-possession, perhaps because he put a flattering interpretation on Hannah's confusion. He seated himself beside her, and everyone saw he was devoted to her, not vulgarly or exclusively; but spontaneously. Nobody doubted Miss Clara's Welsh romance now, and she herself was in the highest spirits.

Mr. Edwards was of course introduced to everybody present. He had some chat with Mr. Greenfield, who seemed to like him; and even Harriet Richards found him amiable and agreeable, though uneasily watching for the appearance of
the cloven foot of Puseyism, and half suspecting him of being a Jesuit, and herself of falling under his pernicious fascinations.

At last the supper trays were served, and the light meal was just being concluded, when once more the bell rang, and this time it really was Mr. Edgar Smith, who had come to walk home with his sisters.

Hannah felt as if the piece of biscuit she had in her mouth must choke her.

It was the first time she had been in the same room with Edgar Smith, since the scene in the book-room more than a year ago. It was the first opportunity they had had of recognising one another. When Edgar Smith entered the room, Hannah was sitting on the same seat by the window curtain she had occupied all the evening, and
Miss Smith and Miss Westcote were still near her. But on her other hand stood (there was no seat) Mr. Edwards, in an attitude and with an aspect it was not easy to mistake. Edgar Smith took it all, and more than all, in at a glance.

He had come to the party in pretty good spirits, and all at once, he hardly knew why, he felt a sort of depression, which took the undignified form of what is styled a bad humour.

Miss Clara welcomed him with much more cordiality than she would have done an hour before, and instantly introduced him to her young friend Mr. Edwards, from Wales.

To Mr. Edwards' polite bow and amiable smile, he returned a bow and a look rather of defiance than of polite-
ness. At this instant he caught Hannah's eye. She bowed nervously, trembling and colouring all over. He returned her salutation with almost the same angry, perturbed countenance as on the day when he had last bidden her farewell. He then turned round, hardly with good manners, and asked Venetia if she were not ready to go home. It was a cold frosty night, and his mother would be anxious.

"I hope you are quite well to-night, Mr. Edgar," asked the lisping voice of Miss Westcote, in a tone of deep interest. But Edgar Smith, like a spoilt baby, was just in the humour to resent being spoken to.

"Quite well, Miss Westcote, thank you; I never was better in my life; I hope I do not look very ill."
"Oh, no, Mr. Edgar, I never saw you looking better; mamma was saying, yesterday, how very well you were looking."

But Mary Westcote failed to win, on this occasion, the reward she sought for. Not only the Miss Smiths, but the whole party now rose to take leave, and Edgar Smith heard Mr. Edwards' entreaty that he might have the pleasure of seeing Hannah home. He did not stop to hear her refusal, but hurried his sisters away, over the frozen roads, listening in moody silence as they talked over the events of the night—the arrival of Mr. Edwards, his good looks, and his devotion to Hannah Brown.

To add to Mr. Edgar Smith's previous causes of annoyance, whatever these might have been, was the not very agreeable re-
reflection that he had made a fool of himself, and that, in the eyes of Hannah Brown and her lover. Perhaps they were making merry at his expense, at that very instant! But a few seconds' reflection was enough to make him ashamed of this idea. Hannah Brown would not laugh at him; but perhaps she would pity him, and in the present juncture this was scarcely less offensive.

The conversation at the Smith breakfast table the next morning, again turned upon Mr. Edwards. Venetia and Julietta both expatiated upon his eyes, his voice, his figure, his pale complexion; and Laura Victoria listened with the deepest interest.

At last Edgar exclaimed, quite out of patience: "Well, you women are certainly a—a flock of geese. A pair of black
eyes, and a black coat, go further with you than all the wit, and wisdom, and goodness in the world."

"The most astonishing thing," said Venetia, "is what he can see to admire in Hannah Brown."

"That," said Edgar, "is the only thing which is not astonishing."

"My daughters," said Mrs. Smith, "I am happy to say, do not understand such arts."

"Mother," said Edgar, "believe me, Miss Brown has no arts but her sweet face and gentle manners."

Mrs. Smith and her daughters only replied by an incredulous look. Mrs. Smith said—

"I hope none of my daughters will ever marry a Puseyite parson."

"They will probably never have the opportunity."
"Edgar!" said his father, reprovingly.
"Well, father! dissenting girls are not likely to have parsons for their lovers.
"Certainly not," said Mrs. Smith, "it is the last thing I should wish."

But the girls did not echo the sentiment. My reader knows they were not so devoted to dissent as their parents. Their brother's arrow had gone home.

But the Miss Smiths, to do them justice, were good-natured, forgiving girls, and when their brother invited them, in the afternoon, to call with him on the Westcotes, they were quite ready to indulge him, and, as they walked along, Edgar said to Laura Victoria—

"Was I very cross to you all this morning?" which question, being reported to the others, they all took it in the light of an apology, and all strove to be as
amiable as possible to the penitent; for, besides being really good-natured, the Miss Smiths had too good an opinion of themselves to be easily wounded, and they could not but confess, however unwillingly, that dissent was against their matrimonial prospects in the church.

To reward her brother for his returning amiability, Venetia now said—

“'You joke about women being so fond of clergymen, but all women are not. Mary Westcote does not like clergymen, and says she would rather be anything than a clergyman’s wife. She does not admire Mr. Edwards at all, will hardly even allow that he has fine eyes, which shows she must either be blind herself or have a prejudiced mind.”

Edgar doubtless heard this speech,
but he made no reply, perhaps because they were within sight of Mrs. Westcote's door, and he had no time. But possibly it had an influence, for at Mrs. Westcote's he was certainly very chatty and agreeable, and entirely effaced from Miss Westcote's mind any unfavourable impression he might have made the previous evening. Of course, Hannah Brown and the Welsh clergyman were talked of, and their engagement seemed to be considered a settled thing. Again the two elder Miss Smiths went into raptures over his personal appearance, and Laura Victoria expressed a desire to see him, as, from what her sisters said, he must be just the man she should admire.

"I am sure," said Miss Westcote, "you will be disappointed. I cannot
see anything to make a fuss about."

"I hear," said Mrs. Westcote, severely, "the young man is a most bigoted Puseyite; that he has flowers and candlesticks on the altar, and that he offers up prayers for his dead wife. I am quite astonished at the Browns and Miss Wellby; but some people forget their principles sadly when they wish to have their daughters settled. I was quite surprised to hear of Mr. Greenfield being so cordial with the young man. But Mr. Greenfield had better take care, or he will be put down for a Puseyite."

"I don't suppose he would care if he were," said Edgar. "I remember at least six accusations of heterodoxy against Mr. Greenfield, of opposite kinds, and he always goes on his own course, and survives them all."
"Oh, I am not saying anything against Mr. Greenfield, except that I am astonished; but, of course, people know their own interest best."

"And their own duties," said Edgar.

Edgar Smith had, what to many was a very provoking way of snubbing persons when they were arguing as they supposed so as to please him, and to no one did he oftener display this peculiarity than to Mrs. Westcote.

Edgar Smith, as we have seen, could be unjust himself, but he would allow no one else to be so. He was lamentably ungrateful to anybody who attacked his supposed adversaries.
CHAPTER III.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

Halton, where Mr. Edwards was at present taking the duties in the absence of the incumbent, was within a mile's walk of Goslingford, from that end of the town near which Tudor Lodge was situated. Mr. Edwards was quickly received into all the society which Goslingford afforded. Mr. Greenfield, in particular, was very hospitable to him,
and they appeared to become great friends. Mr. Greenfield reported his "Puseyism," as Miss Richards and Mrs. Smith called it, to be merely a little nonsense, which would soon fall away; but these two ladies shook their heads over this opinion, and looked doubtfully on Mr. Greenfield. But no sign of any change appeared in Mr. Greenfield. His sermons were as orthodox, his conduct as liberal, as ever. If he would not preach against dissent, neither would he preach against Puseyism. As of old, he said, "I preach the Gospel, by God's help." And as of old was the effect. Mr. Edwards appeared much inclined to learn of Mr. Greenfield, and while still influenced by externals, felt that there was something beyond them and apart from them.
Of course, it would never have done for the Smiths, of all people in the world, to be out of the fashion, so the Miss Smiths coaxed their father to send his card and an invitation, which Mr. Edwards was nothing loath to accept, though they were dissenters. Mr. Edwards had never visited dissenters before, and he had a vague notion that their ways and manners must be very different from those of Church people. He fancied they said a long prayer before dinner, instead of the ordinary grace, that probably they were teetotalers, and that certainly everything would be very formal and gloomy. It was no small astonishment to him to find himself so much at home at Tudor Lodge, among flowers and music, and books of engravings.
It was altogether a very pleasant evening, though Hannah Brown was not there, and in spite of Mr. Edgar Smith's impracticability of manner. The young ladies seemed all very agreeable, and especially Miss Laura Victoria. She, like Hannah Brown, had read Keble, and ventured to like him, and Mr. Edwards found to his amazement that this dissenting girl could fully respond to his admiration for

"Why should we faint and fear to live alone?"

that, like her brother Edgar, she admired Gothic architecture and organ music, and the Church service.

Here was a tempting opportunity to make a convert—to Mr. Edwards an irresistible opportunity, and he revolved in his mind the best way of following it up. But he was in pursuit of another object, and had his parish
to attend to, so that there seemed little time. He put by the idea, however, for future consideration, and went home with the impression that Miss Laura Victoria Smith was a very nice girl—far too good to be a dissenter.

Mr. Edwards had now been three weeks at Halton. During that time he had seen a good deal of Hannah Brown, but he did not feel that he had made the progress he had hoped. Three weeks only remained of the period he had yet to stay. In the uncertain state of his feelings he made a confidant of Miss Clara Wellby. She met him with warm but fussy sympathy, assured him that he should have her most cordial co-operation, and advised him to break the matter to Mr. Brown.
"Before I obtain Miss Brown's consent?"

"Yes, I think so. Her father's opinion would have much weight."

"But it is her affections I want."

"Of course; but our affections have motives, and I am sure it would please Mr. Brown to set about things in a proper and old-fashioned way."

And so the young clergyman took Miss Clara's advice, and calling on Mr. Brown at his office, he announced that he had come to solicit his permission to address his daughter.

Mr. Brown had been seated at his great table, covered with letters, over which he had been poring with a perplexed and anxious countenance. He had received his unexpected guest with a worried and abstracted manner.
Now, however, as he caught the purport of his visit, he looked up with an eager, nervous glance of surprise, and, it would seem, satisfaction.

"Did I understand you, sir," he said, "that you come here to——"

"To solicit your permission to address Miss Brown—the most amiable and charming woman I ever met."

Mr. Brown for a long time returned no answer.

At last he asked abruptly—

"Should you prosper in your suit, do you expect a fortune with Miss Brown?"

Mr. Edwards coloured and answered—

"I loved and admired your daughter before I knew she had a fortune. My first wife had no fortune."

"And if you obtain the hand of Miss Brown, neither will your second."
"You do not mean that you will disinherit your daughter if she should marry me?"

"God forbid! But as an honourable man I must tell you, and as an honourable man you must keep my counsel, if you marry my daughter, your wife will have no fortune but a trifle that was her mother's."

"Fortune," said Mr. Edwards, "as I have already said, has nothing to do with my preference for Miss Brown. If I regret that she has none, it is on her own account, and because I fear she may have been accustomed to many things which a poor parson might not be able to afford her. But if she should condescend to think of me, she is as dear to me without a shilling as if she were as rich as Miss Burdett Coutts."
"Then, sir," said Mr. Brown, nervously, "all I have to say is, I wish you success."

The old man seemed able to say no more. The young man sat as if he still had something on his mind. At last he asked—

"May I ask you—do you think, sir, there is any chance of Miss Brown favouring my suit?"

"Upon my word, young gentleman, I cannot tell—you ought to be a better judge than I am."

Then regarding him more earnestly than he had hitherto done, a grim smile came over the old attorney's features, as he said—

"Your looks seem as likely to please a romantic girl as your foolish disregard of money, and my daughter is a romantic
THE BROWNS AND THE SMITHS.

girl. All I can say is, you have my good wishes. You will be kind to her?"

"I will, indeed. I should be a wretch if I were not."

"You know, sir," said the old man, "there is a difference between being kind and being not unkind."

In reply, Mr. Edwards only shook his hand warmly as he went away, and old Brown fell into thought.

After a time he roused himself, with a deep sigh, and turned again to the papers.

When he returned home that afternoon, his daughter, who had got into the habit of watching his looks closely, thought he seemed rather more cheerful than he had done for some time, and more inclined to chat with her. As he
sipped his tea at a little table by the fire, he asked suddenly—

"What do you think of this young Welsh clergyman, Hannah?"

Hannah coloured in spite of herself.

"I do not think much about him, papa."

"He seems to think a good deal about you."

"Then I am very sorry for it."

"I am sure he would be much distressed if he knew you thought so little about him."

"He will soon get over it. He has a short memory for such things."

"You do not speak kindly of a young man who seems to be a very honourable young man, and a very disinterested young man."
"Why do you think, papa, he is so very disinterested?"

Old Mr. Brown mused, and did not answer immediately.

At last he said very gravely—
"I suppose, Hannah, you would believe my word, and have some reliance on my judgment, even if I did not tell you the reason?"

"Certainly, papa, I should."

"Then, Hannah, I know him to be disinterested."

Hannah looked puzzled.

"I don't see what Mr. Edwards's character has to do with you and me. He is nothing to us."

"Now, Hannah, I should like, and I should expect, to see you above the affectations of boarding-school young ladies. Surely you will not pretend not to
know that the young man admires you?"

Hannah hung her head for a minute, then lifted her eyes and said with the courage of innocence:

"But I have never encouraged him, papa."

"He does not say you have."

"Then why has he spoken to you, papa? Why has he teased you about so foolish a matter?"

"Don't be so unreasonable and angry, Hannah. One would think the young man had insulted you. Let me tell you I think he has acted remarkably well, and—and—I wish, my dear, you would think of him."

"Don't ask me, papa," said Hannah firmly, while a tear started to her eye. "I cannot think of marriage."

William Brown looked as if he had
been shot. He made no answer, and his daughter continued:

"If Mr. Edwards himself, or anyone on his behalf, has spoken to you on this subject, will you, papa, tell them to drop it for ever. I will never marry Mr. Edwards." And Hannah, as she finished speaking, rushed out of the room.

Mr. Brown's head fell on his breast, and he uttered a deep groan.

Hannah, poor girl, in the meantime was bolted into her own bedroom, crying bitterly. She had not shed tears before, since her trip into Wales. She felt both sad and bitter, and she thought, "How little he understands the sacrifice I made for him! How little any of them understand! Men are all alike, but they should not judge a woman's feelings by their own."
CHAPTER IV.

MISS WELLBY'S DIPLOMACY.

Poor Mr. Brown, after this conversation with his daughter, looked yet older, feebler, and more spiritless.

The day after it occurred, he astonished Miss Clara Wellby by paying her a morning visit. Miss Wellby stared with amazement, and, for the first instant, even felt a little frightened at so unlooked a spectacle as that of Mr. Brown
paying a morning visit. Then she started up and shook him warmly by the hand.

“This is kind, indeed, Mr. Brown!” then she stopped suddenly, chilled by his look of fatigue and despondency, and by the vain endeavour he seemed to make to throw some corresponding warmth into his manner. So she set her easy chair for him, by her bright little fire, and asked, cordially—

“Can I do anything for you? There is nothing the matter with Hannah, I hope.”

“No, nothing—that is to say, she is quite well.” And he fell again into silence, which was very puzzling for Miss Clara. Again she asked—

“Can I do anything?”

“No, Clara, I don’t see that you can. I don’t see what there is to do.”
“Nor I,” said Clara. “In fact, I don’t understand,” and, for a moment, Clara felt inclined to laugh at the position in which she and her unusual guest were placed with regard to each other. But all inclination to laugh died away as she caught another glimpse of her old friend’s woebegone countenance, and, taking a chair opposite to him, she thought it would be best to endeavour to engage in some general conversation, and so she began—

“Are your Christmas roses out yet, Mr. Brown?”

“Christmas roses!—I—yes—I am sure I don’t know. Clara, I am a great fool!”

“My dear Mr. Brown,” cried Clara, “I am sure then everybody else thinks very much the contrary.”
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"They may think so now," he said. He then stopped, and, after a short pause and clearing his throat, he again began—

"The truth is I want to have a little talk about Hannah. I don't understand girls. I hoped the Welsh trip would have done her good."

"And so it has, my dear sir. She looks just as she used to do. I am sure it is all right with her; and will soon, I trust, be better than ever it was before," said sanguine Miss Clara.

"I am sure, Clara," continued old Brown, "I did all for the best last year. God knows, Clara, with all my dislike to the Smiths, with all the good reasons I have for that dislike, and which I need not tell you, had I not thought I was acting for my child's happiness, I should not have
let my own feelings merely stand in the way."

"And so you were acting for your child's happiness. Who can doubt it, when one looks on the heartless way he has behaved? And she will be happy—happy with a better man."

"Do you think so, Clara?" with a painful eagerness, "that is what I doubt. She says she will never marry. I don't understand girls, but—but I think she means it."

"Nonsense, my dear sir; you may well say you don't understand girls. When did she say so?"

And then old Mr. Brown, to his immense relief, unburdened his mind, and related to Clara the conversation he had had with his daughter the previous evening, and also what had passed between
himself and Mr. Edwards, as far, at least, as concerned his demanding the hand of his daughter in marriage. Miss Wellby was, at the first moment, quite silenced by what he had to communicate, feeling like one who had received a sudden shock. Then she rallied, and said—

"Oh, my dear sir, I wish you had only told me first! Men do not know how to manage these things."

Poor Mr. Brown's face got longer and longer. He had come for comfort, and somehow or other it seemed that he deserved blame. But he could not quite see this himself.

"I don't know what you mean about managing, Clara. The girl either likes the young man, or she does not, and she says she does not."

"Nonsense! Give her time, my dear
sir—give her time. A girl, and more especially a girl with Hannah's strong feelings, does not forget in a moment. Give her time, and all must be right. I am sure it must.”

“But suppose it is not, Clara. What right have we to lead on this young man merely to serve our own purposes, and to run the risk of disappointing him in the end?”

“But he won't be disappointed.”

“We hope not, but we cannot be so sure of that. It would not be right, Clara,” said Mr. Brown, so decidedly, that Clara could venture no opposition. But, after a few minutes' discomfiture, she rallied again.

“There would be no harm in it, if Mr. Edwards knew. I am certain he would—any man would prefer waiting, with a
good chance, to giving up the woman they loved at once. I will manage it. Let me speak to him."

"But you will tell him the truth," said Mr. Brown, anxiously.

"I will indeed," said Miss Clara, and she really meant to do so, and yet she misled him, naturally enough, having first misled herself. Having now made herself mistress, as she thought, of the cause of Mr. Brown's low spirits, she set herself to cheer him. She showed him clearly how Hannah must in time forget Edgar Smith, how she must become attached to somebody, and how that somebody must be Mr. Edwards. If she did not wholly, and incontrovertibly convince Mr. Brown, she did, at least, entirely convince herself. If she had had any doubts as to the issue, before this conversation, they were now all laid at rest.
That very evening, for Miss Clara was ever energetic, she had Mr. Edwards to a tête-à-tête tea. He arrived looking handsome, amiable, and much more lively than in the old Welsh days. Clara felt that Hannah never could refuse him, and was in a highly good humour at having herself so important a part to play in the affair.

"And now, dear Miss Wellby," he said, "have you got anything to tell me about—about what interests me most in the world?" And then Miss Wellby remembered all of a sudden, that what she had to tell him was, after all, not so very agreeable.

"The truth is," she said, "Mr. Edwards, and perhaps you ought to have known it before, poor Hannah has already had an attachment—a disappointment, I should
say. It was an unfortunate affair, but she behaved nobly. You would think more of her than ever, if you knew all about it."

"I am sure I should," said Mr. Edwards, warmly.

"You don't mind her having been in love with another man?"

"No, why should I? One can love twice, I know."

"But the worst is, I fear, she has not quite forgotten it."

Poor Mr. Edwards' face fell many degrees. It was a few seconds ere he could rally himself sufficiently to be able to say,—

"Is there no hope for me then—none at all?"

Miss Clara smiled; she could afford to smile, so powerful to convince herself had her own arguments been. She had for-
gotten that our arguments are not always so convincing to other minds as they are to our own.

"I do not say so; you must not be precipitate, or it might spoil all. Give her time, and all must come right."

"Who is my rival then, and what has become of him? Can anybody exist insensible to the love of Miss Brown?" said Mr. Edwards, becoming melodramatic, as young men do when they are desperately in love.

"Oh, dear me, no! It was not that," said Miss Wellby, proudly, anxious not to depreciate the value of her young friend.

"He was frantic to have her, but it was most unsuitable, her father did not approve of it, and Hannah behaved very well—so well; but she cannot altogether forget it. Women brood over things more
than men. I tell you the truth, Mr. Edwards. Perhaps you think I ought to have told you before; but I hoped she had forgotten him."

"I don’t blame you, my dear friend. And you think there is some hope for me still?"

Clara thought there was much; but she had just enough caution left to say,—

"I think there is, but you must not act on my opinion. You must judge from your own observation, and from what I have told you. I should not feel justified in saying you were certain of success, but I think so," said Miss Clara, loath too much to discourage him.

"It is enough, dear Miss Wellby. Rest assured while there is a spark—a single spark of hope, I will never give her up."

This was exactly what Miss Wellby
wished, and she wrung the young clergyman's hand approvingly. Here was the young man worthy of Hannah Brown at last. Here was a young man after a woman's heart—a proper hero for a modern romance.

Miss Clara professed to despise romance, and to stick to matter-of-fact. She pronounced novels very good to read of a winter's night; but very bad to make precedents of for the actions of real life. But Miss Clara was, like many other people, false to her own theory. This very affair of Hannah Brown had to her all the interest of a novel, combined with the stronger interest her warm heart took in the welfare of a girl, whom she had come to regard almost with the affection due to a daughter.

And yet I must beg Mr. Edwards'
pardon, when I call him a proper hero for a modern romance. He was a proper hero for the kind of romances Miss Clara read and loved, and in the days of which I write, these were the modern romances. But though those days are not very ancient, they are not modern now. We live so fast now, and our fashions revolve so quickly, that even the fashions of the celebrated "Minerva Press," which were the jest of our younger days, seem to have come uppermost again.

Gallant soldiers, interesting clergymen, eccentric and kind-hearted misanthropes, have had their day, like the fair orphans, the noble-minded heiresses, the intellectual, not very pretty women, it was the fashion to mate them with. Gone is the historical romance, the fashionable novel, the story of domestic life, gone as much as the
sentimentalism of "Pamela," and the "Mysteries" of the terrible but enchanting "Udolpho." We have entered on a new fashion in novels. We don't believe in "Mysteries," we laugh at sentimentalism; fashionable life is mawkish and stilted, and middle life is vulgar—the sin unpardonable above all others.

The common-place people who live in country towns, and eat legs of mutton and apple pies; the squire and the clergyman with their harvest-homes and their school treats, are so unexciting. The emotions of such common-place people, though they may be deep as tragedy, cannot interest us. It is true they marry and die and have children, and out of these three facts the staple of all romances are made. But still, Respectability is very uninteresting, at least to the modern novel
reader. Our heroes and heroines do not interest us now, because we sympathise with them; (at least it is to be hoped we don't); they interest us only when they produce a Sensation. I use the word in the cant sense of the day. A preference for ragouts and curries over plain food, had always been considered (at least in the old-fashioned world) the sign of an unhealthy appetite; and the preference for this highly-seasoned mental food seems to indicate something analogous in the mental condition of the novel-reading world. Is it that its taste is blasé? Excuse me for using a French word, but I describe a state which, at least, used not to be English. Has society become a corpse, that it requires the galvanic shocks of murder, bigamy, and seduction to produce in it an emotion?
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Formerly the preference lay between Dutch painting and High Art. One preferred "Pickwick," another "Zanoni." Now these days are gone by; we despise Dutch painting and High Art, tragedy and comedy alike. Eschewing the commonplace of the decent life of all classes, our most successful novels now describe that world which the French call the *demi-monde*—thank heaven, we have not an English name for it! In fictitious writings there were always villains, but they were rarely, if ever, invested with the dignity of heroism. Iago, in the present day, not Othello, would have been the hero of the piece. Perhaps I may be thought unfortunate in my example, as Othello was a murderer; but Othello was a noble, if a beguiled and mistaken soul: there was no low and
depraved passion—no sensual, self-interested motive in the heart of the deceived Moor.

One wonders where the writers to whom I allude saw the life they represent—so well, I must say; or, do our present race of popular novelists spring up from among fast men about town, ticket-of-leave men, returned lunatics, and dames entretenues? One could fancy Mr. Roupell writing a sensation novel when he obtains his ticket-of-leave!

And to what class belong the myriad readers of their many "thousands?"

Can it be that we of the respectable, humdrum classes, like Bluebeard’s wife, long for a peep into that forbidden closet which is so near us, but which we must not open. Now-a-days, however, we can have it photographed, and know all
about it, without the fear of being betrayed by the bloody key.

At one time it was hardly creditable to read novels—young girls especially were forbidden their perusal. Before a host of clever and right-minded writers this prejudice has at last given way, and the great world of wit, poetry, art, and wisdom contained in novels has been freely thrown open.

But if the present fashion should continue, wise papas and strict mammamas will again forbid them. That peep into the realms of darkness which is hardly good for anybody, will make parents think of the saying about touching pitch. Moreover, these books are not true pictures of life—they paint the exception, not the rule.

I cannot myself believe in the long
continuance of this decadence of taste. If it do continue, there will be a decadence in other things as well.

I, for one, cannot but believe that the simple, and the natural, and the pure, if it be only fairly represented, will find a wider circle of admirers than the artificial, the criminal, and the sensational.

If you, judicious reader, do not like this tale of mine, if you throw it away in infinite disgust at its prosiness at this very sentence, believe me, the fault is mine, in that I have written it ill, and not that of my subject, to which I have done injustice. No, I continue to affirm the truth of the assertion I set out with, that, paradoxical as it may seem, what we want to make fiction interesting is—Truth.
But this is a long digression, and all à propos of vindicating poor Mr. Edwards from being a type of the most modern novel representation of a hero, when in fact, I meant only quasi-modern.

And so poor Mr. Edwards left Miss Wellby, after his tête-à-tête tea-drinking, almost as hopeful as he had come.

What though Hannah Brown "had loved before"—had he not done the same? He had not quite liked it at first, but now, when he thought it over, it almost seemed an additional point of sympathy. He understood now much that had seemed capricious in her conduct. He would give her time, even if he were obliged to return to Llan Gwdd with his happiness uncompleted. At least, so he thought then; but he forgot to allow for the fact that our
actions are as often determined by our impulses as by our intentions.

The same evening that Mr. Edwards spent with Miss Wellby, Hannah and her father passed alone together as usual. Hannah had rather a dread now of evenings alone with her father. They had never at any time been particularly lively, but lately they had had an effect on her spirits which she could not shake off. This evening in particular she dreaded. It was not like Mr. Brown; but still, if he should refer to the subject of their conversation the previous day, how very disagreeable it would be! Hannah wondered why her father wished her so much to marry Mr. Edwards, for she would not have imagined him at all the man to his taste. She wondered why he wanted her to marry at all. He had
never before seemed to have thought of such a thing; and to begin to wish it now, when the idea was so very distasteful to her, was very trying. She pondered the matter, and at last decided that the reason must be that, having been the cause of depriving her of one husband, he had thought he could atone for it by finding her another. A certain paternal kindness Hannah recognized in this, even while she smiled somewhat bitterly over it.

"What a man's idea!" thought Hannah Brown, from the altitude of her womanly contempt. "If one wife dies he looks out for another; if he cannot have the woman he likes best, he makes himself contented with the one he likes second best."

Yes, unwise Hannah, and so sometimes
do women, and who shall blame them?

And yet, if Hannah had reflected, she must have remembered her father had not so acted himself. His own wife had been long dead, but he had brought home no step-mother to Hannah. Were she and her father more like one another than she had ever imagined?

It had never struck her that they were like one another, and it did not strike her now.

To her great relief Mr. Brown did not that evening renew the subject of Mr. Edwards, and yet she should have liked to have known if her father had seen him and had told him her feelings. She should have liked to have known how he had borne it. She wondered if she should see him again, and if she did, what he would say? Up
to this moment she had felt something like irritation towards him; but now, when the step was irrevocably taken, irritation began to soften into pity.

Hannah brought the newspaper as usual to her father. He took it from her, but soon put it aside. He was seated in his own easy chair by the fire—Hannah at the opposite side, seeming to be busy with some needlework.

"Shall I read to you, papa?" she said.

"No—not to-night."

And he seemed to sink into deep and depressing thought.

Hannah felt uncomfortable now as well as anxious, for she feared she had a share in creating his cares.

After a long, a very long time, at last he said—
"Hannah, have you ever thought what the world will be to you alone when I am gone?"

She got up, and sat down on a footstool at his feet.

"Is that what troubles you, papa?"

He did not answer; but Hannah was not quite satisfied with herself. She wondered if Mr. Edwards, too, were very unhappy—then she remembered she might have made both him and her father happy.

Dull as her life now was, how frightfully lonely it would be without her father!

She wished—she wished she could have made him happy.
CHAPTER V.

ON THE ICE.

Miss Clara's whole thoughts were now occupied in what she considered the good work of bringing about frequent meetings between the two young people. It was sometimes, however, a little difficult to contrive. Winter is not so favourable a season as summer for accidental meetings, and it would not do constantly to invite them to meet each other at her own house at tea.
Hannah would have guessed the reason, and would have proved restive. Miss Clara had never been so accommodating and deferential to anybody before as she was at present to Hannah. Hannah perceived it, and guessed she had some end in view, and felt indignant; and, however unjust, the indignation extended itself to Mr. Edwards. She began to feel less uncomfortable at having made him unhappy—to doubt that she had made him unhappy at all. She still felt curious to see him again, and the curiosity was less accompanied with dread. Hannah knew full well that if Clara had abandoned all hope of her marrying Mr. Edwards, she would have been angry with her; instead of that, she bore even with something like petulance, which, I am ashamed to say, Hannah occasionally displayed.
“They make a baby of me,” said Hannah, “and I won’t be made a baby of.”

Fortune, however, seemed to favour Miss Wellby, though fortune, as we all know, is a treacherous dame, who will often betray us with a smile.

There came on a hard frost, quite “old-fashioned Christmas weather,” as we always say when we happen to have a severe winter. The fierce cold seemed to pour down from a sky of steel on a world of iron. The old, and the sick, and the poor, sank perishing beneath its relentless severity. The young, and the gay, and the well-off, enjoyed it. Wrapped up in clothes and furs, the brisk piercing air was as a draught of champagne. There was sliding, and skating, and snow-balling, and all sorts of wintry fun.
So hard was the frost, that in a few days the river was nearly frozen over. Immediately before the severe weather had set in, there had been a heavy fall of rain, and all the low meadows had been flooded. The frost came ere the waters had run off, and now, for miles round, the country was one vast ice-field—Mr. Edwards suggested that it was like the polar regions.

Mr. Edgar Smith, to whom, among several others this remark was made, replied that—

"He had never seen the polar regions, so was not qualified to give an opinion."

"Oh! but one has read descriptions, and one can imagine."

"One can imagine certainly, but it does not follow that one's imaginings are correct."

Miss Wellby and Hannah Brown had
come up just as this conversation was taking place. It was the first time of their appearance on the ice, and the first time Hannah had met Mr. Edwards since her father had spoken to her about him. Mr. Edwards's back had been towards her, and he had not heard her coming. Two days already had he been there with the hope of meeting her, and had hitherto been disappointed. So noiselessly had the two new-comers advanced, that he was only made aware of their presence by Miss Clara's voice, as she answered the last remark—

"Some people are too stupid to imagine, Mr. Edgar. I suppose that is what you mean;" and Mr. Edgar was silenced, as people frequently were, by Miss Clara, even when they had plenty of readiness of their own. But, perhaps, Hannah
Brown's disapproving countenance had as much to do with the effect produced as Miss Clara's ready wit.

Edgar Smith bit his lip, and looked, it must be confessed, much less amiable than Mr. Edwards, who came round from the other side of the group on the ice with a modest, deprecating countenance, to shake hands with the two ladies.

It was just the manner to propitiate Hannah; and, moreover, indignation at Edgar Smith, who was now helping to fasten one of Miss Westcote's skates, made her more cordial.

"He is not affronted at my refusal, and he wishes to show me friendship," thought Hannah, and her first sensation was one of great relief; but then came the afterthought—"He is just what I thought him, or he would have felt it more."
She resolved, however, to be very polite to him, and her resolution was the less difficult to execute as she was more at ease with him than she had ever been before. She fancied the footing on which they were placed was now fully understood. So she addressed some remarks to him about the beauty of the weather, the hardness of the frost, and the animation of the scene. This conversation, unmeaning as it was, appeared to raise his spirits. He devoted himself to her and to Miss Clara, though in a much less obtrusive way than usual. Perhaps it was wrong in Hannah, but she was glad of his devotion on the present occasion; glad that others should see it, and very glad that Edgar Smith should see it. She was glad Mr. Edwards had happened to be on the ice when they came down. Had he not
been, she felt she must have been more in the background than the Hannah Brown of those old days before Edgar Smith came home. And then it struck her, when Mr. Edwards was gone, those old days would come back most likely. Half a-year ago she had been too entirely miserable to think of this; but now the prospect did not seem pleasant. What was she doing? Was that Edgar Smith, so wanting in temper, so silly and trifling as at this moment he seemed, worthy of the sacrifice of her whole life? Nobody in the world was constant! Why should she be?

She had refused Mr. Edwards, it was true; and perhaps he would not have her now. This "perhaps," slight as it was, was not, however, against him. Ah, Mr. Edwards! If you had only known
how to manage, now was your moment. Miss Clara’s diplomacy almost seemed as if it was going to be successful.

But not the wisest diplomatist—not even a Miss Clara—can foresee every thing that may happen. Had she only yielded to her own feeling of fatigue, after the first half hour on the ice, there is no saying how it might all have ended; but when Mr. Edwards pressed them to accompany the rest of the party further up the river, and Hannah did not seem disinclined, Miss Clara, to forward her own scheme, said she was not tired, and consented. Poor Miss Clara! she told a story, and was punished for it, as all story-tellers ought to be.

Where the party had first met, the river and adjacent meadows had formed one vast tract of ice. Further up, where they
were now going, though the left bank of the river continued level and icy, the right rose high above into a high cliff or natural escarpment, which in some places almost overhung the stream. The mamas of Goslingsford dreaded this place, and wrung unwilling promises from their boys not to go near it—promises which, I fear, proved oftener a snare to the conscience than a safeguard from the danger.

Now this high bank was said to be garnished with icy stalactites, the brushwood at the foot glittering with the hoar frost, which had not melted, being entirely in the shade of the cliff.

To see this pretty scene was the avowed object of the party in going, and Hannah, who really loved anything picturesque, felt she should not like to miss it. As they turned around the little headland,
formed by the bend of the river, leading immediately to the spot, they were startled by a hoarse, wailing cry of distress.

What could it be? Some one drowning? They hurried on, all eagerly, and some fearful of what they might see. But there was no broken ice, no sign of distress, as far as they could perceive.

But as they looked, another and a hoarser shout was heard, nearer to them and apparently above them, and as well as the sun in their eyes would permit, all could see a living being, high up on the cliff, but many feet below the top, almost suspended over the stream, and clinging as if for life to an icy projection. It was evident that his footing had given way, from a débris of earth and snow which had slidden down nearly to the bottom of the cliff.

VOL. II.
"Halloo, my boy!" cried Edgar, "what are you hung up there for?"

"Oh, help me sir, please, for God's sake! I cannot hold on many minutes longer."

"I will help you, my poor fellow," cried Edgar Smith, "I will come to you in an instant."

"Up there, Edgar!" cried his two sisters, who were with him, "are you mad?" and they both held him. But he shook them off.

"I am not mad, and there is not a moment to be lost."

"I will go with you," cried Mr. Edwards.

"No, no," cried Edgar, "no use risking more lives than one, and it would be of no further use."

"Oh, Edgar! dear Edgar!" Again the girls clung to him, and looked at Mary Westcote, who immediately began to dis-
suade him, with exaggerated exclamation of terror and entreaty.

But he turned from them all, and for a second, whether intentionally or not I cannot take upon myself to say, looked full at Hannah Brown, as he passed her towards the cliff. Her face as it met his was blanched, and her eyes wild with fear. And she said, in a tone almost of agony,—

"Oh! take care."

"If I perish, will it be anything to you?" asked Edgar, in a quick whisper, which all were too much occupied to notice, and the more especially that he hardly looked at her as he spoke, and was occupied in disembarrassing himself of his heavy great coat.

"Oh!" said Hannah, and it was all she said.

Now there is not much, one would say,
in that common little interjection. At the moment, even Edgar Smith gave not much sign of having heard it; but as he sprang forward towards the icy cliff, he turned round to her again with a glance swift as lightning. From that instant the fate of Mr. Edward Edwards was irrevocably sealed.

Edgar Smith had ascended several of the Swiss mountains. He had not, like his celebrated namesake, "Albert," ever accomplished the ascent of "Sovran Blanc" himself—indeed he had never tried; but he had more idea than an untravelled Englishman, if out of Goslingford there be such a person, how to climb an icy, snow-clad rock. As he ascended, he prepared his footsteps with his hands till he stood in safety, at a height from whence he could reach the legs of the poor child.
"Now, can you hang on a minute longer, till I try to find or make a place where you can stand?"

"I will try—but oh, be quick!"

It was very difficult to be quick. It was in truth very difficult to do it at all. Edgar soon found it impossible to enlarge the little resting-place on which he himself was standing. Feeling about among the snow, he carefully crawled higher up and a little to one side, and holding with one hand a projection above, he looked, for all the world, to the anxious spectators on the frozen river below, like some gigantic fly clinging on to a perpendicular wall.

"Now then, my boy," he said, with the disengaged hand taking a firm hold of his arm, "loosen your hold and drop down gently to where I was standing, and—don't
one of you below utter a word or an exclamation on your lives."

It was an order not very easily to be obeyed. Mary Westcote had been prepared with either screams or plaudits, as the occasion might call for, and it was rather hard to be denied the gratification of either—very hard to be permitted to play no part at all. Her only consolation was Mr. Edwards. That kind-hearted young man, having heard of and believed in the reports concerning her, and feeling a "deep sympathy" with all who were in love, now hastened to strengthen and console, with unfeigned commiseration, and comfortable and pious words. For the words Mary Westcote did not care, nor very much for the commiseration, but she cared for Mr. Edwards's attention, for the fact that he should think it was needed, and for the creditable appearance it had.
As for Hannah Brown, no one thought about her but Miss Clara, who saw her white lips and fixed eyes, and also fancied she had seen a look of intelligence between her and Egdar Smith. She was sadly disconcerted altogether. She could not but admire what Edgar had done, but she was angry he had done it. She was anxious for the issue of the affair, but—it was very provoking.

The faces of the two Miss Smiths were almost as white as Hannah's. Kind-hearted Clara held their hands, and strove to cheer them up. Laura Victoria looked at Hannah, and some flash of mutual feeling made them grasp each other by the hand. From that time, whatever the other members of the Smith family might say of Hannah Brown, Laura Victoria always maintained that she had a kind heart.
But I have left Mr. Edgar Smith and the boy long enough in their most critical position on the cliff. The child, as commanded, loosened his grasp and dropped with a heavy, exhausted fall. It was a terrible moment to the anxious spectators when, instead of alighting in safety, he missed his footing, and seemed as if he should have dragged Edgar with him in his precipitate slide downwards. But with one of those extraordinary acts of exertion, which I will not call superhuman, since in moments of utmost need humanity seems so generally capable of making them, Edgar continued to support the weight of the boy till he regained his lost balance, and with the help of his other hand placed himself in the place of comparative safety. He was a fine, bold, but ragged little fellow, and his face was now white with terror and exhaustion.
"And now, child," said Edgar, "rest a minute, and do whatever I order you."

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

I need not give the details of the descent, nor of the anxieties and emotions felt by the anxious people on the ice beneath. Perilous though it was, it was accomplished in safety. Edgar did not, however, seem much inclined to receive congratulations or praises. First of all he demanded rather sharply of the child what had made him so silly as to go down the cliff.

"Please, sir, my hat fell down, and mother would have been angry. And please, sir, as I was a-getting up again I slipped. Thank you, sir—I hopes no offence."

In answer to this Edgar took out his purse and gave the boy half-a-crown; Mary
Westcote instantly did the same, and then Edgar bade him go home to his mother, and dare ever in his life to come near that cliff again. And the boy, blubbering and bewildered, and apparently amazed at the possession of so much money, pulled his forelock sheepishly, and scampered away on the ice.

"And thank God you are safe!" said the two Miss Smiths with fervour. To which Edgar answered, loud enough for everybody to hear, but addressing no one in particular—

"If I had died, I should have died happy."

Then, with an inclusive bow to all the party, he walked away with his two sisters. The rest followed more slowly—Mary Westcote feeling chagrined and mortified, as she often did, with Edgar
Smith. To her relief they now met another large party coming down on the ice, among whom were the Splints. The attentions of Mr. Fred had never been more acceptable, and Mary at that moment was not quite sure that she agreed with her mother in preferring Edgar Smith. Miss Clara had much to say to Mrs. Splint, who had accompanied the young people to see the wintry spectacle—and so Hannah was left to Mr. Edwards.

But at this moment Mr. Edwards was nothing to Hannah. She did not even feel awkward at being alone with him. He kept on speaking to her, but she did not hear him. She was hardly aware of his presence, and answered at random in the most absent manner. At last he spoke of Miss Westcote—

"I felt for her so much," said he, "I
sympathise so with any one who loves, and sees all that is loved in suspense.”

Hannah heard now. There was something in the subject and something in the manner which alarmed her. She turned round quickly with a flushed and anxious face.

“But I will not speak on the subject if it annoys you, Miss Brown.”

“Oh, pray don’t.”

“I only wish to ask if I may be allowed to have the privilege of seeing you occasionally. I know time is required; but if I may only try, if I have only but a spark of hope, half a lifetime—”

“Oh, Mr. Edwards! I thought my father had told you—you must think of me no longer.”

“I have not seen Mr. Brown since—since—”
“Then I must tell you myself. Do not waste your feelings upon me.”

“Do you leave me no hope then—not any?” said poor Mr. Edwards, hardly believing it.

“None,” said Hannah, with a forcible brevity which was unmistakable.

It was a cruel word. At another time Hannah could hardly have been so cruel; but now there was but one subject on which she could feel, and this absorbing emotion had made her selfish. When about to risk his life, Edgar Smith had thought of her. He had said if he had been killed he should have died happy!
CHAPTER VI.

MISS WELLBY'S TRIALS.

I shall not attempt to describe Miss Wellby's sensations when she received a melancholy epistle from Mr. Edwards, that same evening, telling her of his final rejection by Hannah Brown, and of how impossible even he felt it to hope any longer. Silent sorrow was not in the nature of Mr. Edward Edwards. His letter contained many pages, and he quoted largely from
various poets. His feelings had evidently been much pained by Hannah's manner, but he expressed no resentment. Clara could not help feeling that she should have preferred his being a little angry, and not having quoted poetry at all; but she made an allowance for differences of character, and indeed, at this first moment, had no room for displeasure against any one but Hannah Brown herself. She could not help in some way or other connecting this decided rejection with the scene on the ice the previous day. "Ah," she thought, "if I had only not persuaded Hannah to go there, it might all have been well." And then her wrath was turned against Edgar Smith, and she called him in her heart selfish, dishonourable, and flirting.

It was well it was so late, and that there was a fall of snow, for Miss Clara, in the first
burst of her energetic indignation, thought of walking to Tudor Lodge "to give Edgar Smith a piece of her mind." She could not even go to the Old Red House, for it was far past any hour at which Mr. Brown would have tolerated any visitor—even Miss Clara. That lady was, however, boiling over. Like many other great souls, she was driven by the necessity for expressing herself. There was her maid Susan; but she had still enough of calm reflection left to perceive that that would not do; and besides, Susan was not likely to understand the merits of the case.

Clara took two or three agitated turns round her little parlour, poked the fire angrily—as she might have poked it had it been Mr. Edgar Smith, walked to the window, unfastened the shutters, and looked out upon the night. It was snow-
ing still, but not so fast, and one could just see that there was a moon behind the clouds. Clara looked at her watch—it was just nine o'clock. Harriet Richards did not go to bed till ten.

With characteristic rapidity, both of decision and action, Miss Clara rang her bell, ordered Susan to bring her large cloak and goloshes, and in less than five minutes was on her way to the abode of her friend.

Miss Richards's Mary was surprised, but glad to see her. Mary was inclined to have a very good opinion of Miss Wellby, and to envy Susan a little, because her mistress allowed greater latitude than Miss Richards in amplitude of petticoats and in cap-border decoration. Mary, however, was an unconscious philosopher, and acknowledged the theory of the balance of good in the
human lot. She reflected that if Susan had greater privileges in dress, she (Mary) had less to do and fed more daintily; so, being a reasonable girl, and not expecting everything, she was tolerably contented.

Miss Richards was seated in the little parlour she usually occupied when she was alone. It was a small, high, square room—immensely high in proportion to its size. It was papered with a flock paper—brown leaves on an orange ground, had heavy, dark cornices, and long, grim, ample crimson curtains. A heavy mahogany bookcase, with glass doors, filled with very unreadable-looking books in calf bindings; a heavy, square mahogany table; great mahogany chairs covered with dark leather; and a carpet with an immense brown pattern on an orange ground formed the chief features of this good
lady's bower, or boudoir, in modern language. But there were no boudoirs in Goslingford, except that of the Miss Smiths, and the world in general agreed it was "very ridiculous."

Miss Richards was seated at the table reading—not one of the volumes bound in calf—but a small printed tract, which she had just told Mary was "most sweetly interesting," but she did not seem at all sorry to throw it aside to welcome her friend.

"How kind of you to come such a night as this! But how could you venture out? I trust there is nothing wrong."

And then Miss Clara let out the full tide of her grievances, described the scene on the ice, told how she thought Edgar Smith had said something to Hannah, and finally communicated the contents of the
letter she had just received from Mr. Edwards. But poor Miss Clara was doomed to another disappointment. Harriet, with all the wish to sympathise, found it impossible. She hardly dared to say what she thought; but, accustomed to bring the highest motives into play on the minutest occasions, she said, with the same kind of courage which would have led her to martyrdom, but in as soothing a manner as she was capable—

"My dear Clara! I do not quite see. Are you angry with Edgar Smith for saving a child’s life at the risk of his own?"

Now, this was a sort of unconscious *reductio ad absurdum*, which only made Miss Wellby more angry.

"Of course I am not, Harriet. Am I a fool? But I am sure there was a look of
intelligence passed between Edgar and Hannah. I am almost certain he spoke to her. What right had he to do so? What right has he to blight her whole life, when he cannot marry her himself—when he ought always to have known he could not?"

"My dear Clara, I cannot see what grounds you have; and if he did speak to her—perhaps he remembered he stood on the brink of eternity, and sought that mutual forgiveness which we are commanded——"

"Don't talk such tomfoolery to me, Harriet."

"Oh, Clara! But do you really believe that it can be this only which has made her refuse Mr. Edwards?—for the reason seems to me very insufficient."

"Not of Hannah Brown, who is as
singular and as obstinate in her way as you are in yours.”

“But why should you call her singular and obstinate merely because she will not marry Mr. Edwards?”

“Nine girls out of ten would have been desperately in love with him.”

“But Hannah Brown is a superior girl—I should hope, above the vain and worldly motives which influence many people. Christian people ought not to enter into so solemn an engagement as marriage from a mere self-pleasing motive, but from Christian principles.”

“Christian fiddlesticks! I tell you what, Harriet, Divine Providence has ordained that love should be the motive which unites all the best people, and I call it selfish when a man or a woman sits down to calculate and think this person
will not do because he or she is a little too High Church; that, because she is not as strong as a horse; and the other, because she has not been trained to the most perfect housekeeping. That is what you mean by Christian principles. And, let me tell you, people who marry from such motives rarely marry as happily as when they follow the guide God has given them in their own hearts."

"But, dear Clara, you were just accusing Hannah of following her own inclinations."

There was no denying this; and almost for the first time in their mutual lives, Clara was for a moment silenced by Miss Richards. But she did not bear her defeat so meekly as her friend, perhaps because she was not so much accustomed to it.

"I declare, Harriet, you are enough to provoke a saint. I came here for sym-
pathy and comfort, and you say everything you can to provoke me."

"Indeed, dear Clara, you do me injustice; but you know if I don’t think with you about Mr. Edwards and Hannah Brown, how can I say I do? I am very sorry for poor Hannah."

"Poor Hannah!" said Miss Clara, indignantly, and seizing her cloak and bonnet, would not be persuaded to remain another instant, even to partake of mulled port wine and biscuits, which poor Harriet pressed upon her almost with tears.

The following morning Miss Wellby had the additional trial of communicating the disagreeable intelligence to Mr. Brown. She went to his office for the purpose. Miss Clara was pained by the effect it had on him.

He made no remark, but his head sank
upon his breast; and he remained so long in this attitude that she became at first embarrassed, and then alarmed.

"My dear Mr. Brown!" she said, "are you ill?"

"I don't know, Clara. I hardly know anything. I—I should like to be alone. Thank you, Clara."

Clara felt obliged to go; but as she went out she told the head clerk she thought Mr. Brown was very ill.

She then went home. She felt so angry with Hannah she would not trust herself to go to see her then; and yet her heart softened to her when she thought of how ill her father looked.

After this evening Mr. Brown became more silent, moody, and depressed than ever. Hannah's anxiety at times was almost unbearable, and she could not
THE BROWNS AND THE SMITHS.

communicate it to Miss Wellby, who was in a state of affront at her rejection of Mr. Edwards. Hannah knew that Clara would forgive her in time, but meanwhile it was very trying. Her only consolation was in good Miss Harriet Richards, who was very kind, and who, by her homely, old-maidish sympathy, which, however, was never expressed in words, comforted her with the belief that one person at least appreciated her motives.

And now, refined young-lady reader, in love with the dark-eyed curate, do not altogether despise poor Hannah Brown, her unromantic taste, and her still more unromantic consolation. Doubtless poor Harriet's silent sympathy was not to be compared with the warm-hearted, energetic volubility displayed by dear, dearest Matilda, your chosen—
your bosom friend, who can listen to you and talk to you for hours on the interesting subject; and to whom, when the rain or other unfortunate circumstances prevent your daily walk, you write voluminous letters, to which she sends replies scarcely so voluminous, but equally tender. You know, of course, that you would have infinitely preferred that dear, distinguished-looking young clergyman, to a mere common, country lawyer. In short, you think it was a mistake to have an attorney, or even a solicitor for a hero. Of course, if it had been a barrister, it would have been a different thing. Barristers are admissible within the pale of romance and heroism. But whoever heard of an attorney in love?

Rarely in novels, I grant you, my
sentimental and poetical young friend; but do you know, though it may seem a bold assertion, attorneys, I believe, are as often in love as other people.

Yes, I firmly believe that nine out of ten, or to be moderate, at least six out of ten of those bald-headed and spectacled, elderly gentlemen, with legal faces, who sit in musty, dusty apartments, surrounded by tin boxes and dingy folios, have been in love—desperately, over head and ears in love—at some period of their lives, however antagonistic may seem their surroundings. And, by the way, it has often struck me—why are their surroundings what they are? Why must lawyers' chambers always be such dens of dust and dinginess? Why are their windows never cleaned, their walls never fresh painted, their
cobwebs never swept away? Why are their tables always faded and ink-stained, their chairs old-fashioned, hollowed with sitting on, and hard to move? Where do young lawyers and new firms get all that furniture, so old and shabby,—yet in that exact stage of antiquity which stops short of decay?

But, leaving this question as an insoluble mystery to the uninitiated, I am going to astonish you, my dear young lady, with a further assertion of my belief:—not only have these attorneys once been romantic, but some of them are romantic still. Do not suspect me of decrying romance. The heart is dead in which every spark of it has gone out, and romance—the kind of romance which is noble and chivalrous, full of faith and sympathy
—is not confined to youth and elegance, or rank and profession. And if the lawyer maintains the living spark, it is more merit in him, perhaps, than in men of other professions.

The doctor and the clergyman most frequently see human nature in its better aspects. The doctor sees the fond attentions of husband and wife, mother or child; the long watchings by sick beds, the self-denying cares, the sleepless nights—all borne with love and cheerfulness. The clergyman sees the happy death of the strong in faith, or the penitence of the sinful—he witnesses the bitter tears of love and anguish, as he commits earth to earth, and dust to dust, and it is his to listen to the more pious aspirations and better resolutions of those who are left behind.
But what does the lawyer see? The scramble over the will, the quarrels and the heart-burnings lighted by the torch of the mammon of unrighteousness—when friend turns against friend, and brother against brother, and even child against parent.

A lawyer, depend upon it, then, has a witness within himself for honour and probity, for affection and disinterestedness, if he still believes in them. And whoever has this belief, has some romance left in his soul; something akin to that in you, young lady, which makes you think that melancholy dark eyes and a romantic face are the signs of fine sentiments and angelic goodness.

And this brings me back to Mr. Edwards. When he found that all hope of Hannah Brown was over, he felt in
the most dreadfully low spirits, as if nothing could ever interest him again. For a day or two he did nothing but read Keble's poems and Cox's ballads, and wander about the bleak, wintry fields, and sit up very late at night, till the fire had been long out and it became very cold. He now conceived an intense disgust at Halton and at Goslingford, and longed to be back in his own little parsonage, among the Welsh mountains.

In this frame of mind he wrote to Mr. Martin to beg him to allow him to procure another *locum tenens*, and in the hope that such might be found, one day he walked into Goslingford to bid farewell to Miss Clara Wellby, resolved it should be the last time he would ever set foot in the place.
Miss Wellby was not at home, and, though he had persuaded himself that he should have disliked extremely to meet Hannah Brown, yet, no sooner did he know it was impossible, than he felt an additional pang of disappointment. He walked slowly through the town, on his way home, feeling now that "every link between them was severed."

He was just passing the gates of Tudor Lodge when he was accosted by Miss Laura Victoria Smith, who was coming in an opposite direction.

"How do you do, Mr. Edwards? Mamma is at home. Were you coming to call?"

Mr. Edwards had "No" on his lips; but there was something in the pleasant, blooming face, and cordial manner of the young lady, which seemed to do him
good, and he remembered, too, how it was his duty to convert her from the errors of dissent, so he said her invitation was "too pleasant to refuse." It was some little distance from the gate to the house at Tudor Lodge, and Mr. Edwards and Miss Laura Victoria did not walk fast. She began to speak, or, rather, to lead him to speak about Keble, and he was astonished to find how wonderfully her tastes agreed with his.

Mrs. Smith, as her daughter had said, was at home; and, though she had a slight dissenting prejudice against clergymen, they were genteel, and she was always very civil to them, and, on the present occasion, received Mr. Edwards very graciously. He had a very pleasant chat with the mother and daughter. Then the father and two other daughters came
home, and Mr. Edwards rose to take leave. But it was snowing very hard, or rather sleeting. Mr. Smith proposed he should take pot-luck with them, and the invitation being warmly seconded by all the ladies, he was nothing loath to accept it. The outer world was so miserable, and his solitary fire-side at Halton so dull. He felt it an additional advantage, too, that Mr. Edgar Smith was not to be at home. He was in London on a short holiday.

Mr. Edwards was surprised, on getting home to Halton, at night, to find how late it was; and also to find the letter he had written to Mr. Martin, in the morning, still lying on his chimney-piece, whence, in his absence of mind, he had forgotten to take it to post.

He took it up and looked at it for a
minute or two, as if rather puzzled, then threw it into the fire, at about the same moment that Miss Laura Victoria Smith was laying her head on her pillow, and feeling that to fall asleep was about the last thing she could expect.

The following morning saw Mr. Edwards again at Tudor Lodge. Mrs. Smith had never read Thomas à Kempis, and Mr. Edwards had promised he would lend her the work. It was a bright frosty day after the storm of the preceding evening, and whether or not it was owing to the favourable change in the weather, there was a great improvement in the young clergyman's spirits. He did not feel so wretched or lonely, and the tantalising image of Hannah Brown was not so constantly before his eyes. What a delightful thing, he thought, it would
be if he could convert the whole Smith family! How gratifying to his feelings as a man, a churchman, a clergyman, and a Christian! He pictured the whole family standing before the font, being baptized with the One Baptism, and in this happy vision he for the time thought much less of Hannah Brown.

The following Sunday, Mr. Edwards was to exchange duties with Mr. Greenfield's curate, and to preach in the afternoon in Goslingford church. Let us not forget that clergymen, after all, are but human beings; and pardon him, though he hardly pardoned himself, for looking round the church, and perceiving, with a sensation of pleasure, in Miss Harriet Richards' pew, two very pretty, fashionable-looking bonnets. Not when he preached that first Sunday after seeing Hannah Brown in
Llan Gwdd church, did he feel more anxious to be eloquent and impressive.

Tudor Lodge, as we know, lay on the road to Halton, and as young ladies do not generally walk quite so quick as young gentlemen, it was natural to suppose that Mr. Edwards would overtake the Miss Smiths on their way home, and that they should continue their walk together.

Both Miss Venetia and Miss Laura Victoria took occasion, as was quite true, to say what a treat it was to them to go to church, and how they wished their parents were not dissenters. Of course Mr. Edwards was ready to furnish all the sympathy which could be desired on such a subject, and he and the two Miss Smiths parted at the gate of Tudor Lodge in the most friendly manner. As Mr. Ed-
wards shook hands with Laura Victoria, she coloured up to the forehead in a manner that was very becoming. Mr. Edwards had begun to think that, after all, blue eyes were as pretty as brown, and certainly Miss Laura Victoria had a very nice complexion.
It was Mr. Greenfield’s custom to have a parish tea-drinking once a year in the school-room, generally about or shortly after Christmas time. The chief expense of this party was borne by Mr. Greenfield himself, Miss Richards, and the smaller subscriptions of a few others among the better-off of the Goslingford church-people. Miss Richards, indeed, had never been
quite certain that she was right in patronising this party. There was a magic lantern, and music of a trifling character, and other little things savouring too much of "the world." But Mr. Greenfield insisted it did good, that it brought people together, promoted brotherly feeling, and showed that the rich were not indifferent to the enjoyment of the poor, and did not despise sharing it with them.

Perhaps Mr. Greenfield's opinion weighed more with Miss Richards than his arguments. In fact Miss Richards did not greatly differ from the majority of mankind, and more especially of womankind, in this respect. With most persons, it is not so much what is said, as the man who says it, that carries weight.

But though invitations, or rather tickets were given to this party, an invitation was
not necessary, as anyone could go who pleased, for the sum of a shilling. Mr. Edwards had long been engaged to accompany the Greenfields, and at one time had looked forward to it with great satisfaction.

Hannah Brown was always there, and, like most of the ladies, had a tea-tray of her own. Poor Mr. Edwards had fondly imagined himself assistant-in-chief at this tea-tray, and enjoying afterwards a conversation as good as a tête-à-tête, as they could have it all to themselves. But all that was over now, and with all his predilections for things parochial, Mr. Edwards could not persuade himself that he looked at the party now in any other light than that of "a bore." He really did not wish to meet Hannah Brown now. If the Miss Smiths had only been going! But Miss
Julietta had told him they never went. Julietta however, was the stupidest and least original of the Miss Smiths. Venetia had infinitely more daring, and Laura was not half so matter-of-fact. To these two Mr. Edwards ventured again to remark,—

"He only wished they were going to the school-room tea."

The manner in which they received this announcement, showed at once that Mr. Edwards was not without discernment of character. Laura's eyes brightened, and her cheek flushed up, and Venetia said energetically,—

"Oh, we must manage it somehow or other. I never was at one, and I do think it would be nice fun."

"So very nice, to see all those poor people," said kind-hearted Laura, "enjoying their treat."
"What a charming pretty girl," thought Mr. Edwards, "as good-looking as Miss Brown, and with much more feeling—so interesting, too, the manner in which she has embraced the truth as soon as it was clearly set before her." As a man and a clergyman, Mr. Edwards was flattered; and—are any of us quite proof against guileless flattery?

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Edwards," said Venetia, in a business-like tone, "if you would ask mamma, I think the affair would be settled."

"I, Miss Smith?" he answered, looking much gratified; "do you really think so? Being a clergyman and a churchman, and so very strong a churchman, I should have thought I had less chance than anyone else."

"Oh, that is the very reason, if you only
understood. You are asking the favour. Mamma will always grant favours. If we were to ask her, she would imagine you church people thought you were doing us a favour in admitting us."

Mr. Edwards smiled in the conscious superiority of a churchman's motives and temper, and agreed at once to petition Mrs. Smith. A favourable moment presented itself immediately. Mrs. Smith came into the drawing-room and took up her work. Mr. Edwards looked for her thimble and her spectacles. Politeness in little acts, was at all times the spontaneous expression of his amiable nature, and in spite of herself, had made him a favourite with Mrs. Smith; and when good Miss Richards, in her uncharitable piety, attributed it to jesuitism, even dissenting Mrs. Smith was fain to defend the young "Puseyite
parson." He now preferred the petition he had promised to make, adding (astute Mr. Edwards!), that Mr. Greenfield had told him they were much in want of one or two ladies to make tea. As Mr. Edwards made his request, Mrs. Smith's countenance was evidently propitious, though she faintly demurred a little at first, but she only wanted a little pressing. Her ultimatum was,—

"I am sure, if the girls wish to go, I can have no great objection. I am always glad to have it in my power to oblige anybody. I am not one of those who object to freedom of conscience, and am glad to have Christian intercourse even with those who differ from me."

Mr. Edwards bowed and thanked her. He did not think it necessary, on that occasion, to state in how far his views
differed from hers. Whether or not he acted jesuitically in this reserve, I shall leave to the reader to determine.

When the Greenfield family heard that their difficulties about tea-makers were to be relieved by the Miss Smiths, at the request of Mr. Edwards, they naturally looked a little astonished. However, it was only the day before the party, and having at all times more to do than other people, they were not quite so much interested in other people’s affairs. The most interesting feature in the matter to them, at least for the time, was, that there would be plenty of people to make tea.

But if the Greenfields were not so engrossed by this event as they might have been, other people were. When the Miss Smiths entered the tea-room, and Mr. Edwards took his place at Miss Laura’s
tray, all eyes were upon them. Here was a social phenomenon to exercise the wits of the people of Goslingford! Mr. Edwards, who was supposed to be the lover, the favoured, if not the engaged lover, of Hannah Brown! Had they had a quarrel? Was he trying to pique her? But when the same eyes turned to the other end of the room, where Miss Brown was filling her teapot, she did not look piqued—she looked almost unconcerned. It was as good as a play to the Goslingforders—that is, to those among them who thought plays good.

Another striking phenomenon of the evening was the conduct of the two friends, Miss Wellby and Miss Richards. Miss Wellby, at her own tray, struck everybody as being in a very bad humour. She only spoke to the poor people, and never
went near Hannah Brown. On the contrary, Miss Richards, for whom a tray was too fatiguing, and who everybody expected would either have joined the Greenfields or her friends the Smiths, seated herself by Hannah Brown, and remained beside her all night. But the complications of the evening did not end here.

About half-an-hour after his sisters had left home, Mr. Edgar Smith returned from London. He was even more astonished than the rest of the world to find where they were gone, and with whom. But as he was not in the habit of expressing much surprise, he merely asked to have some meat with his tea, and said, as soon as he had refreshed himself, he would go and see what they were all about.

And, accordingly, ere much of the eve-
ning had elapsed, Mr. Edgar Smith was seen to enter the room.

Hannah Brown saw him, and handed the sugar basin to Miss Richards instead of her tea-cup, and that good soul, though she thought love an improper motive to marry from, had too soft a woman's heart not to pardon the mistake. Miss Westcote saw Mr. Edgar Smith, too, and as her table was very near the door, instantly offered him a place. He would have gone on, but Mr. Greenfield, who passed at the moment, and thought to do him a kindness, said—

"Plenty of room for you there, Mr. Smith. There is such a crowd, you will find it difficult to get to your sisters."

And common politeness forced him to take the offered seat; but Mary said afterwards to her mother—
“He had been so disagreeable, she had a mind not to put up with him any longer.”

But she had often said this before.

Hannah now became more absent than ever. The scene on the ice all at once seemed to melt away into dreamland, and the lonely old heartbreak fell on her again.

Edgar, in the meantime, was as much occupied with the Edwards phenomenon as everybody else.

When the party broke up he took care of his two elder sisters, Mr. Edwards having already secured Miss Laura. All he said, however, on the subject was—

“I was so surprised to find you all at the church tea-party. What will happen next?”

Venetia laughed.
In the meantime Mr. Edwards and Laura lagged behind.

The night was cold and damp, and dark and windy; but no night before had ever seemed so pleasant to Laura Smith. After she got home she did not go to bed, but sat up nearly all night talking to Venetia.

Mr. Edgar Smith now found Mr. Edwards almost domesticated in his father's house. The two young men did not, however, get on much better than they had done in the previous part of their intercourse, which was chiefly, it must be confessed, the fault of Mr. Edgar Smith. Mr. Edwards would have cultivated an intimacy with him if he could; but, though the young lawyer was perfectly polite, he felt his advances repulsed, how, he could not quite have
explained. On the evenings which Mr. Edwards spent at Tudor Lodge, Edgar had mostly business at the office, or some other engagement in the town; and when, at other times, his mother and sisters began to talk of the young clergyman, it seemed generally a signal for him either to leave the room, or to take up the newspaper.

It was within a day or two of the time appointed for Mr. Edwards' return to Wales, that Mrs. Smith, having contrived to be alone with her son, announced to him the marriage of his youngest and favourite sister, Laura Victoria, to Mr. Edwards. Edgar seemed a little surprised at the announcement, but made no remark.

"I thought, my dear," said his mother, "that you were probably prepared to suspect this."
"No, not at all. I am so accustomed to the girls being admired, that it never strikes me, as a consequence, that they are going to be married. I thought, too, Edwards' affections were engaged elsewhere. All the world said so." Edgar spoke in a firm, unmoved tone.

"The world, I suppose, spoke nonsense, as it often does," said Mrs Smith, colouring slightly, and in a half petulant tone.

"I must confess, then, I took the same view as the rest of the world; and I rather wonder that Laura can be quite satisfied with being second best."

"Second best! Upon my word, Edgar, a more devoted young man—but you think nobody can have a lover but Hannah Brown."
It was now Edgar's turn to colour, and for the moment he was silenced. His mother followed up her victory.

"I dare say Mr. Edwards was in love with Hannah Brown as a young man is in love who knows only one girl in the world; but when he sees several, and can make comparisons, his feelings alter."

"You think, then, he only loved, or fancied he loved Miss Brown, till he saw Laura?"

"Of course I think so."

"She, I hope, thinks so, too."

"Of course she does."

"Well, long may she continue to do so. I hope she will be happy, and I dare say she will. To do the fellow justice, he looks good-tempered. I know I shall never get on with him; but I
shall try to be civil to him, for Laura's sake. And now—are we to give up dissent, that we are going to have a brother and sister in the Church?"

"Give up dissent! My dear Edgar! is religion a thing of mere family alliances and politeness?"

"What is it a thing of then?"

"Of the conscience, my dear. How can you ask?"

"What about Laura's conscience, then?"

"Laura has always had a strong inclination to belong to the Church, so it is all right there."

"All right with her soul, you mean?"

"Yes, of course. It would be very illiberal and unchristian, and copying the worse portion of Church people, to doubt that they may be quite as good Christians as ourselves."
"They may be quite as good Christians as ourselves! Then why, may I ask, are we dissenters?"

"For the glorious principle of religious liberty and unshackled conscience."

Edgar smiled. "Which means, when translated, 'Our religion is the same, but they want to teach it one way, and we another, and we want to make them take our way.'"

Mrs. Smith might not always have stood this perhaps; but to-day the prospect of her daughter's marriage had put her in an unusually good humour, and she would bear more from Edgar than anyone else, so she patted him on the head, and said:—

"Now don't, dear, be so fond of contradiction, and don't talk in that way to your father—it vexes him so."
And she kissed him, and Edgar returned the caress warmly, for she was a fond mother, and he loved her; and he, too, was in a good humour.

Edgar Smith had not felt in better spirits for a long time than he had done to-day. Perhaps there was something gratifying to his vanity, as well as to that of the rest of the family, in his sister's marriage. He did not go to the Westcotes that day, nor for several days afterwards—not, indeed, till he and all his sisters and Mr. Edwards were invited to tea.

Laura Victoria's marriage was not long a secret. Its announcement caused a great sensation. There had not been a wedding in Goslingford for a long time, and the Goslingford public had expected that Mr. Edwards would have married quite a different person.
Mrs. Splint “remembered—it could not have been more than a week ago—that she had seen him devoted to Hannah Brown.” Even Mr. Greenfield, who rarely made a remark about such things, confessed that, “Nothing had ever surprised him more in his life;” and though he and Mr. Edwards continued perfectly friendly, their intimacy seemed at once to decrease. Mrs. and Miss Westcote confessed themselves “highly amused, though at the same time not the least surprised. They had never thought there was any truth in the report about Hannah Brown. They were very sorry for her to have twice made herself a laughing-stock; and as to Miss Wellby, they really wondered how she could make such a goose of herself.”
Poor Miss Clara had scarcely ever before been in such a state of dismay and discomfort, which displayed themselves in unusual fidget and snappishness. The cordial sympathy, however, which she met with from Harriet Richards disarmed her a little towards that common object of her excitability. Miss Richards was outwardly more indignant than herself. She "was distressed to think how the Smiths could have permitted such a thing—how they could ever have permitted, with their principles, their daughter to marry a Puseyite clergyman. As for Mr. Edwards himself, she was not surprised. She had always found where religious views were not sound that you could not depend on conduct." Miss Harriet was too amiable to reproach her friend with having been in the
wrong; but Miss Clara felt keenly that she had, and she answered sharply—

"Well, he has been no worse, at any rate, than your pattern Evangelical Dissenting family. I quite agree with you, that where people have no sound religious views, you cannot depend on their conduct. You can never depend on dissenters."

Miss Harriet was shut up, to use an inelegant phrase, but in reality the mutual indignation of the two friends was a great mutual comfort.
CHAPTER VIII.

CHANGE—NOT OF AIR.

And Hannah Brown, what said she to the Smith marriage, and the emotion it created—a lmost as great as when some sacrilegious innovator once proposed to take down the mayor’s four-post—bed, I was going to have said—but I mean pew, in Goslingford Church?

Hannah Brown, if she had been a true heroine, would, of course, have been magnanimously contemptuous, both of
Mr. Edwards' conduct, and the gossip it occasioned. But, as the reader already knows, there was little that was heroic about poor Hannah. She did not hear nearly all the gossip, but what she did hear vexed and mortified her. She was mortified, too, it must be confessed, that Mr. Edwards had so soon forgotten her.

"It is not in my power," thought Hannah, "to create in any one a lasting affection, such as I can feel myself; or is it, as Aunt Clara says, that men cannot feel such affection, and that, as most women are happier married, it is better to take them as they are? Perhaps Laura Smith thinks so;" and Hannah's feelings towards that young lady were, perhaps, hardly so amiable as they ought to have been.

It was on a cold afternoon, in January,
that Hannah Brown made these reflections. She was sitting in her own bed-room, the fire was nearly out, and the cold rain, tending almost to sleet, washed the panes of the small, old-fashioned window. The old-fashioned furniture, the mirror in the black frame, the red moreen curtains, looked dingier than usual, and Hannah, as she caught a view of her own young face in the glass, began to think how, in all probability, she should see it, year by year, reflected there, older and older, till it looked, as much as the mirror itself, a thing of the past.

Then she thought of the cheerful drawing-room at Tudor Lodge, full of young faces and merry talk. Perhaps there were two pairs of lovers there!

As she arrived at this climax of her imagination, the church clock struck three
the dinner-hour—and she hurried down stairs, fearful her father might be waiting for her, but, to her astonishment, he had not come home.

The cloth was laid in the dining-room, and the fire in the book-room was blazing brightly, that he might warm himself before dinner—the methodical William Brown generally allowing himself a quarter of an hour expressly for this purpose. Hannah, expecting him every instant, stirred the fire, and kept it up to the proper point. But the minutes passed. The servants, trained to the exactest punctuality, were putting the dinner on the table, the house-clock and the church-clock had struck a quarter past three, and still no Mr. Brown. Hannah began now to feel alarmed, and all the more so when she called to mind her father's worn and anxious looks.
She now stood in the window, looking eagerly down the path by the churchyard railings, to see if she could perceive him coming; but he had not yet made his appearance. She looked out sadly on the wet pavement, and the gloomy clouds, and an anxious foreboding filled her mind. Then she remembered that it was at that very window Edgar Smith had stood on the memorable occasion of their farewell interview. But, thrusting aside the associations awakened by this recollection, and looking anxiously once more from the window, she was somewhat relieved to see her father appear at last at the further end of the paved alley; but his figure was so bent, his step so feeble, and he advanced so very slowly, that all her anxiety on his account returned. She fancied that illness must have detained
him, and on the impulse of the moment ran to the door to meet him:

"How now, Hannah!" he said. "Coming to the door on such a day without your bonnet! Do you want to kill yourself?"

"Oh! no, father! It will not kill me—but I was afraid you were not well."

"Well;—I am quite well. Go in and eat your dinner."

Hannah saw that her father was not to be spoken to; but this only made her more uneasy.

At dinner, he scarcely tasted what was on his plate; but Hannah durst not remark upon it. She tried to choke down her own dinner, for she felt that he was watching her. As soon as the cloth was removed, he drank down two bumpers of wine—a very unusual proceeding with..."
him, and one which made his daughter feel still more alarmed. Then he said, suddenly, with a hoarse voice and a stern face—

"Hannah, I have bad news for you."

She looked up, very pale; but anything, she felt, was better than suspense.

"I am a ruined man. We are beggars."

The intelligence was very abrupt, and not very easily realised, but Hannah's first thought was for the poor old man who looked at once so broken-hearted and so stern.

"Dearest father," she said, "how has this misfortune happened? Do tell me, and then we can think how best we are to meet it."
Her father looked at her, and his face relaxed a little, but his voice was even hoarser, and not quite so steady, as he answered, after a short pause—

"You know, or perhaps you don't know, that for years I have had concerns with Elkington & Co.'s bank. A most flourishing concern it was once, in the time of old Sir John, but since Sir Wilfred succeeded the old baronet, and married the daughter of an Irish marquis, and led the life of a spendthrift, it has gone all to the dogs. It is a long story, Hannah, and I cannot tell it now. I knew the young scapegrace had not his father's business habits, but till a few weeks ago, I did not know how matters really were, and now the short and the long of the whole matter is, I have not sixpence in the world.
For myself I do not mind, for I am old and weary—but for you, my poor girl."

"Do not think of me, dearest father; I am young and strong, and can work."

"You will not be an absolute beggar. There is your mother's little pittance settled on you, will keep you, perhaps, above actual want."

"Then, of course, father, that is yours in the meantime, and I could earn a little, perhaps, and—and," she continued hesitatingly, "there is—if you were able, perhaps, to go on with your business."

The old man's face fell again.

"I have not told you the worst, Hannah."

She did not speak, but listened
eagerly, and he continued, in a low tone—

"I have many outstanding bills—a few even to tradespeople—and engagements I entered into when it seemed to me I should have no more difficulty in fulfilling them than in giving sixpence to a beggar; and now, Hannah, to meet these liabilities I have not one penny. Old William Brown, that never owed a farthing he could not pay, will soon be a bankrupt."

"How much do these—liabilities, do you call them—amount to?"

He named the sum.

"Father," cried Hannah, eagerly, "and is not that just about my mother's money? Why not take that, and pay them at once."

"No, Hannah, I cannot rob you of
your all; I do not even see that it would be right."

"But you do not rob me, father—I give it gladly. I should be far happier—all my life I should be happier."

"You do not know what you undertake, Hannah—the privations you would have to undergo—the change it would make—how poverty is looked down upon."

"I should not be looked down upon, father. I should be respected."

Her father regarded her with fond admiration, and her strength of mind seemed to pass into his own feelings.

"If I thought it likely that I should live ten or twelve years, I would accept your offer, for then I could go on with the business and pay you. But,
Hannah, I feel my days will not be so many, and—"

"Oh, my dearest father!"—and Hannah was weeping—"Take the money for my sake. Let us make no one else suffer as you have suffered—let us be happy while you are spared, and for me—God will provide."

William Brown had always thought himself a religious man. He had gone to church, he had been orthodox in his creed, he had been moral in his life; but it did surprise him to find that his daughter, in an absolutely practical manner, relied for food and clothing on her Heavenly Parent, as she would have relied on himself—just as much as it surprises many members of most congregations to hear from the pulpit that religion has really something
to do with their shops and their offices, their buying and selling, and their eating and drinking.

It was some minutes ere Mr. Brown answered his daughter, and in the meantime he seemed lost in thought. Then he said:—

"Hannah! I humbly thank God, who has given me such a child as you. And I pray Him that the blessing of a grateful father may rest on you for ever! But it would not be right to let you decide on impulse. Think the matter over for a week, and then let me know."

She promised that she would, but she knew she should not change her mind.
You may be sure there was such an uproar in Goslingford as an election would hardly have paralleled, and which threw Miss Laura Victoria Smith's marriage quite in the shade, at least as a topic of wonder, when it was known that William Brown was involved in the failure of Elkington's Bank. The Browns, who for generations, if not ab-
solutely the richest, had always been esteemed the most substantial, the safest people in Goslingford—that they should actually have fallen, was a comment indeed on human vicissitude, little short, in the opinion of Goslingford, of such an event as the stopping of the Bank of England. Goslingford, without the office of "Brown, Attorney," in the High Street, was an almost inconceivable place. And who but a Brown could ever live in the Old Red House?—the very existence of which was identified and coeval with the Brown family. And then what would become of the poor old man and his daughter? They could do nothing for themselves, that was clear. Hannah was a helpless creature. Even the Brownites allowed she had never been brought up to put her
hand to anything; and though Clara Wellby boldly said they would find themselves mistaken, she had many uncomfortable misgivings.

Endless were the speculations as to what would become of them, and innumerable the plans set forth, as "the only sensible thing they could do"—"the only thing it would not be madness for them to attempt." Even the Smithites were sorry for them, and spoke compassionately and forbearingly, and talked of letting bygones be bygones, only, just insinuating, for Smithites, of course, are not quite without ordinary human feelings, or—frailties, that it would be seen now who really were the most to be depended on.

The Smiths themselves said nothing; but they held themselves a little higher than
usual, the Brownites did not fail to remark, shaking their heads and quoting the wise old saw, that "pride comes before a fall."

In short, what else could the Brownites say, now that the star of Smith was so decidedly on the ascendant—the whole family in the height of prosperity, and a daughter about to be married to the very hero whom the Brownites thought all their own?

Then it began to be whispered about that not only had Mr. Brown lost his all, but that he had debts, and ominous looks were exchanged, and many individuals who had reckoned to the last on the solvency of William Brown, began to feel very uncomfortable. Every creditor he had knew that it was not his fault; no one liked to be the first to hasten the hour of utter ruin; all
wished to be lenient; yet they had their wives and children, their own old age, their own claims.

"It was while these peals of thunder—indicative of the coming storm—were increasing in frequency and distinctness, that each creditor received a private note from William Brown, appointing an hour for meeting him at his chambers for a settlement of his claims. I need not say that all anxiously attended; according to their characters and needs—some hopeful, some doubtful, some compassionate, and some resolved, come what might, to have their due.

Mr. Brown was seated in his own chair. It had always seemed a sort of throne, and to the surprise of many, and provocation of some, it did not seem one whit less like a throne than ever. Wil-
liam Brown appeared pale, and old, and meagre, but he looked round on all with an unabashed front and a haughty eye. One or two immediately resolved to show him no mercy, while one or two others rather admired the old fellow's pluck.

"Gentlemen," were his first words, "I have not sent for you to ask you to make any abatement in your just claims on me. Providence has put it in my power, as I am now going to prove to you, to satisfy them all."

A murmur of satisfaction and surprise, qualified by curiosity, and in some by a shade of doubt, ran round the party. Mr. Brown continued, with a little more emotion than he had at first displayed—

"My daughter has a small fortune of her own, independent of me. It is her
own wish to devote this to the payment of these debts. My daughter, gentlemen, would rather inherit an honest name than a fortune."

And now a murmur of applause, checked only by respect, ran the round of the assembly, and then Mr. Brown, in his own methodical and practical way, proceeded to business; and it was soon apparent that Hannah's fortune and the proceeds of the sale of the Old Red House would be more than sufficient to satisfy every claim. And then applause could no longer be restrained. Mr. Brown's creditors crowded round him, shook hands with him, and thanked him. One poor tradesman remarked emphatically he was "a gentleman," another that everybody knew the Browns were always honest men, and a third said—

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N
"Sir, you may be proud of your daughter."

To which Mr. Brown answered, with a quivering lip, and a drop which would spring to his eye—

"Sir, I am proud of my daughter."

That very afternoon, it was known all over Goslingford that old William Brown would not, after all, be insolvent; that all his debts would be paid, and that he and his daughter Hannah would shortly leave the Old Red House, the "ancient home of the Browns," and go forth upon the world without a sixpence. Then immediately the tide of public opinion, which had lately been somewhat setting against the Browns, now rose higher in their favour than it had ever done before.

It was discovered that they were a credit to Goslingford, identified with the respec-
tability and well-being of the place, an honour to any town; and it behoved their townsfolk, in some way or other, to show them the estimation in which they were held. Mr. Brown, of course, would still carry on his business, the late transactions were not likely to diminish the number of his clients, but—and as his friends remembered his bent figure and his feeble gait, and his changed countenance, few could think that there would be time to do much for Hannah, even if he should spend his old age in a harder drudgery than his industrious youth had ever known. What, then, would become of Hannah?

A few days ago, the Goslingford public would have had no hope for Hannah Brown. But now it began to entertain very different notions with regard to her. She had proved herself
a true chip of the old block. The Goslingford public believed in Hannah Brown. It almost began to believe in her drawings. The Goslingford public, like any other British public, though sometimes uncertain and often changeable, was always sensitive to generosity of conduct—always alive to the nobleness of self-sacrifice—not perhaps for fantastic and sentimental reasons, but in the good and substantial cause of justice and honesty.

All Smithite dissent was for the time hushed. Indeed, there seemed to be no Smithites left, though doubtless there were still a few, who would re-appear when the storm of Brown enthusiasm had somewhat abated. The Smiths themselves, with the exception of Mrs. Smith, who could not conceal that she was disconcerted, and who went about praising her
own family, and relating anecdotes of what they had done, and what they would have done, joined in the general chorus of praise. Mr. Smith "only regretted that poor Mr. Brown's prejudices, excellent and honourable man as he was, prevented him showing him the respect and sympathy he felt for him. But it did not prevent him feeling it."

"Do you hear my husband?" said Mrs. Smith. "He is such a good Christian man. You could not believe, from the way he speaks, all the insults he has received from the Browns. But he never will say anything against them. And God has rewarded him. And Edgar is just like his father. The generous way that he talks of them, nobody would believe."

In fact Edgar had talked very little; but
he had once been heard to say emphatically, and in a tone which forbade all expression of dissent:

"I think Miss Brown's conduct has been beyond all praise."

And this opinion came to the ears both of Hannah and her father. Neither of them made any remark; but neither of them forgot it. It was a sweet solace to Hannah in many an anxious and toilsome hour. Although believed by everybody else, ever since that day on the ice, she had doubted his really being engaged to Mary Westcote, or, at least, had fits of doubting it. Mr. Brown had his own thoughts.

Hannah's health was quite restored, she looked well, and even cheerful. She had no time for despondency. At Lady-Day, the Browns were to leave the Old Red
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House. Neither father nor daughter ever spoke to each other of this trial. Hannah could only guess what such a removal would be, at her father's age, from the home where he had spent his boyhood, where he had brought his bride, where his children had played, and from which he had followed them to the grave. Then the Old Red House seemed identified with the very existence and respectability of the Brown family. Many people thought it ugly, old-fashioned, and gloomy; but to William Brown it was a very nonpareil of respectability and comfort; and to leave it, was, as it were, the consummation and seal of the fall of his race.

Even Hannah herself, who had once felt the place so gloomy and oppressive, now that she was about to quit it for ever, seemed to cling to it with regretful
affection. The long straight walks, the lines of espaliers, she had been used to think so formal, the flowers which had seemed so old-fashioned, the sameness which had appeared so tedious, all now appealed to her heart with the claim of familiar and life-long association. It seemed sad, even to think that her sadness must now be endured apart from the objects which she had once fancied increased it, but which, with the strange perversity of human nature, she now viewed as the dearest and most soothing scenes on earth.

No sooner had the misfortunes of the Browns become known, than Miss Clara Wellby had instantly forgiven Hannah her rejection of Mr. Edwards, though, perhaps, she regretted it all the more. Not that any formal forgiveness had been
expressed, or any formal reconciliation taken place; but she had hurried to Hannah and overwhelmed her with kindnesses and caresses. This forgiveness had been rendered all the more easy by Mr. Edwards' subsequent conduct, and the soreness Miss Wellby felt on the point.

From the time of Mr. Brown's loss, up to the present moment, Miss Clara Wellby had been in an even unusual state of fuss and fidget, running about from house to house, and calling incessantly on Hannah with offers of advice and assistance; and then telling everybody how well she behaved, and how sensible she was, though she had several times been on the point of quarreling with her because she would not be guided by her counsel. But Miss Clara would not, on any account, have seriously quarrelled with her young friend at pre-
sent, and when tempted to do so by some unaccountable self-will on Hannah's part, she would school herself into forbearance, by reflecting, "She has had much to try her, poor thing! I must bear with her little obstinacies." And then, good Miss Clara, with as much reason as many other people, congratulated herself on her own magnanimity, and maintained to the world how Hannah Brown was little short of an angel.

But when the announcement Mr. Brown had made to his creditors became public, Clara's admiration knew no bounds. She was not, as I have already said, used to the "melting mood" (excuse the expression, my fastidious reader); but now she could not speak of Hannah Brown without a tear in her eye, and a choking in her throat; for this fidgety, whimsical old
maid had that high heart which is most touched by acts of generosity, and has in it, perhaps, as much of true poetry as a sensibility to the charms of moonlight and mountains. We cannot have every good quality united in the same person, except in novels; and one great secret of happiness, when Destiny has condemned us to live in a Goslingford, peopled by Browns and Smiths, and people with the mere ordinary characteristics of humanity, is to take them as we find them, and make the best of them. If a valet-de-chambre is incapable of seeing a hero in the man whom he shaves (and Carlyle says the fault is the valet's, not the hero's), it is just possible the master may be able to see a hero in the valet. How much of the heroic may be lost, to human perception, because there lack the eyes to discern
it! And how few there are who have enough of it in themselves to be able to discern it, overlaid by the vulgarities of shops and offices, and domestic cares about worn stockings and legs of mutton.

And now the time drew near for the sale of the Old Red House. The purchaser was not to enter into possession for a month after the sale, and during that period such of the furniture as Hannah and her father were unlikely to require in the smaller abode to which they intended to remove, was also to be sold. Hannah was now very much occupied in looking for a house, but it was no easy task to find a suitable one. At first Miss Wellby had entered with zeal into the quest. But to Hannah's surprise, as the time drew nearer for requiring the house, and the
danger of not obtaining a suitable one, more imminent, her fervour appeared suddenly to cool, she made objections to all Hannah looked at, and said there was no hurry, and that it would be foolish to do a rash thing out of mere impatience. She also seemed to have lost much of the sympathy she had so warmly expressed for her friends in leaving their old home, and assumed an air of quite provoking cheerfulness. "But it was no use being provoked at Miss Clara," Hannah said to herself, "and she was a true friend in the main."

At last the day for the sale of the house arrived. It was sold, and fetched a fair price, Mr. Brown told his daughter; and in answer to her question who was the purchaser, he answered:

"I don't clearly know. There seems
at present some little mystery about it; but as far as the money is concerned, it is all right."

And Hannah could obtain no further information, though she longed to know who were to be the inhabitants of the old home. But the next morning, the mystery was cleared up. She and her father were just finishing breakfast, when Mr. Greenfield and Mr. Splint were announced.

Supposing that they came on business, Hannah was leaving the room, when she was entreated by Mr. Greenfield to remain, as their business was with her as well as with her father.

And then in a very brief manner, but not without emotion, he informed them that he and Mr. Splint had come in the name of many of their friends and
townspeople to beg of them, Mr. and Miss Brown, that they would accept as a free gift the dwelling-place of their forefathers, and their own old home—"The Old Red House," as a testimonial of the high respect and esteem in which they were held by all who knew them. "I am sure," added Mr. Greenfield, "the day that would have seen you quit the Old Red House, would have been a melancholy day for almost everyone in Goslingford."

Mr. Brown looked at his daughter. Her face flushed up, tears rushed to her eyes, and her fingers trembled nervously. Then he turned to his two friends:

"Gentlemen," he said, and he could go no further. His chest heaved, and his lips twitched. Hannah ran hastily to him. "I am quite well," he said,
"but this takes me by surprise, and I am an old man now! As he spoke, he sat down, and Mr. Splint poured him out a cup of tea."

"My good old friend," said Mr. Greenfield, "do not trouble yourself to speak. You will receive this mark of the good-will of your friends, and the high sense they entertain of your own and your daughter's honour and probity, in the spirit in which it is meant. May we tell them so?"

Mr. Brown took the Rector's outstretched hand, and pressed it warmly, and they left the father and daughter alone together.

And then stern, undemonstrative old William Brown opened wide his arms, and Hannah sobbed on her father's heart.
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"I don't know how it is, Hannah," he said, but "this is the proudest moment of my life."
CHAPTER X.

MR. AND MRS. EDWARD EDWARDS.

An hour had not passed after the departure of Mr. Greenfield and Mr. Splint, ere Miss Clara Wellby arrived at the Old Red House. She had not been able to wait another instant.

How excited she was, and how fervently she embraced Hannah and shook hands with Mr. Brown may be imagined by those who have known Miss Wellby.
How she talked, and fussed, and ran all over the house and garden in the wildest manner! With what excess of delight did she not gather innumerable bouquets of crocus and polyanthus, and stick them up all over the house, and talk about sowing the seeds for the summer! Her volubility was so overwhelming that Hannah felt as if she could have cried, and Mr. Brown escaped to the office.

"I knew about it all the time, Hannah, but you see I durst not tell."

And then she hinted how it had been first suggested by Harriet Richards.

"A great thing for her, you know, considering her silliness about the Smiths, all because they belong to the Evangelical Alliance"—and how warmly it had been taken up at once by everybody else.
But Clara did not even hint at the little self-denials she herself had practised—the silk dress, for instance, she had foregone, and nobody appreciated a new silk dress more thoroughly than Miss Clara—that she might have the pleasure of contributing to the testimonial. But Hannah guessed them without being told, and in her heart was grateful.

Nevertheless, she would have felt thankful, after the strong emotions of the morning, to be left alone, but Miss Clara had no notion that anyone could prefer solitude. In the excitement of the moment, too, her tongue was unloosed on the awkward point of Mr. Edwards and the Smiths. She had long been burning to unbosom herself to Hannah on the subject.

"Your rejected lover is to be married
next month, Hannah, and the Smiths are making such a fuss about it. You would think nobody in the world had ever been married before. There are to be ten bridesmaids—such folly! and so worldly in a clergyman's wife. And such a trousseau—silks and satins and velvets. Much use they will be of at Llan Gwdd. And they are going to Paris, and to visit some of his relations. And then they are coming back here, for a little triumph, I suppose. And everybody is putting off their parties; and I understand the dissenting minister is in a dreadful way about it, but he dare not say much, as he might affront Mr. Smith, and there would be a loss to the chapel it would never get over. It is a foolish business. I don't think I shall entertain them when they come.
"But I hope, Aunt Clara, you won't show any pique. It would be undignified. What reason indeed have we to feel piqued? I have not been ill-used by anybody," said Hannah, with a slight touch of pride.

"No," said Miss Clara, "that is a great comfort, Hannah. And Mr. Edwards cannot blame you, for you never gave him any encouragement—the more fool you! But let bygones be bygones."

"I always saw he had no heart, Aunt Clara. I cannot understand you."

"Men will be men, Hannah, and he would have made a kind husband. But I am not going to quarrel with you to-day. And, you see, if I entertain the Edwards party, I must ask all the Smiths, and you would not like it."

"Don't think of me, Aunt Clara."
Do as you like. I have met them all before.” And there was again in Hannah a touch of pride. “Indeed, lately, and especially to-day, I have had so much to feel and to think about, that all these things seem to have gone far back into the past. I feel getting quite old, Aunt Clara. It will be quite pleasant to settle down into the calm of life.”

“Nonsense!” cried Miss Clara, with angry emphasis, “you’ll have plenty of lovers yet, Hannah, and be married, too.”

Hannah returned no answer. She knew it was no use arguing with Miss Clara. But, though not at the moment, afterwards, when the excitement of that day was past, and Hannah Brown had settled down to the monotony of daily life, it
was with a pleasant sensation, even though she did not believe in it, that she remembered that Miss Clara thought "she would have plenty of lovers." Hannah, you see, had many weak points.

The excitement of the Brown failure, magnanimity, and testimonial were beginning to die out in Goslingford, when the public, which, however, did not feel the want of a sensation so much as some other publics, as it had the happy art of making one out of nothing, was gratified by the grand event of the Smith marriage.

Intense interest and curiosity were felt on various points. Opinions ran very strong on both sides, for instance as to whether Mrs. Smith would be present at the ceremony in church. Mrs. Smith had never been in a church at any service
in her life, and was believed to have said that nothing would ever induce her to attend one. "But then," remarked a Brownite, for factions were beginning to revive again, "it is not many months ago since Mrs. Smith said the last thing she should wish would be for one of her daughters to marry a clergyman; and now, whatever she may say, she is evidently quite up in the air about it. With all her pride, she has not been too proud to be glad of Hannah Brown's leavings."

"I look upon this marriage altogether," said Mr. Silk, the draper, and a sound Churchman, "as a severe—a very severe—blow to dissent in Goslingford. Winter is looking quite blue about it. The next generation of the Tudor Lodge family will all go to church."
But still the interesting question with regard to Mrs. Smith remained unsolved till the morning of the marriage, when public anxiety was relieved on the important subject by the appearance of Mrs. Smith in Goslingford Church, dressed in dark blue silk and a white bonnet, and carrying a splendid prayer-book, the gift of her son-in-law elect. The bride and bridegroom were pronounced the handsomest couple that had been seen in Goslingford for a long time. He looked "so interesting and so melancholy," some of the young ladies said; and the same authorities, in a tone of veneration, pronounced Laura Victoria to be certainly a very elegant girl, and supposed she must be very, very happy.

Hannah, from behind the curtain in her bed-room window, beheld the bride
and her whole cortège walk from the church gate to the church door, with a strange feeling that it might have been herself instead of Laura Smith. And then she wondered how she should have felt if it had.

The long procession of bridesmaids was immediately followed by Mrs. Smith and her prayer-book, as above described. She was leaning on the arm of her son. As they passed opposite the Old Red House, Edgar looked up—looked straight at Hannah's window—and did not take his eyes off till they were passed. It was too far off to see the expression of his face; but Hannah's heart beat as she noticed the gesture.

The Edwardses were absent a fortnight in Paris, and another in paying visits, and then they returned for what Miss Clara
had called "their triumph" at Goslingford. And quite an ovation it was in its way.

The Smiths gave a series of splendid dinner-parties, to which Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Winter were not asked, and several other persons gave dinner and tea-parties in their honour. They both looked as well and happy as they could look, and Mrs. Edwards "had had the kindest letters from Mr Edwards' family. His great-uncle, Sir Philip Edwards, had sent her in a present a handsome brooch." It was all very charming, and her life seemed very bright in comparison with that of poor Hannah Brown, who, as she looked at the satisfied, handsome face of her former admirer, wondered with some bitterness why his heartlessness, as she chose to consider it, was thus rewarded.

But was Mr. Edwards heartless?
Nobody thought so except Hannah Brown, and perhaps you, my romantic young reader. Both his wives had thought him the kindest of husbands, he was an immense favourite with his own family, and to his parishioners he was full of sympathy. The real truth was, the Rev. Edward Edwards had a very soft heart. Sympathy was the atmosphere in which he lived, and he could not do without it. He was one of those to whom loving somebody is a necessity. Such people are seldom constant in the common accepta-
tion of the word,—that is to say, con-
stant to a dead or a lost affection. They have too little obstinacy and self-depen-
dence; and, after all, though there can be little that is great, there may be much that is amiable, without these two qualities. And now I think I hear some one ask—
"Is it great to be obstinate? I thought fools were generally obstinate." To which I reply, "Fools are obstinate in their folly, and great men in their wisdom." If Columbus had not been obstinate, America might not have been discovered; and if Galileo had not been obstinate, we might yet have believed that the earth stood still. Obstinacy, in short, is a powerful pièce de resistance, which one would rather see in the hands of a friend than of an enemy.

Miss Clara at first hesitated whether she would invite the Edwardses or not; but we all know the effects of example in this world of imitation. If one sheep jumps through a gap in a hedge, the others are sure to follow, and human beings are, in this respect, very like sheep. It never does to be out of the
fashion. Besides, it might have looked like pique, considering the friendship which had existed between Mr. Edwards and Miss Clara. And, added to all this, Miss Wellby was very fond of giving a party, and the excuse was too good to permit the opportunity to pass. But Clara felt that her party in the present case was attended with many difficulties. These, however, did not dismay her, for she was proud of her generalship, and was resolved it should go off well in spite of all discordant elements.

The whole Smith family were, of course, to be invited, and Miss Richards; Hannah Brown had promised to come; and Miss Clara did not fear now that she would comport herself in the most suitable and dignified manner. Hannah Brown had risen to the very highest point in her esteem,
and though she said to the world, "I always knew what was in Hannah Brown," there could be no doubt that she respected her greatly more, and had much more confidence in her actions, since the world, too, knew what was in her. So she did not fear for her, even when she was to face both her old lovers.

"I will not have the Westcotes, though, Harriet," she said, as she was talking over the affair with her old friend.

"Why not, Clara? I think they might feel it unkind."

"And I don't care if they do."

"Is that Christian, my dear Clara?"

"Very Christian, my dear Harriet, not to invite a jarring element to one's parties. I suppose you would hardly think of inviting Mdlle. Cerito to one of your prayer-meetings?"
"I don't know who you mean."
"I forgot you never read newspapers."
"I read the 'Record' regularly; but I don't remember anything about the person you mention."
"I dare say not. Well, I mean—never mind what I mean. I am not going to have the Westcotes, and there is an end of it."
"Well, if you think it right, I am not sorry. I am always vexed to see Edgar Smith so much there. Such a vain, dressy girl will never make a good wife."
"Vain, dressy girls often settle down into the best wives, and the dowdiest, worst-dressed wives, too, sometimes, if that is a merit, Harriet."
"My dear Clara, you know I like people to be neat."

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"Neat, that is not ragged. It is taste you object to. If a thing is ugly, it is all right."

And so Miss Richards, as usual, was silenced, and the Westcotes were not invited—an omission which they never quite forgave.

Everybody knew Miss Clara liked to be punctual, and as, for some reason I will not stop to analyse, everybody liked to please her, all arrived in good time. Mrs. Edwards, the principal attraction of the evening, entered, leaning on the arm of her handsome husband. She was beautifully dressed, as a bride, and looked blooming, happy, and proud. You could not have overlooked Mrs. Edwards in any room, and if not absolutely handsome, there was much to admire in her round, ample figure, her plump, white
neck and arms, her smiling-blue eyes and good-tempered countenance. Hannah felt immediately what a shadow she was beside her in her grave, middle-aged dress; what a contrast altogether in prospects and position, and all that makes up the fulness of life and youth; and yet Hannah might at that very moment have been in her place. Was the thought one of regret? If it was, it was but for a moment.

The Miss Smiths and their brother were about half-an-hour after the rest of the party, as the carriage had to return for them. They were all in bridal finery, and Edgar had a face as if he were much amused at something or other. He did not, however, appear to be inclined to be as talkative as usual, but after shaking hands with Miss Wellby, seated himself
at a little table apart. Miss Wellby's parties were generally lively, she was so lively and odd herself, and were thus exceptions to the general rule of parties in country towns, or parties anywhere except in very large societies, where you may choose whom you will invite, instead of being obliged to invite whom you can.

In limited societies it is hardly worth anyone's while to be intelligent and agreeable. The social art is not at a premium; it is hardly appreciated, and does not insure social success. The doings of Goslingford were sufficient for Goslingford. Like most country towns, it was an epitome—a concentrated essence of John Bullism, and held, as a chief article of its creed, that all that was alien to Goslingford was unworthy of notice. To wish to in-
roduce new modes of thought, new fashions of society, new manners, was to be dissatisfied with Goslingford as it was, and thus to be guilty of high treason.

Goslingford, I think I have mentioned already, was a liberal borough; but I challenge the world to produce a more stubbornly conservative spirit than is frequently to be found among our old-fashioned liberal boroughs. How quietly was Goslingford convinced, that if Englishmen were the cream of the earth, Goslingford men were the cream of Englishmen. Goslingford orators, at times, talked largely of progress; but Goslingford people would have been woefully affronted had anyone suggested that Goslingford could be improved, for were not Goslingford people the ne plus ultra of humanity?

But, to return to Miss Wellby's parties,
or, rather, party—it proved one of the most brilliant she had given. An almost noisy group formed at one end of the room to play at some game, which Mrs. Edwards had learnt somewhere on her wedding tour. Both Mr. and Mrs. Edwards played. The latter seemed mistress of the sport—the former did not appear to understand it so well; but he laughed at his own mistakes, which, together with his good-humour, seemed to add much to the enjoyment of the game. Before the commencement of this amusement, Mr. Greenfield had seated himself by Hannah Brown, and, after the commencement of the game, Miss Richards and Miss Greenfield, who had declined playing, joined these two. Mr. Edgar Smith, apparently occupied with a book, which had been lying on the table, had also declined playing. They
were yet in the midst of the game when he laid down the book and joined the conversational group. Miss Greenfield was just saying—

"How very happy Mr. Edwards looks —so different from what he used to do. I never saw any one look so good-tempered."

And then Miss Greenfield stopped, seeing his brother-in-law so near. Edgar Smith smiled.

"I have heard what you were saying, Miss Greenfield; but surely it was no treason, and certainly it is quite true. My new brother-in-law is certainly the best tempered fellow I ever knew. Such a temper is quite enviable."

"But," said Miss Greenfield, who never lost an opportunity of pointing a moral, "cannot a good temper be cultivated?"
"I suppose it can by some people; and I have constantly thought I would cultivate one, but, somehow or other, I am constantly discouraged by failures, and therefore, I say it is enviable to be so amiable by nature."

"My dear young friend," said good Miss Richards, "do not be discouraged, the goodness which comes by grace is much better than the goodness which comes only by nature. But I had no idea you had such a trial in your temper."

For an instant a smile played round Edgar's mouth, then he became serious.

"I believe it is not so unbearable as to make me entirely unfit for domestic life; but it often makes me say and do things I bitterly repent. It has made me angry with conduct which, in my heart, I honoured. It has made me seem resentful
where I ought to have shown the admiration my better self always felt."

Edgar Smith spoke gravely, and all the time he was speaking his eyes were fixed determinedly on the face of Hannah Brown. But he did not seem as if he expected her to answer, and the minute he had finished speaking, he turned his eyes in another direction, and Miss Harriet, who was much delighted to find him in so serious a frame of mind, said in her kindest manner—

"It is no new thing, dear Mr. Edgar, when we would do good, to find that evil is present with us."

He listened to her with much respect, but answered, somewhat absently—

"I suppose not."

Good Miss Harriet felt a little disappointed; but just at that instant the party engaged in the new game broke up, and
Edgar Smith rose and mingled with them. Mr. Greenfield again began to talk to Hannah Brown, but she answered at random. All this time she had merely exchanged a bow with Edgar Smith—the sort of salutation with which one greets a slight acquaintance.

But the time had now come to disperse. The Smiths' carriage was at the door for the elder and younger married pairs; but like most of the rest of the party, Venetia and her brother announced their intention of walking home. There was, of course, much bustle at the Smith departure, and the bride had many leave-takings to make, as it was almost her last appearance in Goslingford. In the fulness of her happiness and good-humour she held out her hand to Hannah Brown, who took
it, and shook it cordially. Then her husband did the same—then the elder Smiths and Venetia. Edgar was standing near. He did not hold out his hand, but he did not draw back or turn away. Hannah, with but slight hesitation, offered hers. He took it gratefully, and shook it warmly, but without speaking.

Hannah felt now that she understood him, and that he understood her. She had not felt so happy for a long time. She was as happy, though in a much less agitated way, than after the scene on the ice. She had begun, as I have already said, once more to have rather a better opinion of the other sex.

She now candidly acknowledged to herself that as it was impossible Edgar Smith could marry her, she could
hardly—he being a man, and not a woman—expect him to remain single all his life for her sake. She felt she too had, perhaps, been selfish, and she had certainly judged him hardly. Now, in a fervour of compunction, she tried to take an interest in Mary Westcote, and to hope he might be happy with her. And yet Hannah could not help feeling she would rather he had been happy with almost any other person. And could he really love Mary, and yet have acted as he had done that day on the ice?
CHAPTER XI.

ARTISTIC.

But though the Browns did not leave the Old Red House, they were, of course, constrained to adopt a different style of living from what they had been accustomed to. Hannah resolved, however, that her father should feel it as little as possible; and with only a maid-of-all-work to help her, performed feats of housekeeping which astonished the Gos-
lingford world in general, and more especially that portion of it who had been in the habit of considering her a mere helpless, good-natured nobody. But Hannah had a little plan of her own for adding to her father's gains, which she communicated to no one—not even to Miss Clara Wellby.

One bright, cold spring morning, she set out alone for Buttonborough, carrying a small portfolio under her arm. Arrived at that rich manufacturing town, she at once took her way to the principal street—a very wide and fine one—with splendid shops of all kinds on both sides of the way. Poor Hannah began to feel very foolish and very lonely, and her heart beat very loud and quick. But she had come all this way to execute a purpose, and though
it now seemed to her as if it must fail, she was resolved to go through with it.

Stopping for an instant in front of an engraver and picture-dealer's shop, she then opened the door and, entering, inquired for the master. He came in a few minutes—an intelligent looking man, with very good manners. Hannah gave him her card, and in a shy, stammering manner asked to speak with him. He looked at her card, and asked if she were the daughter of Mr. Brown, the solicitor in Goslingford. Hannah replied that she was, and with much politeness and respect, he rejoined that it would give him much pleasure if he could serve a lady so highly spoken of. Hannah blushed up to the roots of her hair, but somewhat encouraged, she stated her
errand, which was to ask him if he thought he could sell on commission her sketches of the ——shire churches.

Mr. Bradley's countenance fell a little. He said, "It was very difficult to dispose of such things, even when they were very much beyond the average of amateur productions in point of ability—that he could hardly encourage her to hope much—that he feared she would be disappointed."

And poor Hannah, though she said nothing, did look terribly disappointed. She held the portfolio nervously, and was moving as if to take leave, when Mr. Bradley said kindly, but without much encouragement in his tone:

"May I look at your drawings?"

She undid the portfolio, and handed them to him. As he looked at the first,
his countenance became more animated. He then took one or two more, and regarded them carefully, and with evident approbation.

"They are very good," he said emphatically, "very good indeed. If you will leave them here, Miss Brown, I shall be happy to do all in my power for you; but such things are not in great request, and if I were to sell them, I fear they would not fetch anything like their value. What is the lowest sum you would take for one, or for the set?"

"I would take anything. I am anxious to make a little money, and know at present of no other way."

"It is fortunate the subjects are ecclesiastical. I will show them to some of the influential members of our Archæological Society, and perhaps they may
be glad to have them. Will you give me your address, Miss Brown?"

Hannah gladly complied with this request, and left Buttonborough in tolerable spirits, though not very sanguine. She thought if they were to fetch ten shillings, or even five each, it would be a great help to her.

Two days after Hannah's visit to Buttonborough, the post brought her a letter from Mr. Bradley. It was couched in the most polite terms. Her drawings had been much admired, and the president of the Archæological Society had proposed that they should be lithographed and published in a volume, of which he himself would furnish the letter-press. The publication would involve no risk to Hannah, and she should share the profits with Mr. Bradley and the president. Mr.
Bradley added, the gain might not be great, perhaps nothing; but that, at any rate, it would make her known, and might sell the originals.

Hannah was much pleased by this letter. It was pleasant to her to think that she could do something—to feel that the old nightmare sensation of incompetence was passing away. Then perhaps she might make a little money, or it might lead to her making a little at some other time.

In her fallen fortunes, Hannah Brown was not unhappy. She used to take a kind of melancholy pleasure in the thought that she had outlived both the season of vague and restless longing, and the season of passion and excitement, and that she was now entering on the sober period when we can con-
template the trials of the past with a certain poetic wisdom—viewing them as it were from some eminence afar.

It was pleasant to her, too, to believe that even if Edgar Smith loved her no longer, he understood her, and wished to be understood by her. Now that the Edwardses were gone, and that Goslingford had settled down to its usual state of calm monotony, she rarely ever saw him, and never except in the street. It was still generally believed that he was engaged to Mary Westcote; but for the present, the public mind was composed upon the subject, and had arranged that the wedding would likely take place in the summer. Mary Westcote was a great deal with the Miss Smiths at Tudor Lodge, and Mrs. Westcote was lavish of invitations to the whole Smith family. Hannah,
like the rest of the Goslingford world, believed it all, and had forced herself to contemplate it with resignation and composure. She schooled herself to think no more of those words on the ice—now so evidently words of mere momentary excitement. She often talked now as if she were hardly a young person, and she adopted rather an older style of dress. At twenty-two she seemed to herself to have attained quite an advanced age; but this is an opinion which is much commoner at twenty-two than at thirty-two.

In the meantime the publication of the work upon Ecclesiology, illustrated by Hannah's drawings, was agreed upon. The engraving went on, though not very quickly, and that, as well as other matters, required Hannah's occasional presence at Buttonborough. The only
person to whom she had communicated what was in contemplation, was her father, and they had agreed that if was better to say nothing about it to their Goslingford friends till the work was completed, and its success in some measure ascertained. When the intelligence had first been imparted to Mr. Brown, he had been almost struck dumb with astonishment, so foreign it was to all his preconceived notions both of his daughter Hannah, and of pattern women in general. It was exactly the kind of thing that he might have supposed one of the Miss Smiths capable of doing; and if it had been done by one of those reprehensible, unblushing young women, or indeed by any other young lady in Goslingford, Mr. Brown would not have been slow to regard it as conceited, unfemi-
nine, and utterly ridiculous. But Hannah was an exception to all general rules—not only was she a miracle of goodness, but a phenomenon of genius, and as her father sat looking at her in silence, when she had made this communication, his heart swelled with gratitude and pride.

"You have no objection, have you, father?" said Hannah, "for it is not too late yet to put a stop to the business."

"Objection! my dear; I can never have an objection to anything you wish to do. If you can make a little money in any way, after giving me all you possessed, how can I be otherwise than glad? I had no idea you were so clever, and you make no display."

And then old William Brown fell into a reverie over a subject which now often occupied his mind, viz., how little he
had understood his daughter Hannah— and then this led him to wonder if he did understand her now. What about Edgar Smith? Had she forgotten him? Was she happy? Would she ever marry anyone else? She always spoke as if marriage was not in her thoughts. Had Hannah been a mere ordinary girl, this would have gone for nothing with her father; but she was not an ordinary girl. How lonely she would be when he was gone! Would she blame him? Would she ever think that, but for him, she might have had love and affluence, husband and children? Poor old William Brown felt that he could not bear that she should think of him thus; and he loved her so. He had meant it for the best; and he tried to think yet it had been for the best. But would she think so?
It was once more the summer time, the “leafy month of June,” and very warm for the season. The engravings from Hannah’s drawings were in progress, though the matter was still kept quiet in Goslingford. Little consultations with Mr. Bradley and Mr. Wilkins, the president of the Archæological Society, occasionally, though not very often, took Hannah to Buttonborough. Hannah had set off one morning after breakfast, and reached Buttonborough early. She had a good deal of shopping to do in that part of the town near the station, and as Mr. Bradley’s was at some distance, she did her other errands first. Although it was still not late in the day, there was not a breath of air stirring, and the streets were very hot and dusty. When Hannah reached Mr. Bradley’s about noon, she
felt much fagged, and a little out of spirits, as people who are not angels often do on very hot days.

This may perhaps partly explain her discomfiture when, on entering the shop, which was a large one, she perceived, sitting at a counter opposite, Mary Westcote, gaily dressed in the floweriest and most transparent of muslin dresses, with a stylish pink bonnet on her head, and a gay parasol in her hand; while Edgar Smith was standing beside her, and seeming to bend over her, while she smiled up in his face. Hannah felt, with a sudden spasm, that Mary was very pretty, had a brilliant complexion and a fashionable air, while she was painfully conscious that in her plain morning dress, her last year's bonnet, and her mantle covered with dust, she must present a mortifying contrast. And yet
had she not long, long ago made up her mind to this contrast in its fullest extent?

Inconsistent Hannah!

Both of them had looked round as she opened the door, and Mary Westcote, with a triumphant, patronising smile on her face, had turned towards her, while Edgar Smith, becoming suddenly grave, bowed with evident embarrassment.

“How do you do, Miss Brown?” cried Mary Westcote. “Dear me! how dreadfully pale and tired you look! Are you not well?”

“I am very tired,” said Hannah; “the heat——”

But she could say no more—she hardly knew where she was; the shop seemed whirling round, and though to a considerable extent it was the heat, a sudden sense of shame made her feel
as though she wished the earth would yawn and swallow her up. But Edgar Smith was by her side in a moment, with the chair on which Miss Westcote had been sitting.

"Pray, sit down," he said, "let me fetch you a glass of wine. You have overwalked yourself."

Hannah could only bow her thanks, and it was a great relief to see Mr. Bradley at that instant enter the shop. He advanced to her immediately.

"Mr. Wilkins is here," he said. "But how is this?"

"The heat of the weather," said Edgar Smith, in a decided tone.

"Come and have a glass of wine," said Mr. Bradley, kindly; "it is far too hot weather for walking. You must have a fly to go back to the station."
And so saying, he led Hannah, who had in a great measure recovered, into a back parlour, where Mr. Wilkins was already seated, and then he returned to the shop.

"The lady—Miss Brown, I hope, is better."

"Quite well again, I think. I thought, sir, as you seem to know Miss Brown, you would like to see the new work on Ecclesiology. The engravings have been very successful. We have a great many names down, and, in fact, those who are anxious for copies would do well not to delay much longer. Here are some of the proofs, and Mr. Wilkins' name is a sufficient guarantee for the architectural and historical interest of the lectures. And Mr. Bradley displayed the engravings to Edgar Smith, who did not quite understand him."
He admired them greatly, however, and then asked—

"But what have these to do with Miss Brown?"

"I beg your pardon. I thought, as you were acquainted with Miss Brown, that you probably knew that the engravings were from her drawings. I have the originals here now on sale."

And Mr. Bradley produced them.

Edgar Smith and his companion both looked at them eagerly—probably from not quite the same motives.

"Dear me!" said Miss Westcote, "to think of poor Hannah Brown being reduced to earn her livelihood! One feels quite sorry, and as if one ought to do something. It would be quite a charity to take one of her drawings."

And as Miss Westcote spoke she put
on a look of sentimental pity, which did not, however, conceal an air of real indifference, or, perhaps, satisfaction. If she had intended her companion to admire her benevolence, she must have been somewhat mortified that he took no notice of her speech whatever, but, with what almost seemed a slight gesture of impatience, turned to Mr. Bradley, and asked—

"What is the worth of these drawings each?"

"Mr. Wilkins and several other gentlemen who are authorities in such matters, think that they are worth at least five guineas a-piece, but I fear they will not fetch so much—Miss Brown being yet unknown, and the demand for such things not being great."

"Five guineas!" cried Miss Westcote,
opening wide her eyes—"dear me! I should not have thought they were worth more than five shillings. What poor things they are compared with your sister's, Mr. Edgar—Tintern, for instance. That must be worth twenty, if Hannah Brown's are worth five. Everybody thinks it so much finer."

"I will take two of these," said Edgar Smith—"Goslingford and Barley Bridge—at five guineas each. I think them cheap; and, Mr. Bradley, as Miss Brown has not told her acquaintances in her own neighbourhood, I should be obliged to you if you did not mention who was the purchaser."

Good Mr. Bradley's face brightened with pleasure.

"I shall gladly do as you wish," he said, "and I am much obliged to you. Where shall I send the drawings?"
"I will call for them in the course of the day, and bring the cheque with me."

"You are going at three o'clock," said Miss Westcote.

"No; I am afraid I cannot have the pleasure of returning with your mother and yourself, as I had hoped at one time. I may possibly be obliged to dine with a friend, and altogether I think it will be better to make no engagement. I think Mrs. Westcote must be at Slade's by this time—perhaps we had better not keep her waiting."

"Oh, mamma is always late. She will be so disappointed you cannot go back with us, after our being so fortunate, too, as to meet accidentally."

Mr. Smith and Miss Westcote now left the shop together, and walked to
the other end of the long street, where they had made an appointment to meet Mrs. Westcote. Their conversation during the walk was not very lively. The gentleman seemed all at once to have become silent; and Miss Westcote felt inclined to be sulky.

Some days ago she had heard one of the Miss Smiths say her brother was going to Buttonborough on Wednesday, and as she and her mother had intended going for some time, they fixed on that day, and, as it turned out, went by the same train. Mary, as I have already said, was well-dressed and in a good humour. Edgar had seemed pleased enough at the rencontre, and not sorry to escort his pretty companion about in the fashionable streets; but now—

"A change came o'er the spirit of his dream,"
and poor Mary began to feel that the fine day, the transparent muslin, and the pink bonnet had been all in vain. She could not be jealous of Hannah Brown—that was too ridiculous! And yet the very sight of Hannah Brown always seemed to make Edgar Smith disagreeable. She had fondly hoped to-day would have brought matters to a point, but the crisis seemed as far off as ever. And yet, though he never spoke, or even hinted of love, he "paid her so much attention."

Mrs. Westcote was almost as much disconcerted as her daughter, when Edgar Smith took leave, and her spirits were by no means enlivened when she heard of the meeting in Bradley's shop.

"Sly thing!" she said, "to pretend to be taken ill! I wonder how Edgar Smith could be so imposed on. And the
idea of her drawings! These quiet, sly girls have a way of getting round men, Mary, that is not at all creditable."

"But she didn't look well," said Mary; "but, if I had been her, I should have had more spirit than to show I was vexed. And she was such a dowdy! After all, mamma, I am not sure but I like Fred Splint as well as Edgar Smith. He is very nearly as good-looking, and has none of those caprices, and I am sure he'd propose any day I liked. He has as good as done so already, and Edgar Smith never says anything of that kind."

"But he must intend it, my dear, after all the attentions he has paid you, and dangling about so long, and it would be an excellent match. Consider, the Smiths are the principal people in Goslingford; Edgar is so clever and
steady; and he is so good-looking, too. Young men of that kind always give themselves airs; and, moreover, who else is there for him?"

"Hannah Brown, perhaps," said Mary, pettishly.

"Hannah Brown!" was Mrs. Westcote's contemptuous exclamation.

"Well, mamma! you know when I told you long ago how attentive he was to Hannah Brown, you would not believe me, and I was not so far wrong then."

But though Mary Westcote said this, she did not quite actually believe it. "No, he never could think of Hannah Brown, so poor and so dowdy; and when she had refused him, too!"

For, though Mary would not allow it in public, she had a latent belief that he had been rejected by her rival.
When Edgar Smith had freed himself from his companions, he walked backwards and forwards for a few minutes, as if hesitating in which direction to turn. Then he took out his watch, and returning it to his pocket, suddenly, as if some impetus had been given to his movements, set off for Mr. Bradley's, when, having secured his parcel, he hastened in the direction of the Railway Station. Arrived there, he looked rather eagerly about, as if in search of some one. But, if he expected to see anybody he knew, he was disappointed. He returned to Goslingford alone, and arrived at home without any accident or event of any kind whatever.
CHAPTER IX.

EDGAR SMITH’S RESOLUTION, AND HOW IT PROSPERED.

It was that same afternoon. The Smithian dinner was over; the Smithian young ladies had withdrawn to their various lounges on the drawing-room sofas and easy chairs; but Mrs. Smith maintained her ground, along with her husband and son, at the dinner-table. She was questioning her son about his
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visit to Buttonborough. He looked absent, and returned random answers. An expression of impatience, too, passed occasionally over his countenance. Mrs. Smith, at last, became somewhat cross.

"I declare, Edgar, it's no use asking you anything. You seem to have left your wits at Buttonborough. Did you see anybody there you knew?"

"Mrs. and Miss Westcote, I met."

Mrs. Smith's face relaxed into a smile.

"Ah!" she said; "well, as that was the case, I suppose I must forgive you forgetting to order the salmon, and to buy those things at Slade's, though how my dress is to be made without them I am sure I don't know."

"You need not forgive me on that account. I assure you, Mrs. and Miss
Westcote had nothing to do with my sins of omission, for which I am really very sorry."

"Well, say no more about it, then; and I won't blame Mary Westcote either, if you don't like to hear it."

"I don't like you to think that—"

"Oh! don't be afraid I shall be too severe upon her," said Mrs. Smith, rising and laughing, with a tone of incredulity, which made her son follow her. But as he reached the door, he apparently thought better of it, and, opening it for her without any further attempt at remonstrance, he shut it as soon as she was gone, and returned quietly to the table at which his father was still seated.

"Father," he said, after he had taken half a glass of wine. "I think it
right to tell you that I intend to propose again to Hannah Brown."

Mr. Thomas Smith actually started at the suddenness of this announcement.

"Propose to Hannah Brown! The boy is mad!"

"I never was more collected in my life, sir."

"And pray, what may be the reason of this sudden freak?"

"It is neither a freak, sir, nor sudden. I have always preferred Miss Brown to any other woman in the world. I think more highly of her than ever, and if I cannot marry her, I will marry no one else."

"And Miss Westcote. Do you think you are using her well? It is always discreditable to a young man to trifle with a woman's feelings. I will have no hearts broken by my son."
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"There is no danger, my dear father, I assure you, in the present case. If Mary Westcote had had the article you mentioned, I should have asked her to be my wife long ago. I have sought for her heart carefully, but I have not found it."

"A very pretty way of getting off, I must say. You continued your search so long, that I am afraid the young lady must have concluded you had found it. Edgar, let me tell you plainly, I disapprove highly of your conduct. What will become of this poor girl if you throw her off?"

"She will marry Fred Splint, in less than three months; and be far happier than if she had married me."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure."
"In that case then, the world could say nothing," and Mr. Smith meditated.

Mr. Smith, as I have already said, was a genuinely good-tempered man. He cherished no rancour against anybody, not even against William Brown—only a little superficial irritation—but he was a man who thought much of the world's opinion, and old William Brown did not belie him, when he said he had a keen eye to his own interest. He was a far-sighted man, too, and quick to discover the bearings of a question, more especially where that interest was concerned. He now ran over in his mind the various pros and cons with regard to giving his consent to this strange desire, on his son's part, to marry the daughter of his impoverished rival. In the first place, it always gratified Mr. Thomas Smith to
indulge his children, and strange as it appeared, the boy's heart seemed set upon the match. Then it would be as well as look generous and forgiving, and Mr. Smith was a man who appreciated both the approbation of his neighbours and that of his own conscience. And, even in a worldly point of view, it might not be so bad a speculation. There was old Brown's business, which Edgar would of course step into, and this might in the end be worth more than Mary Westcote's few thousands.

But on the other hand, poor Mary Westcote! There was the great drawback. He did not quite believe his son's assertion that she had no heart.

Mr. Smith had little discrimination, in a general way, of the characters of women. He attributed to them a general desire
for matrimony and a good establishment, united with much softness of heart towards those who could offer such advantages to them, and his kindly feelings revolted at the idea of inflicting a double disappointment on Mary's ambition and her affections. In fact it would have required an immense counterbalancing advantage to himself and to his own family, to have induced him to do so. Then another important question was—"What would Mrs. Smith say?"

Now Mr. Smith was by no means a henpecked husband; still to have the wife of his bosom in a state of indignation both at himself and his son, and a state of indignation by no means utterly unjust, was far from a pleasant prospect. Such a fond wife, and a fond mother too, as Mrs. Smith was: and supposing the Browns were to put upon his son the indignity of
a refusal. Even Thomas Smith's soul boiled within him as he thought of such a possibility, and for the moment he was moved to withhold his consent. But Thomas Smith, though a much more outspoken demonstrative man than William Brown, was in reality not so impulsive. He thought before he spoke, though his thinking was rapid.

"I do not like this match so well as I should have liked one with Miss Westcote! but you have arrived at a time of life when a man ought to judge for himself, and upon yourself you must take all the responsibility of this step. Take my advice, however, and do not make the offer till you are certain you will be accepted by the father, as well as by the daughter. He would be worse than a fool to refuse you, considering the poor
girl's situation; but there is no answering for what such a pig-headed, vindictive old fellow may do."

"But he is a fine old fellow, too, sir. I must say so, in spite of his treatment of me. And you must confess, my dear father, his daughter has acted nobly."

"Very romantically, Edgar; and if I had been her father, I do not know that I should have thought myself justified in permitting her to make such a sacrifice."

"Oh! do not say so, my dear father! You would, I am sure. Such a sacrifice ought to be accepted when it is offered, though, perhaps, not many—perhaps nobody but Hannah Brown herself, would have thought of making it."

Edgar spoke warmly, and Thomas Smith
seemed, for a moment, as if conscious of a returning glow of youth, to catch the feelings of his son.

"I believe you would, Edgar," he said, with some emotion.

"Thank you, father," said Edgar, choking down a sensation which sent the blood all over his face. And from that moment, though neither father nor son made any further allusion to the subject, they were drawn closer to each other than they had ever been before.

"Then, father," said Edgar, "I have your approbation in what I am about to undertake?"

"You have my consent, and my good wishes, since you fancy your happiness depends on the matter; though, for many reasons, I could have wished you..."
had looked elsewhere. But, remember, to Miss Brown personally I have no objection. Are you going to ask your mother's consent?"

"After I have obtained Mr. Brown's."

"You undertake to remove mountains."

"Well, sir, I have both faith and perseverance; and then, you know, 'faint heart never won fair lady.'"

Mr. Thomas Smith was not a man to waste any time in regretting what could not be helped. It was also his disposition to look at the bright side of things, and as he lounged into the garden with a small hoe in his hand, for the purpose of rooting out forthwith the minutest weed which might meet his eye, he fell back upon the notions of old Brown's business, the credit that
would redound to Edgar for his generosity, and the high character Hannah herself bore in the town. And then it struck him that Miss Harriet Richards would be pleased. She had never seemed quite cordial about the match with Miss Westcote, and Hannah Brown was a great favourite of hers, and had become more so of late.

Edgar, in the meantime, had joined his mother and sisters in the drawing-room. They did not, however, find him much more collected or agreeable than he had been at the dinner-table; but, as Mrs. Smith had told the girls he had met the Westcotes at Buttonborough, they were very forbearing towards his absence of mind, and merely revenged themselves by a little interchange of smiles and nods, and a few amiably
satirical remarks on the supposed locality of "some people's hearts," with occasional allusions to blue eyes and fair hair—allusions which, when their brother heard, made him rather cross. At last he cried—

"I assure you, Venetia, I don't admire blue eyes and fair hair at all."

"How very polite!" said Venetia, looking in the glass at her own.

"If you will force me into speaking plainly, I cannot help it."

"Lovers are not generally so touchy about a little teasing."

"How can I tell you more plainly, I am not Miss Westcote's lover."

"Well, well, we will say no more about it;" and the sisters smiled to one another with provoking incredulity.

Edgar took up a book, and pretended
to read; but, not finding the occupation very entertaining, he, too, strolled out into the garden.

"How cross he is," said Venetia, "about being teased! Can he and Mary Westcote have had a quarrel?"

"Oh, no!" cried Julietta, "I dare-say it is the heat, and because mamma was annoyed about the salmon, and the trimmings of her dress."

"I don't think it can be quite settled, or he would have told us," said Venetia, "though I don't quite understand why it is not, as, I am sure, Mary is ready enough."

"I think it is settled," said her sister, "and that he will not tell us because we laugh at him. Well, I like the match on the whole, though Mary will never set the Thames on fire."
"It is a great deal better than Hannah Brown," said Venetia, "I could never have got on with her—such a dowdy, too! How Edgar ever could admire her, I could not understand, but one never can understand men."

"Laura used rather to admire her, you remember. Till she fell in love with Edward, she always agreed with Edgar. But there is no use in speaking about her now, as, of course, she is out of the question."

"I should think so," said Venetia, contemptuously.

A day or two after the conversations narrated above, Edgar Smith was walking in the street which communicated with the little paved lane leading to the Old Red House. He had been in this street two or three times every day
since his last visit to Buttonborough, after having hardly set foot in it for a year and a half, as had already been remarked by one or two denizens of the neglected locality; for in Goslingford every movement of everybody was noted and commented on by everybody else.

In country towns the doings of our neighbours are, by no means, absolutely indifferent to us. We have not attained to that frozen self-sufficiency, common only in great cities, which makes it of no consequence whether the bustle next door is occasioned by a wedding or a funeral. We yet take a deep interest in the destiny and the doings of our neighbours, and, to my prejudiced mind, even at the risk of, perhaps, not a little gossip, there is something human 'and kindly in this
feeling of brotherhood. When I have been in London—be not astonished, dear reader, narrow-minded and antiquated as my notions are, I have been in London, and in Paris, too—it has often struck me that the inhabitants of our street or square have been no more to us than the doors on their houses—provided they did not annoy us by playing pianos, or keeping little spaniels that barked all night—and I have been called on to admire the freedom from gossip which was the result of this state of affairs. Now it is not, perhaps, very pleasant to be gossiped about; still, when one has broken one's leg, or fallen sick of a fever, it is pleasant to find our neighbours sending us their wonderful jellies and incomparable leg rests, even though they have a great deal to
say about the doctor we have employed, and their surprise that he has permitted us to go out so soon, and about our own folly in not taking that febrifuge, or using that lotion which has cured so many people. This may all be troublesome enough, still it is quite as human and as Christian as utter indifference.

Thus, it came to pass, that Mr. Silk, the principal draper in Goslingford, Miss Griffin, sister of the late Mr. Griffin, surveyor of roads, and various other persons, began to remark that Mr. Edgar Smith had passed down the street at least a half dozen times within the last three or four days, just as he did when he was paying his addresses to Miss Brown, and to wonder what it could mean. Miss Griffin, who was
rather in poor circumstances, and resided above Mr. Silk's shop, commented on the fact one day when she met Mr. Silk on the stairs.

"I declare, Mr. Silk, there is young Smith going past again! Have you remarked how often he has been passing lately?"

"Well, I have now, Miss Griffin. Is the match on with Miss Brown again, do you think?"

"Oh, la! no, Mr. Silk. I should think not, considering the way he was used before, and how fond the Smiths are of money. I am afraid Miss Brown has not much chance now, poor thing!"

"See, there is old Mr. Brown coming up the street—he seems hardly able to stand against the wind. How he has
aged during the past year! I wonder if they will speak to one another."

And Mr. Silk and Miss Griffin stood still, together, watching with interest from the dusty staircase-window the meeting of the representatives of the families of Brown and Smith.

It was a windy day, more especially for the season, and it did seem too much for the unsteady steps of the poor old man. He was within twenty paces of Edgar Smith, and just passing the entrance of a narrow cross street, when a sudden gust of wind blew his hat off his head right across the way.

Edgar Smith immediately started off in chase of it, and shortly succeeding in capturing it, brought it back to its owner. Mr. Brown, perceiving to whose polite-
ness he was indebted for its restoration, naturally felt a little awkward; but making as dignified a bow as the wind and his situation altogether would permit, he said—

"I am very much obliged to you indeed, sir, for your kindness."

"You are most welcome, Mr. Brown," said the young man, with more outward self-possession, but probably with not less real perturbation, "I only wish that it were in my power to do you a kindness."

Mr. Brown looked full in the young man's face as he spoke, and could not deny to himself that its expression was ingenuous and sincere.

"You are very good, sir," he said, "and I thank you."

"It would gratify me much, Mr.
Brown, if you would take my arm to the corner of the street. The wind is so strong here one can hardly stand against it."

Old William Brown appeared to hesitate for a second, and then he took the proffered aid. Indeed, without absolute rudeness it would have been difficult to decline it, and, moreover, the old man felt that he might not, perhaps, be able to keep his legs till he reached the more sheltered spot.

And now the heart of Edgar Smith began to thump with astounding violence. Here was the opportunity which, lost once, might be lost for ever. Here was the tide in the affairs of Edgar Smith which, taken at the full, might lead on, if not to fortune, at least to the love of a penniless girl.
"I hope—I hope Miss Brown is quite well?"—with a gasp.

"My daughter is quite well, thank you."

And there was a slight change in his tone.

Edgar gasped again. Why would his heart thump so loud? But he must speak now, or never!

"I would give all I possess in the world, Mr. Brown, for your permission to call upon Miss Brown. My feelings to her nothing can ever change; but if you disapprove of them as you once did, I will never mention them again."

Poor old Mr. Brown was so much agitated that he was obliged to cling more tightly to his companion's arm. At last he said, with tolerable calmness—
"You take me by surprise, young man." Then he continued, with a broken voice and a quivering lip—"God has blest me with the best daughter in the world. She is the best judge of her own happiness, and whatever makes her happy will please me."

"I have your leave, then, to address Miss Brown. May I call on her now?"

"To-morrow morning—not till then; I——"

And the old man thought how he would have her all to himself for one night longer.

"Thank you," said Edgar; and a slightly awkward pause succeeded to these words; but young Smith was too happy to mind any little awkwardness.

They had now turned the corner,
and had almost reached Mr. Brown's office, when that gentleman, making an almost superhuman effort, addressed his companion—

"It would be ungracious and ungentlemanly in me, Mr. Edgar Smith, not to say that, under the circumstances, I consider the constancy you have shown, an honour both to my daughter and to yourself, and I beg to retract the expressions I made use of on a former occasion."

Old Brown spoke with a kind of haughty humility.

"Oh, my dear sir, pray, pray never mention them again. I did not expect——"

"Young man," said Mr. Brown, "always expect me to behave like a gentleman."
They were now at the office-door, and shook hands for the first time in their lives. Edgar bounded down the street, and then ran home all the way to Tudor Lodge. He was much gratified, and a little amused at the amende honorable which had just been made to him.

It was the following morning. There had been rain in the night, after the wind had fallen, but the sky was again blue and fresh, save where a few soft white clouds yet floated.

Hannah Brown was sitting, after breakfast, at the open window of the drawing-room, with a heap of domestic needlework before her, just come home from the wash. She looked up every now and then to admire the fresh roses, and the glistening foliage, and the morning light on the church and spire; or to
listen to the cry of the swifts, as in graceful curves they darted round and round the venerable edifice; or to inhale the sweet, old-fashioned fragrance of pinks and sweet peas.

Hannah was in good spirits this morning. The post had brought her a note from Mr. Bradley, telling her he had sold two of her sketches for five guineas each; and on this foundation she had begun to build many little castles in the air. Then her thoughts for a moment took a less agreeable turn, as the sale of her sketches suggested the remembrance of Mr. Bradley's shop, and Mr. Bradley's shop brought back the picture of Edgar Smith bending down to talk to Mary Westcote, in her bright, fashionable dress. Poor Hannah, for an instant again, contrasted, somewhat bitterly, her rival's lot
with her own; then she aroused herself from a reverie into which she had for a few seconds fallen, and began vigorously to mend one of her father’s stockings, while she hummed a cheerful tune. What was it to her whom Edgar Smith should marry? The destinies of no two people in the same place could lie wider apart. She would be cheerful and happy—and had she not already sold her sketches?

As Hannah fixed her thoughts on this consolatory idea, the door-bell rang. But as it could not be a visitor so early in the morning, she darned on unheedingly; but was shortly startled by a slight bustle in the passage outside the drawing-room door. Then the maid-of-all-work—clean, but bare-armed—threw open the door and announced—
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"Please, miss, Mr. Edgar Smith wishes to see you."

And Hannah Brown started to her feet in amazement and confusion, throwing down on the floor a heap of work which was piled on the little table before her.

Edgar Smith had now advanced some steps into the room, the maid had shut the door, and he paused nervously, with a heightened colour.

"Miss Brown!"

"I—I am surprised, Mr. Smith," said Hannah, angry with herself for her want of self-possession, and dreading lest she should betray her feelings, "can I serve you? or perhaps it is my father——"

"Did you not expect me then? Has not your father told you?"

"He has told me nothing," she answered, almost frightened.
But Edgar Smith had now drawn close to her.

"He has left me then to tell you, I am here by his consent—Oh, Hannah! I am not changed. Are you?"

What Hannah answered, I cannot take upon myself to relate. In truth I am not sure that she answered at all. I can only say that in a few seconds she and Edgar Smith were seated together on the sofa, that her lips and cheeks were quite pale, and that she trembled violently. He held her hand, which was very cold, firmly in his; he had recovered his self-possession, and was speaking to her calmly. Probably he was setting her mind at rest about her father.

An hour had passed, and they were still together. Now the colour had returned to Hannah's face, and she looked a little
excited, but happy. So did Edgar Smith. Perhaps his former calmness had been partly assumed. They were both talking now in a lively manner.

"I was so certain, only this morning," said Hannah, "that you were going to marry Mary Westcote."

To which Edgar made some answer, much more flattering to Hannah than to the lady to whom she had referred.

"But how much you have been with her! I—I hope she is not disappointed."

"If she should be, Hannah, will you act the part of a generous-minded heroine, and give me up to her?"

Hannah could not help smiling, though she did not quite approve.

"I am afraid, Edgar, you are very conceited."

"Indeed, Hannah, I am not," he
answered, seriously; "I am profoundly conscious in my heart how much better you are than I am. But I never felt this towards Mary Westcote. I confess, with shame towards you, that for a long time I was angry with you, and tried hard to love her; but I never sought to make her love me, and she does not love me. I wish I had acted differently. I would have been more worthy of you. She may be disappointed, but I am sure her heart is not broken. But if it were," he asked again, in a lighter tone, "would you give me up?"

"I would give you up, Edgar, rather than you should do what was wrong; but not for anything else."

"Dear Hannah! I give you my word, I never spoke a syllable to Mary Westcote that might not have been proclaimed at
the cross. You will soon see, I am sure, that she is not heart-broken. And now are you satisfied?"

"I must be satisfied," she said, with a smile so happy, that Edgar Smith thought no more of Mary Westcote.
CHAPTER XIII.

AND THE LAST.

Words would fail to convey to the reader the amazement—the almost stunned sensation of wonder which took possession of the public mind of Goslingford when the Smith and Brown alliance was announced by both families as a settled thing.

Mr. Silk and Miss Griffin were the only persons who were not astonished. They "had seen," they "had thought," and very
eagerly they were listened to in their own circle, while the nine days' wonder lasted. But their circle was of course not the circle of the Browns and the Smiths, though it was, to do it justice, quite as much interested as if it had been. Clara Wellby was at first a little hurt that she had not been more confided in. But when it was explained to her how there had been nothing to confide, she was pacified, nay delighted.

"Hannah would be provided for—Hannah would be married—much happier for Hannah, who had not her independence of feeling or expansiveness of interest."

This latter quality she immediately began to display in the purchase of Hannah's trousseau, and in all the other arrangements now making for the young pair. She had apparently elected herself dictator in all these matters, and when
Hannah especially, ventured to have any opinion of her own, was prone to feel aggrieved. Still, after a few hours' reflection, she was too kind-hearted and too fond of her young friend, not to forgive her, and relieved herself merely by grumbling to Miss Harriet Richards, who generally listened in silence. That good soul was very much pleased with the match. It was what she had always wished. "Dear, good Hannah was about to become a member of a pious family, and Edgar Smith was not going to throw himself away upon a silly, flirting, dressed-up girl." And Harriet testified her approbation by making the young couple jointly a handsome present of plate—a present, which gave privately the most intense satisfaction to Mr. Smith, senior, who regarded it as the earnest of better things to come.
It is well for you, Harriet, to be able to make such presents," said Miss Wellby, who, though much pleased, could never resist an opportunity of a hit at her old friend, and was moreover slightly jealous that she had been able to do more for Hannah than she could afford herself. "Do you intend to be as liberal to all the young people married in Goslingford?"

"No, Clara, I do not; but I wish to testify both to the Browns and the Smiths my approbation of this match. The Browns behaved most honourably at the time of poor Mr. Brown's losses. The Smiths now are acting the part of true Christians, as I have always thought them. I do not know a finer natural character than Hannah Brown, and I rejoice to think she is so soon to become one of a Christian family."
"Oh! she has been one of a heathen family hitherto you think; and so to reward her for giving up the worship of idols of wood and stone, you are going to give her quantities of silver, not being one of those who can say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'"

"Oh, Clara!" was poor Harriet's rejoinder; and then Miss Wellby, satisfied with her triumph, entered with her friend into a lively discussion on the merits and beauties of the trays, salt-cellars, coffee-pot, &c., and then of the on dits of the Smith and Brown factions, who mostly found themselves, at present, between the horns of a dilemma.

But what did Mrs. Smith say? was a question which many asked, though, as the Brownites remarked, if she got over the marriage of her daughter with
a Puseyite parson, there was no reason why she should not also get over the marriage of her son with Hannah Brown. And, accordingly, she did get over it wonderfully; she extolled the Christian virtues of her husband and son, and magnified the constancy and generosity of Edgar. Of old Mr. Brown she said nothing; but in speaking of Hannah she echoed the sentiments of Miss Richards, adding, that she was amazingly clever, and might have made a fortune as an artist; and that, for her part, though Hannah had not the style of her own girls, she thought her very pretty.

Edgar had, indeed, removed mountains; but in fact, when Mrs. Smith was made aware that the irrevocable step was taken, like a partial mother, and a wise if not a consistent woman,
she began to regard it in the most favourable light. It was not that the Smiths had given in to the Browns. The Browns had, in fact, "knuckled down," as it were, to the Smiths—quite a different thing; and, this being the case, Mrs. Smith found it much easier to forgive them their former offences. It is so easy to be magnanimous when one's pride has been propitiated. Harriet Richards, too, approved of it, and her husband defended it—and last, not least, it was Edgar's own doing, and Edgar surely must do right.

To her own daughters, of course, she still owned many little grudges against Hannah Brown; but Hannah, being no longer a Brown, but an incipient Smith to the rest of the world, was, of course, to be upheld as infallible. Equally, of
course, many people were amused at this great revolution in Mrs. Smith's opinion, and none so much so as her former friend, Mrs. Westcote, who now went off into a fit of laughter—laughter which had rather a vicious sound—whenever Mrs. Smith's name was mentioned—

"Oh! the way Mrs. Smith wheels round is so amusing; and the idea of her pretending she is pleased with Hannah Brown for a daughter-in-law!—when I know well she wanted somebody else. If I were only to tell you half the things she has said to me; but some people value themselves too much to take other people's leavings. I wonder how the Browns' pride ever came down so low; but some girls have not the choice of other girls."
But notwithstanding Mrs. Westcote's laughter and high spirits, everybody said she was disappointed—and when, about a fortnight after the announcement of Edgar Smith's marriage, Miss Westcote's to Mr. Frederick Splint was also announced, everybody said so still; and those who had blamed Edgar Smith were now inclined to excuse him. In short, the tide of popularity, which had set in so strongly in favour of the Browns at the time of their losses, now set in as strongly in favour of the Smiths. A grand armistice seemed to have been tacitly agreed upon by the two factions—the prelude to a permanent peace, to be cemented, as among other high contracting parties, by a matrimonial alliance.

Henceforward the rival factions of Gos-
lingford could rally no longer round the old familiar watchwords of Brown and Smith. As for the factions themselves, we all know that, though those may slumber for a short period of excitement, they never die. And a good thing, too, on the whole, while human nature is what it is. Can we imagine a country without its liberals and conservatives, without its Guelphs and Ghibellines, or a town without its Montagues and Capulets, without its Browns and Smiths? The liberals need the conservatives to keep them in order, the Guelphs the Ghibellines, and *vice versa*. If Browns were to have all their own way at vestry meetings, at boards of guardians, at school committees, without the Argus eyes of the Smithian crew to discern their errors, and their sharp
tongues to point them out, would it really be the better for the public? Diamond cuts diamond, and steel polishes steel, and human beings are not so good and perfect yet, that they can afford to dispense with the whetstone of emulation.

Edgar Smith and Hannah Brown were married in the old church of Goslingford. It was a very quiet wedding; not much company, and very few bridesmaids. Not so that of Miss Westcote, which took place the following morning, and which, she was resolved, "should not be a dowdy, sneaking affair, as if she were ashamed of it." Her dress was the handsomest, her veil the finest, that had ever been seen in Goslingford—as even those of Mrs. Edward Edwards had been nothing in comparison.
Eight bridesmaids, in pink and white, attended her to the altar, and her Sunday school class strewed flowers in her path. Her mother gave a splendid breakfast, and a carriage with four greys drove Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Splint to the Dustwhirl Road Station. This, however, the Goslingford public, in general, pronounced to be "very foolish," and extolled the superior sense of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Smith, who had set off with only a pair. And "it was in Mr. Smith senior's private carriage, whereas the vehicle which conveyed the Splints was only hired, which made it the more ridiculous." And the old-fashioned Goslingforders shook their heads, and "wished good might come of it." "Who were Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Splint, to set up to be finer than the Browns and
the Smiths, who had always been reckoned the principal people in this place?"

And these remarks somewhat consoled the two Miss Smiths for the quietness of their brother's wedding, which, as contrasted with that of Mary Westcote, had slightly mortified them. They were sadly afraid, notwithstanding their brother's continental education, that he might, after all, fall into dowdy, Brown ways.

Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Smith took up their abode, with old Mr. Brown, in the Old Red House. Many persons prophesied that this arrangement "would never answer." It did answer, however, pretty well. I do not say that Edgar Smith would not have infinitely preferred a house of his own; but he was very good-tempered, though he had said him-
self he was not, and bore, in a won-
derful manner, with his father-in-law's peculiarities. And, if at any time these appeared peculiarly trying, a glance at Hannah's imploring face would check him at once, and he would think how the possession of that treasure overpaid him for all petty trials, and how he could bear anything rather than to bring a cloud on that face. For Edgar Smith, with all his faults and foibles, was a gentleman, in the best sense of the word. Thus, though he and Hannah were happy, they had their share of mortal cares. Among these might be mentioned the little grudges and affronts which were frequently manifested by the Tudor Lodge party, more especially by Mrs. Smith, senior. To keep her and old Mr. Brown on good terms required.
an amazing amount of diplomacy and management on the part of the young pair. How they had to put the best face on all Mr. Brown's eccentricities, and smooth down all his asperities—how they had to soften Mrs. Smith's speeches, and to ignore her interferences, and how they had to keep up an appearance, not only to the world, but in their own family circle, of the extremest friendship and intimacy, while they contrived to reduce personal intercourse to the minimum—it would take chapters to relate.

And when, to the great delight of Grandpapa Brown, as well as to the satisfaction of all the Smiths, a little Hannah made her appearance, the ground on which harmony rested seemed only to become more dangerous, and the hidden fires more ready to burst out. As was natural,
Grandmamma thought—she having experience, and Hannah having none—it was a kindness to be constantly at the Old Red House, that she might dictate, in every particular, as to the management of this pledge of the union of the Browns and the Smiths. Poor old Mr. Brown could not come home to his three o'clock dinner without finding Mrs. Smith turning the house upside down.

"These draughts are not good for the baby;" or the dinner was delayed for half an hour, as the child "could not fail to be ill if Hannah partook of what had originally been ordered."

Then she was "sure the nurse did not carry it right; and as Mr. Brown was the master of the house, and had more weight with the woman than anybody else, he ought to speak to her."
Mr. Brown was half-distracted, and at last told Hannah that he could bear it no longer—not even for her sake; that he knew the next time Mrs. Smith attacked him they should quarrel. And Hannah, weeping, told her husband. He made a wry face and kissed her, and told her he would not have her bothered. And the next morning he walked up to Tudor Lodge, and broke the affair to his mother as delicately and skilfully as he could.

But skilfully as it was managed, Edgar's hint was but the spark wanting to fire the train which had been laid so long.

There was a great explosion. Mrs. Smith "was not surprised at any amount of obstinacy and ingratitude on the part of the Browns; but she had hoped
better things from her own son. She saw now that he was not her son, but Hannah Brown's husband," &c.

And Edgar blazed up in defence of his wife, and there was quite a scene; and then Mrs. Smith wept, and Edgar begged her pardon if he had been hasty, and acknowledged how much he owed to her affection. And they embraced, and were reconciled.

But from that day there was a wider gulf between Mrs. Smith and Mr. Brown. Outwardly their politeness to each other was excessive, even to formality, but what their inward feelings were we will not inquire. Mrs. Smith very rarely came now to the Old Red House. When she did, she said little, but looked much, and would gaze at her son and the baby, and then sigh, while Mr. Brown fidgeted un-
easily on his chair, and Hannah looked wretched. If anyone happened to ask her opinion on the merest trifle, she answered, she "never gave advice—she never ventured to have an opinion about other people's affairs, even when they were her own children."

To do the elder Mr. Smith and his daughters justice, they tried to make the best of matters, but came at last to the conclusion that it was best to leave them alone.

Yet Edgar and Hannah were happy, though there were moments when they both thought themselves miserable. But these were only moments—and how many among us are happier? We all paint to ourselves a perfect picture of domestic happiness—an orderly house, where there are never ashes on the hearth or litter on the carpet.
THE BROWNS AND THE SMITHS.

—where there is ever a wife sweet and cheerful, and children joyous and blooming; but we forget that children must cry and litter the carpet, that the best of wives have times of sickness and hours of worry; that the best fuel has some ashes, and matrimony in its brightest form has even an additional share of cares, great and small. Then, even where the united families are not Browns and Smiths, how, in a world where the inhabitants are not angels, can they be expected to see eye to eye or feel heart to heart? Mrs. Jones will ever be of opinion that her son is more attentive to his wife's family than to his own; and Mrs. Robinson, that her daughter has got into the foolish, extravagant ways of the Joneses.

The "great old dusty pedagogue," as
Carlyle has styled honest, irascible, wise old Johnson, has given the best definition of the difference between the happiness of married and single life—a definition more easily understood than some of his definitions. "Married life," said he, "has many cares, and single life few pleasures."

But cares and trials borne for love's sake, though bitter in the seed, are sweet in the fruit. When poverty, for instance, comes in at the door, love does not always fly out of the window; with all finer natures he becomes, on the contrary, stronger and tenderer than ever. Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were a much more attached couple in their misfortunes than they had ever been in the day of their exaltation.

And so, to compare small things
with great (and small things, after all, are more trying to the temper), the mutual affection of Edgar and Hannah Smith acquired, under their family discipline, a fulness and power which, under less trying circumstances, it might never have attained. This was a great reward for all the self-control they were obliged to practise. But the day came when Edgar had another reward.

It was summer time again, late in the summer, verging on the early autumn. The weather was warm, but, for the season, not oppressive. The apples began to swell and redden on the espaliers in the garden of the Old Red House, and the long shadow of the church spire lay slanting dreamily over the trim borders. The air was full of the fragrance of sweet peas and migno-
nette, and, contrasted with the unbroken light of the blue and cloudless sky, the ivy in the shady corners looked refreshingly dark and cool.

Old William Brown, in a garden-chair, was being wheeled about by a man whose business it was to render that office to his master, as well as to superintend and work in the garden. Little Hannah, in a great straw hat, was trotting about near him, and the elder Hannah walking by his side, looking pleased and happy, but as if she felt the exertion on the warm summer day.

It was nearly dinner-time, and Edgar was expected every instant from the office. At last he appeared from the garden-door, and Hannah's face brightened into smiles as she hastened to meet him, and then she said—
"We will leave you with grandpapa, Edgar, while we change our things."

"Shall I wheel you, sir?" said Edgar, as the two Hannahs disappeared, and the servant went to tie up some flowers.

"No, I would rather sit a little in the sunshine. It is not too warm for my chill old blood."

"Then I will sit down, too," said Edgar, drawing forward a camp-stool, which his wife had been occupying a short time before.

For a minute or two, the young man and the old one both sat silent, Edgar revelling, half unconsciously, in the beauty of the day, and in the monastic quietude of the scene—Mr. Brown, thinking—thinking, perhaps, of life, which, to the old, has a far horizon on the side
of memory, while on the side of expectation, it has only a tall impervious hedge of yew, casting a long shadow in the evening light, as well over the fading landscape the traveller has left behind, as over the narrow space which yet divides him from its darkness.

"Edgar," said the old man, thoughtfully, "once it was the fashion, more than it is now-a-days, to talk of happy old age reposing in the consciousness of a well-spent life. I have just been wondering if any one could look back on his life, and feel it well-spent; or if anyone ever did look forward with confidence resting on this. I know, when I am gone, many will call my life well-spent; once I thought so myself; but, at this moment, it seems to me a series of mistakes and unkindnesses. Edgar, I
am too feeble to do so myself, but, when I am gone, tell your father and mother I parted with them in perfect charity. For yourself, I confess, at one time I mistook you utterly, and the discovery of that mistake has led me to suspect I may have made others. I thank you for all your affection and kindness to Hannah, and oh! Edgar, give her a double portion when she has no one else to love her—and may the blessing of an old man be on your head, my Son!"

Edgar started from his seat, much moved, but Mr. Brown waved him back, and then said, with the resolute calmness with which he had already spoken—

"Edgar, I am not able. Let us be quiet, it would kill me. I cannot speak to Hannah, but you——"
And Edgar said, solemnly—
"I will."

The old man pressed his hand on his heart, as if he felt a sudden spasm, and leant back in his chair exhausted.

Not very many days after this conversation, the mourners went about the streets for old William Brown. There were not many invited guests at the funeral, but so many others attended that it was the largest funeral that had been seen in Goslingford for many long years. No man had ever been more respected than old William Brown, and the sensation of sadness which invaded the hearts of his townsfolks, as the funeral bell broke the stillness of the summer day, was deepened by the feeling that there was now no Brown in Goslingford.
There is always something saddening in witnessing the end of anything, to beings who feel that any end is a type and emblem of the end. The last day at school or college—the last blossom of the spring—the last chapter of the book, even though the end may be but a step to a better beginning, are all pathetic in their appeal to our feelings. But the end, not only of a life, but of a family, and a family associated for generations with a locality and its interests, is an event which comes home to most hearts.

But there were circumstances in the present ceremony even more striking than usual.

The last of the Browns was borne to his resting-place by his hereditary enemies. A Smith was the chief mourner,
and Smiths stood round the open grave.

Old Thomas Smith seemed more affected even than anyone else; and, as he walked away, he said to Mr. Greenwood—

"There lies a better man than I—a Christian—a forgiving man. May my latter end be like his!"

The great Brown and Smith rivalry, like all things human, was at an end for ever; and let us say of its memory, as of the memory of the erring but honest man that day laid in his grave—

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