YONGE CHARLOTTE MARY

MAGNUM BONUM; OR, MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I.—JOE BROWNLOW'S FANCY

The lady said, "An orphan's fate
Is sad and hard to bear."—Scott.

"Mother, you could do a great kindness."

"Well, Joe?"

"If you would have the little teacher at the Miss Heath's here for the holidays. After all the rest, she has had the measles last and worst, and they don't know what to do with her, for she came from the asylum for officers' daughters, and has no home at all, and they must go away to have the house purified. They can't take her with them, for their sister has children, and she will have to roam from room to room before the whitewashers, which is not what I should wish in the critical state of chest left by measles."

"What is her name?"

"Allen. The cry was always for Miss Allen when the sick girls

wanted to be amused."

"Allen! I wonder if it can be the same child as the one Robert was interested about. You don't remember, my dear. It was the year you were at Vienna, when one of Robert's brother-officers died on the voyage out to China, and he sent home urgent letters for me to canvass right and left for the orphan's election. You know Robert writes much better than he speaks, and I copied over and over again his account of the poor young man to go with the cards. 'Caroline Otway Allen, aged seven years, whole orphan, daughter of Captain Allen, l07th Regiment;' yes, that's the way it ran."

"The year I was at Vienna, and Robert went out to China. That was eleven years ago. She must be the very child, for she is only eighteen. They sent her to Miss Heath's to grow a little older, for though she was at the head of everything at the asylum, she looks so childish that they can't send her out as a governess. Did you see her, mother?"

"Oh, no! I never had anything to do with her; but if she is daughter to a friend of Robert's—"

Mother and son looked at each other in congratulation. Robert was the stepson, older by several years, and was viewed as the representative of sober common sense in the family. Joe and his mother did like to feel a plan quite free from Robert's condemnation for enthusiasm or impracticability, and it was not the worse for his influence, that he had been generally with his regiment, and when visiting them was a good deal at the United

Service Club. He had lately married an heiress in a small way, retired from the army, and settled in a house of hers in a country town, and thus he could give his dicta with added weight.

Only a parent or elder brother would, however, have looked on "Joe" as a youth, for he was some years over thirty, with a mingled air of keenness, refinement, and alacrity about his slight but active form, altogether with the air of some implement, not meant for ornament but for use, and yet absolutely beautiful, through perfection of polish, finish, applicability, and a sharpness never meant to wound, but deserving to be cherished in a velvet case.

This case might be the pretty drawing-room, full of the choice artistic curiosities of a man of cultivation, and presided over by his mother, a woman of much the same bright, keen, alert sweetness of air and countenance: still under sixty, and in perfect health and spirits—as well she might be, having preserved, as well as deserved, the exclusive devotion of her only child during all the years in which her early widowhood had made them all in all to each other. Ten years ago, on his election to a lectureship at one of the London hospitals, the son had set up his name on the brass plate of the door of a comfortable house in a once fashionable quarter of London; she had joined him there, and they had been as happy as affection and fair success could make them. He became lecturer at a hospital, did much for the poor, both within and without its walls, and had besides a fair practice, both among the tradespeople, and also among

the literary, scientific, and artistic world, where their society was valued as much as his skill. Mrs. Brownlow was well used to being called on to do the many services suggested by a kind heart in the course of a medical man's practice, and there was very little within, or beyond, reason that she would not have done at her Joe's bidding. So she made the arrangement, exciting much gratitude in the heads of the Pomfret House Establishment for Young Ladies; though without seeing little Miss Allen, till, from the Doctor's own brougham, but escorted only by an elderly maid-servant, there came climbing up the stairs a little heap of shawls and cloaks, surmounted by a big brown mushroom hat.

"Very proper of Joe. He can't be too particular,—but such a child!" thought Mrs. Brownlow as the mufflings disclosed a tiny creature, angular in girlish sort, with an odd little narrow wedge of a face, sallow and wan, rather too much of teeth and mouth, large greenish-hazel eyes, and a forehead with a look of expansion, partly due to the crisp waves of dark hair being as short as a boy's. The nose was well cut, and each delicate nostril was quivering involuntarily with emotion—or fright, or both.

Mrs. Brownlow kissed her, made her rest on the sofa, and talked to her, the shy monosyllabic replies lengthening every time as the motherliness drew forth a response, until, when conducted to the cheerful little room which Mrs. Brownlow had carefully decked with little comforts for the convalescent, and with the ornaments likely to please a girl's eye, she suddenly broke into a little irrepressible cry of joy and delight. "Oh! oh! how lovely!

Am I to sleep here? Oh! it is just like the girls' rooms I always *did* long to see! Now I shall always be able to think about it."

"My poor child, did you never even see such a room?"

"No; I slept in the attic with the maid at old Aunt Mary's, and always in a cubicle after I went to the asylum. Some of the girls who went home in the holidays used to describe such rooms to us, but they could never have been so nice as this! Oh! oh! Mrs. Brownlow, real lilies of the valley! Put there for me! Oh! you dear, delicious, pearly things! I never saw one so close before!"

"Never before." That was the burthen of the song of the little bird with wounded wing who had been received into this nest. She had the dimmest remembrance of home or mother, something a little clearer of her sojourn at her aunt's, though there the aunt had been an invalid who kept her in restraint in her presence, and her pleasures had been in the kitchen and in a few books, probably 'Don Quixote' and 'Evelina,' so far as could be gathered from her recollection of them. The week her father had spent with her, before his last voyage, had been the one vivid memory of her life, and had taught her at least how to love. Poor child, that happy week had had to serve her ever since, through eleven years of unbroken school! Not that she pitied herself. Everybody had been kind to her—governesses, masters, girls, and all. She had been happy and successful, and had made numerous friends, about whom, as she grew more at home, she freely chatted to Mrs. Brownlow, who was always ready to hear of Mary Ogilvie and Clara Cartwright, and liked to draw out

the stories of the girl-world, in which it was plain that Caroline Allen had been a bright, good, clever girl, getting on well, trusted and liked. She had been half sorry to leave her dear old school, half glad to go on to something new. She was evidently not so comfortable, while Miss Heath's lowest teacher, as she had been while she was the asylum's senior pupil. Yet when on Sunday evening the Doctor was summoned and the ladies were left tete-a-tete, she laughed rather than complained. But still she owned, with her black head on Mrs. Brownlow's lap, that she had always craved for something—something, and she had found it now!

Everything was a fresh joy to her, every print on the walls, every ornament on the brackets, seemed to speak to her eye and to her soul both at once, and the sense of comfort and beauty and home, after the bareness of school, seemed to charm her above all. "I always did want to know what was inside people's windows," she said.

And in the same way it was a feast to her to get hold of "a real book," as she called it, not only the beginnings of everything, and selections that always broke off just as she began to care about them. She had been thoroughly well grounded, and had a thirst for knowledge too real to have been stifled by the routine she had gone through—though, said she, "I do want time to get on further, and to learn what won't be of any use!"

"Of no use!" said Mr. Brownlow laughing—having just found her trying to make out the Old English of King Alfred's 'Boethius'—"such as this?"

"Just so! They always are turning me off with 'This won't be of any use to you.' I hate use—"

"Like Ridley, who says he reads a book with double pleasure if he is not going to review it."

"That Mr. Ridley who came in last evening?"

"Even so. Why that opening of eyes?"

"I thought a critic was a most formidable person."

"You expected to see a mess of salt and vinegar prepared for his diet?"

"I should prepare something quite different—milk and sweetbreads, I think."

"To soften him? Do you hear, mother? Take advice."

Caroline—or Carey, as she had begged to be called—blushed, and drew back half-alarmed, as she always was when the Doctor caught up any of the little bits of fun that fell so shyly and demurely from her, as they were evoked by the more congenial atmosphere.

It was a great pleasure to him and to his mother to show her some of the many things she had never seen, watch her enjoyment, and elicit whether the reality agreed with her previous imaginations. Mr. Brownlow used to make time to take the two ladies out, or to drop in on them at some exhibition, checking the flow of half-droll, half-intelligent remarks for a moment, and then encouraging it again, while both enjoyed that most amusing thing, the fresh simplicity of a grown-up, clever child.

"How will you ever bear to go back again?" said Carey's

school-friend, Clara Cartwright, now a governess, whom Mrs. Brownlow had, with some suppressed growls from her son, invited to share their one day's country-outing under the horse-chestnut trees of Richmond.

"Oh! I shall have it all to take back with me," was the answer, as Carey toyed with the burnished celandine stars in her lap.

"I should never dare to think of it! I should dread the contrast!"

"Oh no!" said Carey. "It is like a blind person who has once seen, you know. It will be always warm about my heart to know there are such people."

Mrs. Brownlow happened to overhear this little colloquy while her son was gone to look for the carriage, and there was something in the bright unrepining tone that filled her eyes with tears, more especially as the little creature still looked very fragile —even at the end of a month. She was so tired out with her day of almost rapturous enjoyment that Mrs. Brownlow would not let her come down stairs again, but made her go at once to bed, in spite of a feeble protest against losing one evening.

"And I am afraid that is a recall," said Mrs. Brownlow, seeing a letter directed to Miss Allen on the side-table. "I will not give it to her to-night, poor little dear; I really don't know how to send her back."

"Exactly what I was thinking," said the Doctor, leaning over the fire, which he was vigorously stirring.

"You don't think her strong enough? If so, I am very glad," said the mother, in a delighted voice. "Eh, Joe?" as there was a

pause; and as he replaced the poker, he looked up to her with a colour scarcely to be accounted for by the fire, and she ended in an odd, startled, yet not displeased tone, "It is that—is it?"

"Yes, mother, it is that," said Joe, laughing a little, in his relief that the plunge was made. "I don't see that we could do better for your happiness or mine."

"Don't put mine first" (half-crying).

"I didn't know I did. It all comes to the same thing."

"My dear Joe, I only wish you could do it to-morrow, and have no fuss about it! What will Robert do?"

"Accept the provision for his friend's daughter," said Joe, gravely; and then they both burst out laughing. In the midst came the announcement of dinner, during which meal they refrained themselves, and tried to discuss other things, though not so successfully but that it was reported in the kitchen that something was up.

Joseph was just old enough for his mother, who had always dreaded his marriage, to have begun to wish for it, though she had never yet seen her ideal daughter-in-law, and the enforced silence during the meal only made her more eager, so that she began at once as soon as they were alone.

"When did you begin to think of this, Joe?"

"Not when I asked you to invite her—that would have been treacherous. No, but when I began to realise what it would be to send her back to her treadmill; though the beauty of it is that she never seems to realise that it is a treadmill."

"She might now, though I tried so hard not to spoil her. It is that content with such a life which makes me think that in her you may have something more worth than the portion, which—which I suppose I ought to regret and say you will miss."

"I shall get all that plentifully from Robert, mother."

"I am afraid it does entail harder work on you, and later on in life, than if you had chosen a person with something of her own."

"Something of her own? Her own, indeed! Mother, she has that of her own which is the very thing to help and inspire me to make a name, and work out an idea, worth far more than any pounds, shillings, and pence, or even houses or lands I might get with a serene and solemn dame, even with clear notions as to those same L. s. d.!"

"For shame, Joe! You may be as much in love as you please, but don't be wicked."

For this description was applicable to the bride whom Robert had presented to them about a year ago, on retiring with a Colonel's rank.

"So I may be as much in love as I please? Thank you. I always knew you were the very best mother in the world:" and he came and kissed her.

"I wonder what she will say, the dear child!"

"May be that she has no taste for such an old fellow. Hush, mother. Seriously, my chief scruple is whether it be fair to ask a girl to marry a man twice her age, when she has absolutely seen nothing of his kind but the German master!"

"Trust her," said Mrs. Brownlow. "Nay, she never could have a freer choice than now, when she is too young and simple to be weighted with a sense of being looked down on. It is possible that she may be startled at first, but I think it will be only at life opening on her; so don't be daunted, and imagine it is your old age and infirmity," said the mother, smoothing back the locks which certainly were not the clustering curls of youth.

How the mother watched all the next morning, while the unconscious Carey first marvelled at her nervousness and silence, and then grew almost infected by it. It was very strange, she thought, that Mrs. Brownlow, always so kind, should say nothing but "humph" on being told that Miss Heath's workmen had finished, and that she must return next Monday morning. It was the Doctor's day to be early at the hospital, and he had had a summons to see some one on the way, so that he was gone before breakfast, when Carey's attempts to discuss her happy day in the country met with such odd, fitful answers; for, in fact, Mrs. Brownlow could not trust herself to talk, and had no sooner done breakfast than she went off to her housekeeping affairs and others, which she managed unusually to prolong.

Carey was trying to draw some flowers in a glass before her —a little purple, green-winged orchis, a cowslip, and a quivering dark-brown tuft of quaking grass. He came and stood behind her, saying—

"You've got the character of those."

"They are very difficult," sighed Carey; "I never tried flowers

before, but I wanted to take them with me."

"To take them with you?" he repeated, rather dreamily.

"Yes, back to another sort of Heath," she said, with a little laugh; "don't you know I go next Monday?"

"If you go, I hope it will only be to come back."

"Oh! if Mrs. Brownlow is so good as to let me come again in the holidays!" and she was all one flush of joy, looking round, and up in his face, to see whether it could be true.

"Not only for holidays—for work days," he said, and his voice shook.

"But Mrs. Brownlow can't want a companion?"

"But I do. Caroline, will you come back to us to make home doubly sweet to a busy man, who will do his best to make you happy?"

The little creature looked up in his face bewildered, and then said shyly, the colour surging into her face—

"Please, what did you say?"

"I asked if you would stay with us, and make this place bright for us, as my wife," he said, taking both the little brown hands into his own, and looking into the widely-opened wondering eyes; while she answered, "if I may,"—the very words, almost the very tone, in which she had replied to his invitation to come to recover at his house.

"Ah, my poor child, you have no one's leave to ask!" he said; "you belong to us, only to us,"—and he drew her into his arms, and kissed her.

Then he felt and heard a great sob, and there were two tears on her cheek when he could see her face, but she smiled with happy, quivering lip, and said—

"It was like when papa kissed me before he went away; he would be so glad."

In the midst of the caress that answered this, a bell sounded, and in the certainty that the announcement of luncheon would instantly follow, they started apart.

Two seconds later they met Mrs. Brownlow on the landing—

"There, mother," said the Doctor.

"My child!" and Carey was in her arms.

"Oh, may I?—Is it real?" said the girl in a stifled voice.

After that, they took it very quietly. Carey was so young and ignorant of the world that she was not nearly so much overpowered as if she had had the slightest external knowledge either of married life, or of the exceptional thing the doctor was doing. Her mother had died when she was three years old, and she had never since that time lived with wedded folk, while even her companions at school being all fatherless, she had gathered nothing of even second-hand experience from them. All she knew was from books, which had given glimpses into happy homes; and though she had feasted on a few novels during this happy month, they had been very select, and chiefly historical romance. She was at the age when nothing is impossible to youthful dreams, and if Tancredi had come out of the Gerusalemme and thrown himself at her feet, she would hardly

have felt it more strangely dream-like than the transformation of her kind doctor into her own Joe: and on the other hand, she had from the first moment nestled so entirely into the home that it would have seemed more unnatural to be torn away from it than to become a part of it. As to her being an extraordinary and very disadvantageous choice for him, she simply knew nothing of the matter; she was used to passiveness as to her own destiny, and now that she did indeed "belong to somebody" she let those somebodies think and decide for her with the one certainty that what Mr. Brownlow and his mother liked was sure to be the truly right and happy thing.

So, instead of being alarmed and scrupulous, she was sweetly, shyly, and yet confidingly gay and affectionate, enchanting both her companions, but revealing by her naive questions and remarks such utter ignorance of all matters of common life that Mrs. Brownlow had no scruples in not stirring the question, that had never occurred to her son or his little betrothed, namely, her own retirement. Caroline needed a mother far too much for her to be spared.

What was to be done about Miss Heath? It was due to her for Miss Allen to offer to return till her place could be supplied, Mrs. Brownlow said—but that was only to tease the lovers—for a quarter, at which Joe made a snarling howl, whereat Carey ventured to laugh at him, and say she should come home for every Sunday, as Miss Pinniwinks, the senior governess, did.

"Come home,—it is enough to say that," she added.

Mrs. Brownlow undertook to negotiate the matter, her son saying privately—

"Get her off, if you have to advance a quarter. I'd rather do anything than send her back for even a week, to have all manner of nonsense put into her head. I'd sooner go and teach there myself."

"Or send me?" asked his mother.

"Anything short of that," he said.

Miss Heath, as Mrs. Brownlow had guessed, thought an engaged girl as bad as a barrel of gunpowder, and was quite as much afraid of Miss Allen putting nonsense into her pupils' heads as the doctor could be of the reverse process: so, young teachers not being scarce, Carey's brief connection with Miss Heath was brought to an end in a morning call, whence she returned endowed with thirteen book-markers, five mats, and a sachet.

Carey had of her own, as it appeared, twenty-five pounds a year, which had hitherto clothed her, and of which she only knew that it was paid to her quarterly by a lawyer at Bath, whose address she gave. Mr. Brownlow followed up the clue, but could not learn much about her belongings. The twenty-five pounds was the interest of the small sum, which had remained to poor Captain Allen, when he wound up his affairs, after paying the debts in which his early and imprudent marriage had involved him. He did not seem to have had any relations, and of his wife nothing was known but that she was a Miss Otway, and that he

had met her in some colonial quarters. The old lady, with whom the little girl had been left, was her mother's maternal aunt, and had lived on an annuity so small that on her death there had not been funds sufficient to pay expenses without a sale of all her effects, so that nothing had been saved for the child, except a few books with her parents' names in them—John Allen and Caroline Otway—which she still kept as her chief treasures. The lawyer, who had acted as her guardian, would hand over to her five hundred pounds on her coming of age.

That was all that could be discovered, nor was Colonel Robert Brownlow as much flattered as had been hoped by the provision for his friend's daughter. Nay, he was inclined to disavow the friendship. He was sorry for poor Allen, he said, but as to making a friend of such a fellow, pah! No! there was no harm in him, he was a good officer enough, but he never had a grain of common sense; and whereas he never could keep out of debt, he must needs go and marry a young girl, just because he thought her uncle was not kind to her. It was the worst thing he could have done, for it made her uncle cast her off on the spot, and then she was killed with harass and poverty. He never held up his head again after losing her, and just died of fever because he was too broken down to have energy to live. There was enough in this to weave out a tender little romance, probably really another aspect of the truth, which made Caroline's bright eyes overflow with tears, when she heard it couched in tenderer language from Joseph, and the few books and treasures that had been rescued

agreed with it—a Bible with her father's name, a few devotional books of her mother's, and Mrs. Hemans's poems with "To Lina, from her devoted J. A."

Caroline would fain have been called Lina, but the name did not fit her, and would not *take*.

Colonel Brownlow was altogether very friendly, if rather grave and dry towards her, as soon as he was convinced that "it was only Joe," and that pity, not artfulness, was to blame for the undesirable match. He was too honourable a man not to see that it could not be given up, and he held that the best must now be made of it, and that it would be more proper, since it was to be, for him to assume the part of father, and let the marriage take place from his house at Kenminster. This was a proposal for which it was hard to be as grateful as it deserved; since it had been planned to walk quietly into the parish church, be married "without any fuss," and then to take the fortnight's holiday, which was all that the doctor allowed himself.

But as Robert was allowed to be judge of the proprieties, and as the kindness on his part was great, it was accepted; and Caroline was carried off for three weeks to keep her residence, and make the house feel what a blank her little figure had left.

Certainly, when the pair met again on the eve of the wedding, there never was a more willing bride.

She said she had been very happy. The Colonel and Ellen, as she had been told to call her future sister, had been very kind indeed; they had taken her for long drives, shown her everything,

introduced her to quantities of people; but, oh dear! was it absolutely only three weeks since she had been away? It seemed just like three years, and she understood now why the girls who had homes made calendars, and checked off the days. No school term had ever seemed so long; but at Kenminster she had had nothing to do, and besides, now she knew what home was!

So it was the most cheerful and joyous of weddings, though the bride was a far less brilliant spectacle than the bride of last year, Mrs. Robert Brownlow, who with her handsome oval face, fine figure, and her tasteful dress, perfectly befitting a young matron, could not help infinitely outshining the little girlish angular creature, looking the browner for her bridal white, so that even a deep glow, and a strange misty beaminess of expression could not make her passable in Kenminster eyes.

How would Joe Brownlow's fancy turn out?

CHAPTER II. – THE CHICKENS

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen."—Cowper.

No one could have much doubt how it had turned out, who looked, after fifteen years, into that room where Joe Brownlow and his mother had once sat tete-a-tete.

They occupied the two ends of the table still, neither looking much older, in expression at least, for the fifteen years that had passed over their heads, though the mother had—after the wont of active old ladies—grown smaller and lighter, and the son somewhat more bald and grey, but not a whit more careworn, and, if possible, even brighter.

On one side of him sat a little figure, not quite so thin, some angles smoothed away, the black hair coiled, but still in resolute little mutinous tendrils on the brow, not ill set off by a tuft of carnation ribbon on one side, agreeing with the colour that touched up her gauzy black dress; the face, not beautiful indeed —but developed, softened, brightened with more of sweetness and tenderness—as well as more of thought—added to the fresh responsive intelligence it had always possessed.

On the opposite side of the dinner-table were a girl of fourteen and a boy of twelve; the former, of a much larger frame than her mother, and in its most awkward and uncouth stage, hardly redeemed by the keen ardour and inquiry that glowed in the dark eyes, set like two hot coals beneath the black overhanging brows of the massive forehead, on which the dark smooth hair was parted. The features were large, the complexion dark but not clear, and the look of resolution in the square-cut chin and closely shutting mouth was more boy-like than girl-like. Janet Brownlow was assuredly a very plain girl, but the family habit was to regard their want of beauty as rather a mark of distinction, capable of being joked about, if not triumphed in.

Nor was Allen, the boy, wanting in good looks. He was fairer, clearer, better framed in every way than his sister, and had a pleasant, lively countenance, prepossessing to all. He had a well-grown, upright figure, his father's ready suppleness of movement, and his mother's hazel eyes and flashing smile, and there was a look of success about him, as well there might be, since he had come out triumphantly from the examination for Eton College, and had been informed that morning that there were vacancies enough for his immediate admission.

There was a pensiveness mixed with the satisfaction in his mother's eyes as she looked at him, for it was the first break into the home. She had been the only teacher of her children till two years ago, when Allen had begun to attend a day school a few streets off, and the first boy's first flight from under her wing, for

ever so short a space, is generally a sharp wound to the mother's heart.

Not that Allen would leave an empty house behind him. Lying at full length on the carpet, absorbed in a book, was Robert, a boy on whom the same capacious brow as Janet's sat better than on the feminine creature. He was reading on, undisturbed by the pranks of three younger children, John Lucas, a lithe, wiry, restless elf of nine, with a brown face and black curly head, and Armine and Barbara, young persons of seven and six, on whom nature had been more beneficent in the matter of looks, for though brown was their prevailing complexion, both had well-moulded, childish features, and really fine eyes. The hubbub of voices, as they tumbled and rushed about the window and balcony, was the regular accompaniment of dinner, though on the first plaintive tone from the little girl, the mother interrupted a "Well, but papa," from Janet, with "Babie, Babie."

"It's Jock, Mother Carey! He *will* come into Fairyland too soon."

"What's the last news from Fairyland, Babie?" asked the father as the little one ran up to him.

"I want to be Queen Mab, papa, but Armine wants to be Perseus with the Gorgon's head, and Jock is the dragon; but the dragon will come before we've put Polly upon the rock."

"What! is Polly Andromeda—?" as a grey parrot's stand was being transferred from the balcony.

"Yes, papa," called out Armine. "You see she's chained, and

Bobus won't play, and Babie will be Queen Mab—"

"I suppose," said the mother, "that it is not harder to bring Queen Mab in with Perseus than Oberon with Theseus and Hippolyta—"

"You would have us infer," said the Doctor with grave humour, "that your children are at their present growth in the Elizabethan age of culture—"

But again began a "Well, but papa!" but, he exclaimed, "Do look at that boy—Well walloped, dragon!" as Jock with preternatural contortions, rolled, kicked and tumbled himself with extended jaws to the rock, alias stand, to which Polly was chained, she remarking in a hoarse, low whisper, "Naughty boy —"

"Well moaned, Andromeda!"

"But papa," persisted Janet, "when Oliver Cromwell—"

"Oh! look at the Gorgon!" cried the mother, as the battered head of an ancient doll was displayed over his shoulder by Perseus, decorated with two enormous snakes, one made of stamps, and the other a spiral of whalebone shavings out of a box.

The monster immediately tumbled over, twisted, kicked, and wriggled so that the scandalised Perseus exclaimed: "But Jock—monster, I mean—you're turned into stone—"

"It's convulsions," replied the monster, gasping frightfully, while redoubling his contortions, though Queen Mab observed in the most admonitory tone, touching him at the same time with her wand, "Don't you know, Skipjack, that's the reason you don't

grow—"

"Eh! What's the new theory! Who says so, Babie?" came from the bottom of the table.

"Nurse says so, papa," answered Allen; "I heard her telling Jock yesterday that he would never be any taller till he stood still and gave himself time."

"Get out, will you!" was then heard from the prostrate Robert, the monster having taken care to become petrified right across his legs.

"But papa," Janet's voice was heard, "if Oliver Cromwell had not helped the Waldenses—"

It was lost, for Bobus and Jock were rolling over together with too much noise to be bearable; Grandmamma turned round with an expostulatory "My dears," Mamma with "Boys, please don't when papa is tired—"

"Jock is such a little ape," said Bobus, picking himself up. "Father, can you tell me why the moon draws up the tides on the wrong side?"

"You may study the subject," said the Doctor; "I shall pack you all off to the seaside in a day or two."

There was one outcry from mother, wife, and boys, "Not without you?"

"I can't go till Drew comes back from his outing—"

"But why should we? It would be so much nicer all together."

"It will be horribly dull without; indeed I never can see the sense of going at all," said Janet.

There was a confused outcry of indignation, in which waves —crabs—boats and shrimps, were all mingled together.

"I'm sure that's not half so entertaining as hearing people talk in the evening," said Janet.

"You precocious little piece of dissipation," said her mother, laughing.

"I didn't mean fine lady nonsense," said Janet, rather hotly; "I meant talk like—"

"Like big guns. Oh, yes, we know," interrupted Allen; "Janet does not think anyone worth listening to that hasn't got a whole alphabet tacked behind his name."

"Janet had better take care, and Bobus too," said the Doctor, "or we shall have to send them to vegetate on some farm, and see the cows milked and the pigs fed."

"I'm afraid Bobus would apply himself to finding how much caseine matter was in the cow's milk," said Janet in her womanly tone.

"Or by what rule the pigs curled their tails," said her father, with a mischievous pull at the black plaited tail that hung down behind her.

And then they all rose from the table, little Barbara starting up as soon as grace was said. "Father, please, you *are* the Giant Queen Mab always rides!"

"Queen Mab, or Queen Bab, always rides me, which comes to the same thing. Though as to the size of the Giant—"

There was a pause to let grandmamma go up in peace, upon

Mother Carey's arm, and then a general romp and scurry all the way up the stairs, ending by Jock's standing on one leg on the top post of the baluster, like an acrobat, an achievement which made even his father so giddy that he peremptorily desired it never to be attempted again, to the great relief of both the ladies. Then, coming into the drawing-room, Babie perched herself on his knee, and began, without the slightest preparation, the recitation of Cowper's "Colubriad":—

"Fast by the threshold of a door nailed fast
Three kittens sat, each kitten looked aghast."

And just as she had with great excitement—

"Taught him never to come there no more,"

Armine broke in with "Nine times one are nine."

It was an institution dating from the days when Janet made her first acquaintance with the "Little Busy Bee," that there should be something, of some sort, said or shown to papa, whenever he was at home or free between dinner and bed-time, and it was considered something between a disgrace and a misfortune to produce nothing.

So when the two little ones had been kissed and sent off to bed, with mamma going with them to hear their prayers, Jock, on being called for, repeated a Greek declension with two mistakes in it, Bobus showed a long sum in decimals, Janet, brought a

neat parallelism of the present tense of the verb "to be" in five languages—Greek, Latin, French, German, and English.

"And Allen—reposing on your honours? Eh, my boy?"

Allen looked rather foolish, and said, "I spoilt it, papa, and hadn't time to begin another."

"It—I suppose I am not to hear what till it has come to perfection. Is it the same that was in hand last time?"

"No, papa, much better," said Janet, emphatically.

"What I want to see," said Dr. Brownlow, "is something finished. I'd rather have that than ever so many magnificent beginnings."

Here he was seized upon by Robert, with his knitted brow and a book in his hands, demanding aid in making out why, as he said, the tide swelled out on the wrong side of the earth.

His father did his best to disentangle the question, but Bobus was not satisfied till the clock chimed his doom, when he went off with Jock, who was walking on his hands.

"That's too tough a subject for such a little fellow," said the grandmother; "so late in the day too!"

"He would have worried his brain with it all night if he had not worked it out," said his father.

"I'm afraid he will, any way," said the mother. "Fancy being troubled with dreams of surging oceans rising up the wrong way!"

"Yes, he ought to be running after the tides instead of theorising about them. Carry him off, Mother Carey, and the

whole brood, without loss of time."

"But Joe, why should we not wait for you? You never did send us away all forlorn before!" she said, pleadingly. "We are all quite well, and I can't bear going without you."

"I had much rather all the chickens were safe away, Carey," he said, sitting down by her. "There's a tendency to epidemic fever in two or three streets, which I don't like in this hot weather, and I had rather have my mind easy about the young ones."

"And what do you think of my mind, leaving you in the midst of it?"

"Your mind, being that of a mother bird and a doctor's wife, ought to have no objection."

"How soon does Dr. Drew come home?"

"In a fortnight, I believe. He wanted rest terribly, poor old fellow. Don't grudge him every day."

"A fortnight!" (as if it was a century). "You can't come for a fortnight. Well, perhaps it will take a week to fix on a place."

"Hardly, for see here, I found a letter from Acton when I came in. They have found an unsophisticated elysium at Kyve Clements, and are in raptures which they want us to share—rocks and waves and all."

"And rooms?"

"Yes, very good rooms, enough for us all," was the answer, flinging into her lap a letter from his friend, a somewhat noted artist in water-colours, whom, after long patience, Carey's school friend, Miss Cartwright, had married two years ago.

There was nothing to say against it, only grandmamma observed, “I am too old to catch things; Joe will let me stay and keep house for him.”

“Please, please let me stay with granny,” insisted Janet; “then I shall finish my German classes.”

Janet was granny’s child. She had slept in her room ever since Allen was born, and trotted after her in her “housewifeskep,” and the sense of being protected was passing into the sense of protection. Before she could be answered, however, there was an announcement. Friends were apt to drop in to coffee and talk in the evening, on the understanding that certain days alone were free—people chiefly belonging to a literary, scientific, and artist set, not Bohemian, but with a good deal of quiet ease and absence of formality.

This friend had just returned from Asia Minor, and had brought an exquisite bit of a Greek frieze, of which he had become the happy possessor, knowing that Mrs. Joseph Brownlow would delight to see it, and mayhap to copy it.

For Carey’s powers had been allowed to develop themselves; Mrs. Brownlow having been always housekeeper, she had been fain to go on with the studies that even her preparation for governess-ship had not rendered wearisome, and thus had become a very graceful modeller in clay—her favourite pursuit—when her children’s lessons and other occupations left her free to indulge in it. The history of the travels, and the account of the discovery, were given and heard with all zest, and in the midst

others came in—a barrister and his wife to say good-bye before the circuit, a professor with a ticket for the gallery at a scientific dinner, two medical students, who had been made free of the house because they were nice lads with no available friends in town.

It was all over by half-past ten, and the trio were alone together. "How amusing Mr. Leslie is!" said the young Mrs. Brownlow. "He knows how describe as few people do."

"Did you see Janet listening to him," said her grandmother, "with her brows pulled down and her eyes sparkling out under them, wanting to devour every word?"

"Yes," returned the Doctor, "I saw it, and I longed to souse that black head of hers with salt water. I don't like brains to grow to the contempt of healthful play."

"People never know when they are well off! I wonder what you would have said if you had had a lot of stupid dolts, boys always being plucked, &c."

"Don't plume yourself too soon, Mother Carey; only one chick has gone through the first ordeal."

"And if Allen did, Bobus will."

"Allen is quite as clever as Bobus, granny, if—" eagerly said the mother.

"If—" said the father; "there's the point. If Allen has the stimulus, he will do well. I own I am particularly pleased with his success, because perseverance is his weak point."

"Carey kept him up to it," said granny. "I believe his success

is quite as much her work as his own."

"And the question is, how will he get on without his mother to coach him?"

"Now you know you are not one bit uneasy, papa!" cried his wife, indignantly. "But don't you think we might let Janet have her will for just these ten days? There can't be any real danger for her with grandmamma, and I should be happier about granny."

"You don't trust Joe to take care of me?"

"Not if Joe is to be out all day. There will be nobody to trot up and down stairs for you. Come, it is only what she begs for herself, and she really is perfectly well."

"As if I could have a child victimised to me," said granny.

"The little Cockney thinks the victimising would be in going to the deserts with only the boys and me," laughed Carey; "But I think a week later will be quite time enough to sweep the cobwebs out of her brain."

"And you can do without her?" inquired Mrs. Brownlow. "You don't want her to help to keep the boys in order?"

"Thank you, I can do that better without her," said Carey. "She exasperates them sometimes."

"I believe granny is thinking whether she is not wanted to keep Mother Carey in order as well as her chickens. Hasn't mother been taken for your governess, Carey?"

"No, no, Joe, that's too bad. They asked Janet at the dancing-school whether her sister was not going to join."

"Her younger sister?"

"No, I tell you, her half-sister. But Clara Acton will do discretion for us, granny; and I promise you we won't do anything her husband says is very desperate! Don't be afraid."

"No," said grandmamma, smiling as she kissed her daughter-in-law, and rose to take her candle; "I am never afraid of anything a mother can share with her boys."

"Even if she is nearly a tomboy herself," laughed the husband, with rather a teasing air, towards his little wife. "Good night, mother. Shall not we be snug with nobody left but Janet, who might be great-grandmother to us both?"

"I really am glad that Janet should stay with granny," said Carey, when he had shut the door behind the old lady; "she would be left alone so many hours while you are out, and she does need more waiting on than she used to do."

"You think so? I never see her grow older."

"Not in the least older in mind or spirits; but she is not so strong, nor so willing to exert herself, and she falls asleep more in the afternoon. One reason for which I am less sorry to go on before, is that I shall be able to judge whether the rooms are comfortable enough for her, and I suppose we may change if they are not."

"To another place, if you think best."

"Only you will not let her stay at home altogether. That's what I'm afraid of."

"She will only do so on the penalty of keeping me, and you may trust her not to do that," said Joe, laughing with the

confidence of an only son.

"I shall come back and fetch you if you don't appear under a fortnight. Did you do any more this morning to the great experiment, Magnum Bonum?"

She spoke the words in a proud, shy, exulting semi-whisper, somewhat as Gutenberg's wife might have asked after his printing-press.

"No. I haven't had half an hour to myself to-day; at least when I could have attended to it. Don't be afraid, Carey, I'm not daunted by the doubts of our good friends. I see your eyes reproaching me with that."

"Oh no, as you said, Sir Matthew Fleet mistrusts anything entirely new, and the professor is never sanguine. I am almost glad they are so stupid, it will make our pleasure all the sweeter."

"You silly little bird, if you sit on that egg it will be sure to be addled. If it should come to any good, probably it will take longer than our life-time to work into people's brains."

"No," said Carey, "I know the real object is the relieving pain and saving life, and that is what you care for more than the honour and glory. But do you remember the fly on the coach wheel?"

"Well, the coach wheel means to stand still for a little while. I don't mean to try another experiment till my brains have been turned out to grass, and I can come to it fresh."

"Ah! 'tis you that really need the holiday," said Carey, wistfully; "much more than any of us. Look at this great crow's foot," tracing it with her finger.

"Laughing, my dear. That's the outline of the risible muscle. A Mother Carey and her six ridiculous chickens can't but wear out furrows with laughing at them."

"I only know I wish it were you that were going, and I that were staying at home."

> "'You shall do my work to-day,
> And I'll go follow the plough,'"

said her husband, laughing. "There are the notes of my lecture, if you'll go and give it."

"Ah! we should not be like that celebrated couple. You would manage the boys much better than I could doctor your patients."

"I don't know that. The boys are never so comfortable, when I've got them alone. But, considering the hour, I should think the best preliminary would be to put out the lamp and go to bed."

"I suppose it is time; but I always think this last talk before going upstairs, the best thing in the whole day!" said the happy wife as she took the candle.

CHAPTER III. –
THE WHITE SLATE

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street.
Doors, where my heart was wont to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand—
A hand that can be clasped no more.
Behold me, for I cannot sleep.—Tennyson.

"Mother Carey," to call her by the family name that her husband had given the first day she held a baby in her arms, had a capacity of enjoyment that what she called her exile could not destroy. Even Bobus left theory behind him and became a holiday boy, and the whole six climbed rocks, paddled, boated, hunted sea weeds and sea animals, lived on the beach from morning to night; and were exceedingly amused by the people, who insisted on addressing the senior of the party as "Miss," and thought them a young girl and her brothers under the charge of Mrs. Acton. She, though really not a year older than her friend, looked like a worn and staid matron by her side, and was by no means disposed to scramble barefoot over slippery seaweed, or to take impromptu a part in the grand defence of the sand and shingle edition of Raglan Castle.

Even to Mrs. Acton it was a continual wonder to see how entirely under control of that little merry mother were those great, lively, spirited boys, who never seemed to think of disobeying her first word, and, while all made fun together, and she was hardly less active and enterprising than they, always considered her comfort and likings.

So went things for a fortnight, during which the coming of the others had been put off by Dr. Drew's absence. One morning Mr. Acton sought Mrs. Brownlow on the beach, where she was sitting with her brood round her, partly reading from a translation, partly telling them the story of Ulysses.

He called her aside, and told her that her husband had telegraphed to him to bid him to carry her the tidings that good old Mrs. Brownlow had been taken from them suddenly in the night, evidently in her sleep.

Carey turned very white, but said only "Oh! why did I go without them?"

It was such an overwhelming shock as left no room for tears. Her first thought, the only one she seemed to have room for, was to get back to her husband by the next train. She would have taken all the children, but that Mrs. Acton insisted, almost commanded, that they should be left under her charge, and reminded her that their father wished them to be out of London; nor did Allen and Robert show any wish to return to a house of mourning, being just of the age to be so much scared at sorrow as to ignore it. And indeed their mother was equally new to any real grief; her

parents had been little more than a name to her, and the only loss she had actually felt was that of a favourite schoolfellow.

She had no time to think or feel till she had reached the train and taken her seat, and even then the first thing she was conscious of was a sense of numbness within, and frivolous observation without, as she found herself trying to read upside down the direction of her opposite neighbour's parcels, counting the flounces on her dress, and speculating on the meetings and partings at the stations; yet with a terrible weight and soreness on her all the time, though she could not think of the dear grannie, of whom it was no figure of speech to say that she had been indeed a mother. The idea of her absence from home for ever was too strange, too heartrending to be at once embraced, and as she neared the end of her journey on that long day, Carey's mind was chiefly fixed on the yearning to be with her husband and Janet, who had suffered such a shock without her. She seemed more able to feel through her husband—who was so devoted to his mother, than for herself, and she was every moment more uneasy about her little daughter, who must have been in the room with her grandmother. Comfort them? How, she did not know! The others had always petted and comforted her, and now—No one to go to when the children were ailing or naughty—no one to share little anxieties when Joe was out late—no one to be the backbone she leant on—no dear welcome from the easy chair. That thought nearly set her crying; the tears burnt in her strained eyes, but the sight of the people opposite braced her, and she tried to fix her

thoughts on the unseen world, but they only wandered wide as if beyond her own control, and her head was aching enough to confuse her.

At last, late on the long summer day, she was at the terminus, and with a heart beating so fast that she could hardly breathe, found herself in a cab, driving up to her own door, just as the twilight was darkening.

How dark it looked within, with all the blinds down! The servant who opened the door thought Miss Janet was in the drawing-room, but the master was out. It sounded desolate, and Carey ran up stairs, craving and eager for the kiss of her child—the child who must have borne the brunt of the shock.

The room was silent, all dusky and shadowed; the window-frames were traced on the blinds by the gas freshly lighted outside, and moving in the breeze with a monotonous dreariness. Carey stood a moment, and then her eyes getting accustomed to the darkness, she discerned a little heap lying curled up before the ottoman, her head on a great open book, asleep—poor child! quite worn out. Carey moved quietly across and sat down by her, longing but not daring to touch her. The lamp was brought up in a minute or two, and that roused Janet, who sprang up with a sudden start and dazzled eyes, exclaiming "Father! Oh, it's Mother Carey! Oh, mother, mother, please don't let him go!"

"And you have been all alone in the house, my poor child," said Carey, as she felt the girl shuddering in her close embrace.

"Mrs. Lucas came to stay with me, but I didn't want her," said

Janet, "so I told her she might go home to dinner. It's father—"

"Where is father?"

"Those horrid people in Tottenham Court Road sent for him just as he had come home," said Janet.

"He went out as usual?"

"Yes, though he had such a bad cold. He said he could not be spared; and he was out all yesterday till bedtime, or I should have told him grandmamma was not well."

"You thought so!"

"Yes, she panted and breathed so oddly; but she would not let me say a word to him. She made me promise not, but being anxious about him helped to do it. Dr. Lucas said so."

There was a strange hardness and yet a trembling in Janet's voice; nor did she look as if she had shed tears, though her face was pale and her eyes black-ringed, and when old nurse, now very old indeed, tottered in sobbing, she flung herself to the other end of the room. It was more from nurse than from Janet that Carey learnt the particulars, such as they were, namely, that the girl had been half-dressed when she had taken alarm from her grandmother's unresponsive stillness, and had rushed down to her father's room. He had found that all had long been over. His friend, old Dr. Lucas, had come immediately, and had pronounced the cause to have been heart complaint.

Nurse said her master had been "very still," and had merely given the needful orders and written a few letters before going to his patients, for the illness was at its height, and there were cases

for which he was very anxious.

The good old woman, who had lived nearly all her life with her mistress, was broken-hearted; but she did not forget to persuade Caroline to take food, telling her she must be ready to cheer up the master when he should come in, and assuring her that the throbbing headache which disgusted her with all thoughts of eating, would be better for the effort. Perhaps it was, but it would not allow her to bring her thoughts into any connection, or to fix them on what she deemed befitting, and when she saw that the book over which Janet had been asleep in the twilight was "The Last of the Mohicans," she was more scandalised than surprised.

It was past Janet's bedtime, but though too proud to say so, she manifestly shrank from her first night of loneliness, and her mother, herself unwilling to be alone, came with her to her room, undressed her, and sat with her in the darkness, hoping for some break in the dull reticence, but disappointed, for Janet hid her head in the clothes, and slept, or seemed to sleep.

Perhaps Carey herself had been half dozing, when she heard the well-known sounds of arrival, and darted down stairs, meeting indeed the welcoming eye and smile; but "Ah, here she is!" was said so hoarsely and feebly, that she exclaimed "Oh Joe, you have knocked yourself up!"

"Yes," said Dr. Lucas, whom she only then perceived. "He must go to bed directly, and then we will see to him. Not another word, Brownlow, till you are there, nor then if you are wise."

He strove to disobey, but cough and choking forbade; and as

he began to ascend the stairs, Caroline turned in dismay to the kind, fatherly old man, who had always been one of the chief intimates of the house, and was now retired from practice, except for very old friends.

He told her that her husband was suffering from a kind of sore throat that sometimes attacked those attending on this fever, though generally not unless there was some predisposition, or unless the system had been unduly lowered. Joe had indeed been over-worked in the absence of several of the regular practitioners and of all those who could give extra help; but this would probably have done little harm, but for a cold caught in a draughty room, and the sudden stroke with which the day had begun. Dr. Lucas had urged him to remain at home, and had undertaken his regular work for the day, but summonses from his patients had been irresistible; he had attended to everyone except himself, and finally, after hours spent over the critical case of the wife of a small tradesman, he had found himself so ill that he had gone to his friend for treatment, and Dr. Lucas had brought him home, intending to stay all night with him.

Since the wife had arrived, the good old man, knowing how much rather they would be alone, consented to sleep in another room, after having done all that was possible for the night, and cautioned against talking.

Indeed, Joe, heavy, stupefied, and struggling for breath, knew too well what it all meant not to give himself all possible chance by silent endurance, lying with his wife's hand in his,

or sometimes smoothing her cheek, but not speaking without necessity. Once he told her that her head was aching, and made her lie down on the bed, but he was too ill for this rest to last long, and the fits of struggling with suffocation prevented all respite save for a few minutes.

With the early light of the long summer morning Dr. Lucas looked in, and would have sent her to bed, but she begged off, and a sign from her husband seemed to settle the matter, for the old physician went away again, perhaps because his eyes were full of tears.

The first words Joe said when they were again alone was "My tablets." She went in search of them to his dressing-room, and not finding them there, was about to run down to the consulting-room, when Janet came out already dressed, and fetched them for her, as well as a white slate, on which he was accustomed to write memorandums of engagements.

Her father thanked her by a sign, but there was possibility enough of infection to make him wave her back from kissing him, and she took refuge at the foot of the bed, on a sofa shut off by the curtains which had been drawn to exclude the light.

Joe meantime wrote on the slate the words, "Magnum bonum."

"Magnum bonum?" read his wife, in amazement.

"Papers in bureau," he wrote; "lock all in my desk. Mention to no one."

"Am I to put them in your desk?" asked Caroline, bewildered

as to his intentions, and finding it hard to read the writing, as he went on—

"No word to anyone!" scoring it under, "not till one of the boys is ready."

"One of the boys!" in utter amazement.

"Not as a chance for himself," he wrote, "but as a great trust."

"I know," she said, "it is a great trust to make a discovery which will save life. It is my pride to know you are doing it, my own dear Joe."

"It seems I am not worthy to do it," was traced by his fingers. "It is not developed enough to be listened to by anyone. Keep it for the fit one of the boys. Religion, morals, brains, balance."

She read each word aloud, bending her head in assent; and, after a pause, he wrote "Not till his degree. He could not work it out sooner. These is peril to self and others in experimenting—temptation to rashness. It were better unknown than trifled with. Be an honest judge—promise. Say what I want."

Spellbound, almost mesmerised by his will, Caroline pronounced—"I promise to keep the magnum bonum a secret till the boys are grown up, and then only to confide it to the one that seems fittest, when he has taken his degree, and is a good, religious, wise, able man, with brains and balance, fit to be trusted to work out and apply such an invention, and not make it serve his own advancement, but be a real good and blessing to all."

He gave her one of his bright, sweet smiles, and, as she sealed

her promise by a kiss, he took up the slate again and wrote, "My dear comfort, you have always understood. You are to be trusted. It must be done worthily or not at all."

That was the burthen of everything; and his approval and affection gave a certain sustaining glow to the wife, who was besides so absorbed in attending to him, as not to look beyond the moment. He wrote presently, after a little more, "You know all my mind for the children. With God's help you can fill both places to them. I should like you to live at Kenminster, under Robert's wing."

After that he only used the tablets for temporary needs, and to show what he wanted Dr. Lucas to undertake for his patients. The husband and wife had little more time for intimate communings, for the strangulation grew worse, more remedies were tried, and one of the greatest physicians of the day was called in, but only to make unavailing efforts.

Colonel Brownlow arrived in the middle of the day, and was thunderstruck at the new and terrible disaster. He was a large, tall man, with a good-humoured, weather-beaten face, and an unwieldy, gouty figure; and he stood, with his eyes brimming over with tears, looking at his brother, and at first unable to read the one word Joe traced for him—for writing had become a great effort—"Carey."

"We will do our best for her, Ellen and I, my dear fellow. But you'll soon be better. Horrid things, these quinsies; but they pass off."

Poor Joe half-smiled at this confident opinion, but he merely wrung his brother's hand, and only twice more took up the pencil —once to write the name of the clergyman he wished to see, and lastly to put down the initials of all his children: "Love to you all. Let God and your mother be first with you.—J. B."

The daylight of the second morning had come in before that deadly suffocation had finished its work, and the strong man's struggles were ended.

When Colonel Brownlow tried to raise his sister-in-law, he found her fainting, and, with Dr. Lucas's help, carried her to another room, where she lay, utterly exhausted, in a kind of faint stupor, apparently unconscious of anything but violent headache, which made her moan from time to time, if anything stirred her. Dr. Lucas thought this the effect of exhaustion, for she had not slept, and hardly taken any food since her breakfast at Kyve three days ago; and finding poor old nurse too entirely broken down to be of any use, he put his own kind wife in charge of her, and was unwilling to admit anyone else—even Mrs. Robert Brownlow, who arrived in the course of the day. She was a tall, fine-looking person, with an oval face—soft, pleasant brown skin, mild brown eyes, and much tenderness of heart and manner, but not very well known to Caroline; for her periodical visits had been wholly devoted to shopping and sight-seeing. She was exceedingly shocked at the tidings that met her, and gathered Janet into her arms with many tears over the poor orphan girl! It was an effusiveness that overwhelmed Janet, who

had a miserable, hard, dried-up feeling of wretchedness, and injury too; for the more other people cried, the less she could cry, and she heard them saying to one another that she was unfeeling.

Still Aunt Ellen's presence was a sort of relief, for it made the house less empty and dreary, and she took upon her the cares that were greatly needed in the bereaved household, where old nurse had lost her head, and could do nothing, and the most effective maid was away with the children. So Janet wandered about after her aunt, with an adverse feeling at having her home meddled with, but answering questions and giving opinions, called or uncalled for. Her longing was for her brothers, and it was a great blow to find that her uncle had written to both Allen and Mr. Acton that they had better not come home at present. She thought it cruel and unjust both towards them and herself; and in her sickening sense of solitude and injury she had a vague expectation that they were all going to be left wholly orphans, like the children of fiction, dependent on their uncle and aunt, who would be unjust, and prefer their own children; and she had a prevision of the battles she was to fight, and the defensive influence she was to exert.

That brought to her mind the white slate on which her father had been writing, and she hurried to secure it, though she hardly knew where to go or to look; but straying into her father's dressing-room, she found both it and the tablets among a heap of other small matters that had been, cleared away when the other chamber had been arranged into the solemnity of the death-

room. Hastily securing them, she carried them to her own desk in the deserted school-room, feeling as if they were her charge, and thus having no scruple in reading them.

She had heard what passed aloud; and, as the eldest girl, had been so constantly among the seniors, and so often supposed to be intent on her own occupations when they were conversing, that she had already the knowledge that magnum bonum, was the pet home term for some great discovery in medical, science that her father had been pursuing, with many disappointments and much incredulity from the few friends to whom it had been mentioned, but with absolute confidence on his own part. What it was she did, not know, but she had fully taken in the injunction of secrecy and the charge to hand on the task to one of her brothers; only, while her father had spoken of it as a grave trust, she viewed it as an inheritance of glory; and felt a strange longing and repining that it could not be given to her to win and wear the crown of success.

Janet, did not, however, keep the treasure long, for that very evening Mrs. Lucas sought her out to tell her that her mother had been saying something, about a slate, and Dr. Lucas thought it was one on which her father had been writing. If she could find it, they hoped her mother would rest better.

Janet produced it, and, being evidently most unwilling to let it go out of her hands, was allowed to carry it in, and to tell her mother that she had it. There was no need for injunctions to do so softly and cautiously, for she was frightened by her mother's

dull, half-closed eye, and pale, leaden look; but there was a little air of relief as she faltered, "Here's the slate, dear mother:" and the answer, so faint that she could hardly hear it, was, "Lock it up, my dear, till I can look."

Mrs. Lucas told Janet she might kiss her, and then sent the girl away. There was need of anxious watch lest fever should set in, and therefore all that was exciting was kept at a distance as the poor young widow verged towards recovery.

Once, when she heard voices on the stairs, she started nervously, and asked Mrs. Lucas, "Is Ellen there?"

"Yes, my dear; she shall not come to you unless you wish it," seeing her alarm; and she laid her head down again.

The double funeral was accomplished while she was still too ill to hear anything about it, though Mrs. Lucas had no doubt that she knew; and when he came home, Colonel Brownlow called for Janet, and asked her whether she could find her grandmother's keys and her father's for him.

"Mother would not like anyone to rummage their things," said Janet, like a watch-dog.

"My dear," said her uncle, in a surprised but kind tone, as one who respected yet resented her feeling; "you may trust me not to rummage, as you call it, unnecessarily; but I know that I am executor, if you understand what that means, my dear."

"Of course," said Janet, affronted as she always was by being treated as a child.

"To both wills," continued her uncle; "and it will save your

mother much trouble and distress if I can take steps towards acting on them at once; and if you cannot tell where the keys are, I shall have to look for them."

"Janet ought to obey at once," said her aunt, not adding to the serenity of Janet's mind; but she turned on her heel, ungraciously saying, "I'll get them;" and presently returned with her grandmother's key-box, full of the housekeeping keys, and a little key, which she gave to her uncle with great dignity, adding, "The key of her desk is the Bramah one; I'll see for the others."

"A strange girl, that!" said her uncle, as she marched out of the room.

"I am glad our Jessie has not her temper!" responded his wife; and then they both repaired to old Mrs. Brownlow's special apartment, the back drawing-room, while Janet quietly dropped downstairs with the key she had taken from her father's table on her way to the consulting-room. She intended to prevent any search, by herself producing the will from among his papers, for she was in an agony lest her uncle should discover the clue to the magnum bonum, of which she regarded herself the guardian.

Till she had actually unlocked the sloping lid of the old-fashioned bureau, it did not occur to her that she did not know either what the will was like, nor yet the magnum bonum, which was scarcely likely to be so ticketed. She only saw piles of letters and papers, marked, some with people's names, some with a Greek or Latin word, or one of the curious old Arabic signs, for which her father had always a turn, having, as his mother used

to tell him, something of the alchemist in his composition. One of these parcels, fastened with elastic rings, must be magnum bonum, and Janet, though without much chance of distinguishing it, was reading the labels with a strange, sad fascination, when, long before she had expected him, her uncle stood before her, with greatly astonished and displeased looks, and the word "Janet."

She coloured scarlet, but answered boldly, "There was something that I know father did not want anyone but mother to see."

"Of course there is much," said her uncle, gravely—"much that I am fitter to judge, of than any little girl."

Words cannot express the offence thus given to Janet. Something swelled in her throat as if to suffocate her, but there could be no reply, and to burst out crying would only make him think her younger still; so as he turned to his mournful task, she ensconced herself in a high-backed chair, and watched him from under her dark brows.

She might comfort herself by the perception that he was less likely than even herself to recognise the magnum bonum. He would scarcely have thought it honourable to cast a glance upon the medical papers, and pushing them aside from where she had pulled them forward, searched till he had found a long cartridge-paper envelope, which he laid on the table behind him while he shut up the bureau, and Janet, by cautiously craning up her neck, managed to read that on it was written "Will of

Joseph Brownlow, Executors: Mrs. Caroline Otway Brownlow, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Brownlow."

Her uncle then put both that and the keys in his pocket, either not seeing her, or not choosing to notice her.

CHAPTER IV. – THE STRAY CHICKENS

But when our father came not here,
I thought if we could find the sea
We should be sure to meet him there,
And once again might happy be.—Ballad.

"What was Dr. Lucas saying to you?" asked Carey, sitting up in bed after her breakfast.

"He said, my dear, that you were really well now," said Mrs. Lucas, tenderly; "and that you only wanted rousing."

She clasped her hands together.

"Yes, I know it. I have been knowing it all yesterday and last night. It hasn't been right of me, keeping you all this time, and not facing it."

"I don't think you could, my dear."

"Not at first. It seems to me like having been in a whirlpool, and those two went down in it." She put her hands to her temples. "But I must do it all now, and I will. I'll get up now. Oh! dear, if they only would let me come down and go about quietly." Then smiling a piteous smile. "It is very naughty, but of all things I dread the being cried over and fondled by Ellen!"

Mrs. Lucas shook her head, though the tears were in her

eyes, and bethought her whether she could caution Mrs. Robert Brownlow not to be too demonstrative; but it was a delicate matter in which to interfere, and after all, whatever she might think beforehand, Caroline might miss these tokens of feeling.

She had sat up for some hours the evening before, so that there was no fear of her not being strong enough to get up as she proposed; but how would it be when she left her room, and beheld all that she could not have realised?

However, matters turned out contrary to all expectation. Mrs. Lucas was in the drawing-room, talking to the Colonel's wife, and Janet up stairs helping her mother to dress, when there was a sound of feet on the stairs, the door hastily opened for a moment, and two rough-headed, dusty little figures were seen for one moment, startling Mrs. Brownlow with the notion of little beggars; but they vanished in a moment, and were heard chattering up stairs with calls of "Mother! Mother Carey!" And looking out, they beheld at the top of the stairs the two little fellows hanging one on each side of Carey, who was just outside her door, with her hair down, in her white dressing gown, kneeling between them, all the three almost devouring one another.

"Jockie! Armie! my dears! How did you come? Where are the rest?"

"Still at Kyve," said Jock. "Mother we have done such a thing —we came to tell you of it."

"We've lost the man's boat," added Armine, "and we must give

him the money for another."

"What is it? What is it, Caroline?" began her sister-in-law; but Mrs. Lucas touched her arm, and as a mother herself, she saw that mother and sons had best be left to one another, and let them retreat into the bedroom, Carey eagerly scanning her two little boys, who had a battered, worn, unwashed look that puzzled her as much as their sudden appearance, which indeed chimed in with the strange dreamy state in which she had lived ever since that telegram. But their voices did more to restore her to ordinary life than anything else could have done; and their hearts were so full of their own adventure, that they poured it out before remarking anything,—

"How did you come, my dear boys?"

"We walked, after the omnibus set us down at Charing Cross, because we hadn't any more money," said Armine. "I'm so tired." And he nestled into her lap, seeming to quell the beating of her aching heart by his pressure.

"This is it, mother," said Jock, pulling her other arm round him. "We two went down to the beach yesterday, and we saw a little boat—Peter Lary's pretty little boat, you know, that is so light—and we got in to rock in her, and then I thought I would pull about in her a little."

"Oh! Jock, Jock, how could you?"

"I'd often done it with Allen and Young Pete," said Jock, defensively.

"But by yourselves!" she said in horror.

"Nobody told us not," said Jock rather defiantly; and Armine, who, with his little sister Barbara, always seemed to live where dreamland and reality bordered on each other, looked up in her face and innocently said—

"Mrs. Acton read us about the Rocky Island, and she said father and granny had brought their boats to the beautiful country, and that we ought to go after them, and there was the bright path along the sea, and I thought we would go too, and that it would be nicer if Jock went with me."

"I knew it did not mean that," said Jock, hanging his mischievous black head a little, as he felt her shudder; "but I thought it would be such fun to be Columbus."

"And then? Oh! my boys, what a fearful thing! Thank God I have you here."

"I wasn't frightened," said Jock, with uplifted head; "we could both row, couldn't we, Armie? and the tide was going out, and it was so jolly; it seemed to take us just where we wanted to go, out to that great rock, you know, mother, that Bobus called the Asses' Bridge."

Carey knew that the current at the mouth of the river did, at high tide, carry much drift to the base of this island, and she could understand how her two boys had been floated thither. Jock went on—

"We had a boat-hook, and I pulled up to the island; I did, mother, and I made fast the boat to a little stick, and we went out to explore the island."

"It has a crater in the top, mother, and we think it must be an instinct volcano," said Armine, looking up sleepily.

"And there were such lots of jolly little birds," went on Jock.

"Never mind that now. What happened?"

"Why, the brute of a boat got away," said Jock, much injured, "when I'd made her ever so fast. She pulled up the stick, I'm sure she did, for I can tie a knot as well as Pete."

"So you could not get away?"

"No, and we'd got nothing to eat but chocolate creams and periwinkles, and Armie wouldn't look at them, and I don't think I could while they were alive. So I hoisted a signal of distress, made of my tie, for we'd lost our pocket-handkerchiefs. I was afraid they would think we were pirates, and not venture to come near us, for we'd only got black flags, and it was a very, very long time, but at last, just as it got a little darkish, and Armie was crying—poor little chap—that steamer came by that always goes between Porthole and Kyvemouth on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I hailed and I hailed, and they saw or heard, and sent a boat and took us on board. The people all came and looked at us, and one of them said I was a plucky little chap; he did, mother, and that I'd the making of an admiral in me; and a lady gave us such a jolly paper of sandwiches. But you see the steamer was going to Porthole, and the captain said he could not anyhow put back to Kyve, but he must take us on, and we must get back by train."

Mother Carey understood this, for the direct line ran to Porthole, and there was a small junction station whence a branch

ran to Kyvemouth, from which Kyve St. Clements was some three miles distant.

"Were you carried on?" she asked.

"Well, yes, but we meant it," said Jock. "I remembered the boat. I knew father would say we must buy another, so I asked the captain what was the price of one, for Armine and I had each got half-a-sovereign."

"How was that?"

"An old gentleman the day before was talking to Mr. Acton. I think he is some great swell, for he has got a yacht, and servants, and a carriage, and lots of things; and he said, 'What! are those poor Brownlow's boys? bless me!' and he tipped us each. Allen and Bobus were to go with Mr. Acton and have a sail in his yacht, but they said we should be too many, so we thought we'd get a new boat, but the Captain—"

"Said your money would go but a little way," put in Caroline.

"He laughed!" said Jock, as a great offence; "and said that was a matter for our governor, and we had better go home and tell as fast as we could. There was a train just starting when we got in to Porthole, and somebody got our tickets for us, and Armie went fast off to sleep, and I, when I came to think about it, thought we would not get out at the junction, but come on home at once, Mother Carey, and tell you all about it. When Armie woke—why, he's asleep now—he said he would rather come home than to Kyve."

"Then you travelled all night?"

"Yes, there was a jolly old woman who made us a bed with her shawl, only I tumbled off three times and bumped myself, and she gave us gooseberries, and cake, and once when we stopped a long time a porter got us a cup of tea. Then when we came to where they take the tickets, I think the man was going to make a row, but the guard came up and told him all about it, and I gave him my two half-sovereigns, and he gave me back fourteen shillings change, for he said we were only half-price and second class. Then when once I was in London," said Jock, as if his foot was on his native heath, "of course I knew what to be at."

"Have you had nothing to eat?"

"We had each a bun when we got out at Charing Cross, but I'm awfully hungry, mother!"

"I should think so. Janet, my dear, go and order some breakfast for them."

"And," said Janet, "must not the others be dreadfully frightened about them at Kyve?"

That question startled her mother into instant action.

"Of course they must! Poor Clara! poor Allen! They must be in a dreadful state. I must telegraph to them at once."

She lifted Armine off gently to her bed, scarcely disturbing him, twisted up her hair in summary fashion, and the dress, which her friends had dreaded her seeing, was on, she hardly knew how, as she bade old nurse see to Jock's washing, dressing, and making himself tidy, and then amazed the other ladies by running into the drawing-room crying breathlessly—

"I must telegraph to the Actons," and plunging to the depths of a drawer in the davenport.

"Caroline, your cap!"

For it was on the back of the head that had never worn a cap before. And not only then, but for the most part whenever they met, those tears and caresses, that poor Mother Carey so much feared, were checked midway by the instinct that made Aunt Ellen run at her with a great pin and cry—

"Caroline, your cap."

She was still, after having had it fixed, kneeling down, searching for a form for telegraphing, when the door was opened, and in came Colonel Brownlow, looking very pale and fearfully shocked.

"Ellen!" he began, "how shall I ever tell that poor child? Here is Mr. Acton."

But at that moment up sprang Mother Carey, and as Mr. Acton entered the room she leapt forward—

"Oh! I was just going to telegraph! They are safe! they are here! Jock, Jock!"

And downstairs came tumbling and rushing that same little imp, while the astonishment of his uncle and aunt only allowed them to utter the one word, "John!"

Mr. Acton drew a long breath, and said, "You have given us a pretty fright, boy."

"Here's the paper," added Carey; "telegraph to Clara at once. Ring the bell, Jock; I'll send to the office."

All questions were suspended while Mr. Acton wrote the telegram, and then it appeared that the boat had been picked up empty, with Armine's pocket-handkerchief full of shells in it, and the boys had been given up for lost, it having been concluded that, if they had been seen, the boat also would have been taken in tow, and not cast loose to tell the tale. The two elder boys were almost broken-hearted, and would have been wild to come back to their mother, had it not been impossible to leave poor little Barbara, who clung fast to them, as the only shreds left to her of home and protection. They would at least be comforted in the space of a quarter of an hour!

Carey was completely herself and full of vigour while Mr. Acton was there, consoling him when he lamented not having taken better care, and refusing when he tried to persuade her to accompany him back to Kyve. Neither would Janet return with him, feeling it impossible to relax such watch as she could keep over the Magnum Bonum papers, even though she much longed for her brothers.

"I should insist on her going," said Aunt Ellen, "after all she has gone through."

"I don't think I can," said Carey. "You would not send away your Jessie?"

Ellen did not quite say that her pretty, sweet, caressing Jessie was different, but she thought it all the same.

Carey did not fulfil her intentions of going into matters of business with her brother-in-law that day, for little Armine,

always delicate, had been so much knocked up by his course of adventures, that he needed her care all the rest of the day. Nor would she have been fit for anything else, for when his aunt recommended a totally different treatment for his ailments, she had no spirit to argue, but only looked pale and determined, being too weary and dejected to produce her arguments.

Jock was sufficiently tired to be quiescent in the nursery, where she kept him with her, feeling, in his wistful eyes, and even in poor little Armine's childish questions, something less like blank desolation than her recent apathy had been, as if she were waking to thrills of pain after the numbness of a blow.

Urged by a restless night and an instinctive longing for fresh air, she took a long walk in the park before anyone came down the next morning, with only Jock for her companion, and she came to the breakfast table with a freshened look, though with a tremulous faintness in her voice, and she let Janet continue tea maker, scarcely seeming to hear or understand the casual remarks around her; but afterwards she said in a resolute tone, "Robert, I am ready whenever you wish to speak to me."

So in the drawing-room the Colonel, with the two wills in his hand, found himself face to face with her. He was the more nervous of the two, being, much afraid of upsetting that composure which scandalised his wife, but which he preferred to tears; and as he believed her to be a mere child in perception, he explained down to her supposed level, while she listened in a strange inert way, feeling it hard to fix her attention, yet half-

amused by the simplicity of his elucidations. “Would Ellen need to be told what an executor meant?” thought she.

She was left sole guardian of the children, “the greatest proof of confidence a parent can give,” impressively observed the Colonel, wondering at the languor of her acquiescence, and not detecting the thought, “Dear Joe! of course! as if he would have done anything else!”

“Of course,” continued the Colonel, “he never expected that it would have proved more than a nominal matter, a mere precaution. For my own part, I can only say that I shall be always ready to assist you with advice or authority if ever you should find the charge too onerous for you.”

“Thank you,” was all she could bring herself to say at that moment, feeling that her boys were her own, though the next she was recollecting that this was no doubt the reason Joe had bidden her live at Kenminster, and in a pang of self-reproach, was hardly attending to the technicalities of the matters of property which were being explained to her.

Her husband had not been able to save much, but his life insurance was for a considerable sum, and there was also the amount inherited from his parents. A portion of the means which his mother had enjoyed passed to the elder brother, and Mrs. Brownlow had sunk most of her individual property in the purchase of the house in which they lived. By the terms of Joseph’s will, everything was left to Caroline unreservedly, save for a stipulation that all, on her death, should be divided

among the children, as she should appoint. The house was not even secured to Allen, so that she could let or sell it as she thought advisable.

"I could not sell it," said Carey quickly, feeling it her first and only home. "I hope to see Allen practising there some day."

"It is not in a situation where you could sell it to so much advantage as you would have by letting it to whoever takes the practice."

She winced, but it was needful to listen, as he told her of the offers that had been made for the house and the good-will of the practice. What he had thought the best offer was, however, rejected by her with vehemence. She was sure that Joe would never stand that man coming in upon his patients, and when asked for her reasons, would only reply, that "None of us could bear him."

"That is no reason why he should not be a good practitioner and respectable man. He may not be what you like in society, and yet—"

"Ask Dr. Lucas," hastily interrupted Carey.

"Perhaps that will be the best way," said the Colonel gravely. "Will you promise to abide by his decision?"

"I don't know! I mean, if everyone decided against me, *nothing* should induce me to let *that* Vaughan into Joe's house to meddle with his patients."

Colonel Brownlow made a sign of displeased acquiescence, so like his brother when Carey was a little impetuous or naughty,

that she instantly felt shocked at herself, and faltered, "I beg your pardon."

He seemed not to notice this, but went on, "As you say, it may be wise to consult Dr. Lucas. Perhaps, putting it up to competition would be the best way."

"Oh, no," said Caroline. "Have you a letter from Dr. Drake?"

"No."

"Then depend upon it he must have too much delicacy to begin about it so soon. I had rather he had it than anyone else."

"Can he make a fair offer for it? You cannot afford to throw away a substantial benefit for preferences," said the Colonel. "At the outside, you will not have more than five hundred pounds a year, and I fear you will feel much straitened after what you are used to, with four boys, and such ideas as to their education," he added smiling.

"I don't know, but I am sure it is what Joe would wish. He had rather trust his patients to Harry—to Dr. Drake—than to anyone, and he is just going to be married, and wants a practice; I shall write to him. It is so nice of him not to have pressed forward."

"You will not commit yourself?" said Colonel Brownlow. "Remember that your children's interests are at stake, and must not be sacrificed to a predilection."

Again Caroline felt fiery and furious, and less inclined than ever to submit her judgment as she said, "You can inquire, but I know what Joe thought of him."

"His worthiness is not the point, but whether he can indemnify

you."

"His worthiness not the point!" cried Caroline, indignantly. "I think it all the point."

"You misunderstand me; you totally misunderstand me," exclaimed the Colonel trying hard to be gentle. "I never meant to recommend an unworthy man."

"You wanted Vaughan," murmured Mother Carey, but he did not regard the words, perhaps did not hear them, for he went on: "My brother in such a case would have taken a reasonable view, and placed the good of his children before any amiable desire to benefit a—a—one unconnected with him. However," he added, "there is no reason against writing to him, provided you do not commit yourself."

Caroline hated the word, but endured it, and the rest of the interview was spent upon some needful signatures, and on the question of her residence at Kenminster, an outlook which she contemplated as part of the darkness into which her life seemed to have suddenly dashed forward. One place would be much the same as another to her, and she could only hear with indifference about the three houses, possible, and the rent, garden, and number of rooms.

She was very glad when it was over, and the Colonel, saying he should go and consult Dr. Lucas, gave her back the keys he had taken from Janet, and said that perhaps she would prefer looking over the papers before he himself did so, with a view to accounts; but he should advise all professional records to be destroyed.

It may be feared that the two executors did not respect or like each, other much the better for the interview, which had made the widow feel herself even more desolate and sore-hearted.

She ran, downstairs, locked the door of the consulting room, opened the lid of the bureau, and kneeling down with her head among all the papers, she sobbed with long-drawn, tearless sobs, "O father! O Joe! how could you bid me live there? He makes me worse! They will make me worse and worse, and now you are gone, and Granny is gone, there's nobody to make me good; and what will become of the children?"

Then she looked drearily on the papers that lay before her, as if his hand-writing at least gave a sort of nearness. There was a memorandum book which had been her birthday present to him, and she felt drawn to open it. The first she saw after her own writing of his name was—

"'Magnum Bonum. So my sweet wife insists on calling this possibility, of which I will keep the notes in her book.

"'Magnum Bonum! Whether it so prove, and whether I may be the means of making it known, must be as God may will. May He give me the power of persevering, to win, or to fail, or to lay the foundation for other men, whichever may be the best, with a true heart, heeding His glory, and acting as His servant to reveal His mysteries of science for the good of His children.

"'And above all, may He give us all to know and feel the true and only Magnum Bonum, the great good, which alone makes success or failure, loss or gain, life or death, alike blessed in Him

and through Him.'"

Carey gazed on those words, as she sat in the large arm-chair, whither she had moved on opening the book. She had always known that religion was infinitely more to her husband than ever it had been to herself. She had done what he led her to do, and had a good deal of intellectual and poetical perception and an uprightness, affection, and loyalty of nature that made her anxious to do right, but devotion was duty, and not pleasure to her; she was always glad when it was over, and she was feeling that the thoughts which were said to comfort others were quite unable to reach her grief. There was no disbelief nor rebellion about her, only a dull weariness, and an inclination which she could hardly restrain, even while it shocked her, to thrust aside those religious consolations that were powerless to soothe her. She knew it was not their fault, she did not doubt of their reality; it was she who was not good enough to use them.

These words of Joe were to her as if he were speaking to her again. She laid them on her knee, murmured them over fondly, looked at them, and finally, for she was weak still and had had a bad night, fell fast asleep over them, and only wakened, as shouts of "Mother" were heard over the house.

She locked the bureau in a hurry, and opened the door, calling back to the boys, and then she found that Aunt Ellen had taken all the three out walking, when Jock and Armine, with the remains of their money burning in their pockets, had insisted on buying two little ships, which must necessarily be launched in the

Serpentine. Their aunt could by no means endure this, and Janet did not approve, so there seemed to have been a battle royal, in which Jock would have been the victor, if his little brother had not been led off captive between his aunt and sister, when Jock went along on the opposite side of the road, asserting his independence by every sort of monkey trick most trying to his aunt's rural sense of London propriety.

It was very ridiculous to see the tall, grave, stately Mrs. Robert Brownlow standing there describing the intolerable naughtiness of that imp, who, not a bit abashed, sat astride on the balustrade in the comfortable conviction that he was not hers.

"I hope, at least," concluded the lady, "that you will make them feel how bad their behaviour has been."

"Jock," said Carey mechanically, "I am afraid you have behaved very ill to your aunt."

"Why, Mother Carey," said that little wretch, "it is just that she doesn't know anything about anything in London."

"Yes," chimed in little Armine, who was hanging to his mother's skirts; "she thought she should get to the Park by Duke Street."

"That did not make it right for you not to be obedient," said Carey, trying for severity.

"But we couldn't, mother."

"Couldn't?" both echoed.

"No," said Jock, "or we should be still in Piccadilly. Mother Carey, she told us not to cross till it was safe."

"And she stood up like the Duke of Bedford in the Square," added Armine.

Janet caught her mother's eye, and both felt a spasm of uncontrollable diversion in their throats, making Janet turn her back, and Carey gasp and turn on the boys.

"All that is no reason at all. Go up to the nursery. I wish I could trust you to behave like a gentleman, when your aunt is so kind as to take you out."

"I *did*, mother! I did hand her across the street, and dragged her out from under all the omnibus horses," said Jock in an injured tone, while Janet could not refrain from a whispered comparison, "Like a little steam-tug," and this was quite too much for all of them, producing an explosion which made the tall and stately dame look from one to another in such bewildered amazement, that struck the mother and daughter as so comical that the one hid her face in her hands with a sort of hysterical heaving, and the other burst into that painful laughter by which strained spirits assert themselves in the young.

Mrs. Robert Brownlow, in utter astonishment and discomfiture, turned and walked off to her own room. Somehow Carey and Janet felt more on their ordinary terms than they had done all these sad days, in their consternation and a certain sense of guilt.

Carey could adjudicate now, though trembling still. She made Jock own that his Serpentine plans had been unjustifiable, and then she added, "My poor boy, I must punish you. You must

remember it, for if you are not good and steady, what *will* become of us."

Jock leapt at her neck. "Mother, do anything to me. I don't mind, if you only won't look at me like that!"

She sat down on the stairs, all in a heap again with him, and sentenced him to the forfeit of the ship, which he endured with more tolerable grace, because Armine observed, "Never mind, Skipjack, we'll go partners in mine. You shall have half my cargo of gold dust."

Carey could not find it in her heart to check the voyages of the remaining ship, over the uncarpeted dining-room; but as she was going, Armine looked at her with his great soft eyes, and said, "Mother Carey, have you got to be the scoldy and punishy one now?"

"I must if you need it," said she, going down on her knees again to gather the little fellow to her breast; "but, oh, don't—don't need it."

"I'd rather it was Uncle Robert and Aunt Ellen," said Jock, "for then I shouldn't care."

"Dear Jock, if you only care, I think we sha'n't want many punishments. But now I must go to your aunt, for we did behave horribly ill to her."

Aunt Ellen was kind, and accepted Carey's apology when she found that Jock had really been punished. Only she said, "You must be firm with that boy, Caroline, or you will be sorry for it. My boys know that what I have said is to be done, and they

know it is of no use to disobey. I am happy to say they mind me at a word; but that John of yours needs a tight hand. The Colonel thinks that the sooner he is at school the better."

Before Carey had time to get into a fresh scrape, the Colonel was ringing at the door. He had to confess that Dr. Lucas had said Mrs. Joe Brownlow was right about Vaughan, and had made it plain that his offer ought not to be accepted, either in policy, or in that duty which the Colonel began to perceive towards his brother's patients. Nor did he think ill of her plan respecting Dr. Drake; and said he would himself suggest the application which that gentleman was no doubt withholding from true feeling, for he had been a favourite pupil of Joe Brownlow, and had been devoted to him. He was sure that Mrs. Brownlow's good sense and instinct were to be trusted, a dictum which not a little surprised her brother-in-law, who had never ceased to think of "poor Joe's fancy" as a mere child, and who forgot that she was fifteen years older than at her marriage.

He told his wife what Dr. Lucas had said, to which she replied, "That's just the way. Men know nothing about it."

However, Dr. Drake's offer was sufficiently eligible to be accepted. Moreover, it proved that the most available house at Kenminster could not be got ready for the family before the winter, so that the move could not take place till the spring. In the meantime, as Dr. Drake could not marry till Easter, the lower part of the house was to be given up to him, and Carey and Janet felt that they had a reprieve.

CHAPTER V. – BRAINS AND NO BRAINS

I do say, thou art quick in answers:
Thou heatest my blood.—Love's Labours Lost.

Kem'ster, as county tradition pronounced what was spelt Kenminster, a name meaning St. Kenelm's minster, had a grand collegiate church and a foundation-school which, in the hands of the Commissioners, had of late years passed into the rule of David Ogilvie, Esq., a spare, pale, nervous, sensitive-looking man of eight or nine and twenty, who sat one April evening under his lamp, with his sister at work a little way off, listening with some amusement to his sighs and groans at the holiday tasks that lay before him.

"Here's an answer, Mary. What was Magna Charta? The first map of the world."

"Who's that ingenious person?"

"Brownlow Major, of course; and here's French, who says it was a new sort of cow invented by Henry VIII.—a happy feminine, I suppose, to the Papal Bull. Here's a third! The French fleet defeated by Queen Elizabeth. Most have passed it over entirely."

"Well, you know this is the first time you have tried such an examination, and boys never do learn history."

"Nor anything else in this happy town," was the answer, accompanied by a ruffling over of the papers.

"For shame, David! The first day of the term!"

"It is the dead weight of Brownlows, my dear. Only think! There's another lot coming! A set of duplicates. They haven't even the sense to vary the Christian names. Three more to be admitted to-morrow."

"That accounts for a good deal!"

"You are laughing at me, Mary; but did you never know what it is to feel like Sisyphus? Whenever you think you have rolled it a little way, down it comes, a regular dead weight again, down the slope of utter indifference and dulness, till it seems to crush the very heart out of you!"

"Have you really nobody that is hopeful?"

"Nobody who does not regard me as his worst enemy, and treat all my approaches with distrust and hostility. Mary, how am I to live it down?"

"You speak as if it were a crime!"

"I feel as if it were one. Not of mine, but of the pedagogic race before me, who have spoilt the relations between man and boy; so that I cannot even get one to act as a medium."

"That would be contrary to esprit de corps."

"Exactly; and the worst of it is, I am not one of those genial fellows, half boys themselves, who can join in the sports con

amore; I should only make a mountebank of myself if I tried, and the boys would distrust me the more."

"Quite true. The only way is to be oneself, and one's best self, and the rest will come."

"I'm not so sure of that. Some people mistake their vocation."

"Well, when you have given it a fair trial, you can turn to something else. You are getting the school up again, which is at least one testimony."

David Ogilvie made a sound as if this were very base kind of solace, and his sister did not wonder when she remembered the bright hopes and elaborate theories with which he had undertaken the mastership only nine months ago. He was then fresh from the university, and the loss of constant intercourse with congenial minds had perhaps contributed as much as the dulness of the Kenminster youth to bring him into a depressed state of health and spirits, which had made his elder sister contrive to spend her Easter at the seaside with him, and give him a few days at the beginning of the term. Indeed, she was anxious enough about him, when he went down to the old grammar-school, to revolve the possibility of acceding to his earnest wish, and coming to live with him, instead of continuing in her situation as governess.

He came back to luncheon next day with a brightened face, that made his sister say, "Well, have you struck some sparks?"

"I've got some new material, and am come home saying, 'What's in a name?'"

"Eh! Is it those very new Brownlows, that seemed yesterday to be the last straw on the camel's back?"

"I wish you could have seen the whole scene, Mary. There were half-a-dozen new boys to be admitted, four Brownlows! Think of that! Well, there stood manifestly one of the old stock, with the same oval face and sleepy brown eyes, and the very same drawl I know so well in the 'No—a—' to the vain question, 'Have you done any Latin?' And how shall I do justice to the long, dragging drawl of his reading? Aye, here's the sentence I set him on: 'The—Gowls—had—con—sen—ted—to—accept—a—sum—of—gold—and—retire. They were en—gagged—in—wag—ging out the sum—required, and—' I had to tell him what to call Brennus, and he proceeded to cast the sword into the scale, exclaiming, just as to a cart-horse, 'Woh! To the Worsted' (pronounced like yarn). After that you may suppose the feelings with which I called his ditto, another Joseph Armine Brownlow; and forth came the smallest sprite, with a white face and great black eyes, all eagerness, but much too wee for this place. 'Begun Latin?' 'Oh, yes;' and he rattled off a declension and a tense with as much ease as if he had been born speaking Latin. I gave him Phaedrus to see whether that would stump him, and I don't think it would have done so if he had not made os a mouth instead of a bone, in dealing with the 'Wolf and the Lamb.' He was almost crying, so I put the Roman history into his hand, and his reading was something refreshing to hear. I asked if he knew what the sentence meant, and he answered, 'Isn't it

when the geese cackled?' trying to turn round the page. 'What do you know about the geese?' said I. To which the answer was, 'We played at it on the stairs! Jock and I were the Romans, and Mother Carey and Babie were the geese.'"

"Poor little fellow! I hope no boys were there to listen, or he will never hear the last of those geese."

"I hope no one was within earshot but his brothers, who certainly did look daggers at him. He did very well in summing and in writing, except that he went out of his way to spell fish, p h y c h, and shy, s c h y; and at last, I could not resist the impulse to ask him what Magna Charta is. Out came the answer, 'It is yellow, and all crumpled up, and you can't read it, but it has a bit of a great red seal hanging to it.'"

"What, he had seen it?"

"Yes, or a facsimile, and what was more, he knew who signed it. Whoever taught that child knew how to teach, and it is a pity he should be swamped among such a set as ours."

"I thought you would be delighted."

"I should be, if I had him alone, but he must be put with a crew who will make it their object to bully him out of his superiority, and the more I do for him, the worse it will be for him, poor little fellow; and he looks too delicate to stand the ordeal. It is sheer cruelty to send him."

"Hasn't he brothers?"

"Oh, yes! I was going to tell you, two bigger boys, another Robert and John Brownlow—about eleven and nine years old.

The younger one is a sort of black spider monkey, wanting the tail. We shall have some trouble with that gentleman, I expect."

"But not the old trouble?"

"No, indeed; unless the atmosphere affects him. He answered as no boy of twelve can do here; and as to the elder one, I must take him at once into the fifth form, such as it is."

"Where have they been at school?"

"At a day school in London. They are Colonel Brownlow's nephews. Their father was a medical man in London, who died last summer, leaving a young widow and these boys, and they have just come down to live in Kenminster. But it can't be owing to the school. No school would give all three that kind of—what shall I call it?—culture, and intelligence, that they all have; besides, the little one has been entirely taught at home."

"I wonder whether it is their mother's doing?"

"I am afraid it is their father's. The Colonel spoke of her as a poor helpless little thing, who was thrown on his hands with all her family."

After the morning's examination and placing of the boys, there was a half-holiday; and the brother and sister set forth to enjoy it together, for Kenminster was a place with special facilities for enjoyment. It was built as it were within a crescent, formed by low hills sloping down to the river; the Church, school, and other remnants of the old collegiate buildings lying in the flat at the bottom, and the rest of the town, one of the small decayed wool staples of Somerset, being in terraces on the hill-side, with

steep streets dividing the rows. These were of very mixed quality and architecture, but, as a general rule, improved the higher they rose, and were all interspersed with gardens running up or down, and with a fair sprinkling of trees, whose budding green looked well amid the yellow stone.

On the summit were some more ornamental villa-like houses, and grey stone buildings with dark tiled roofs, but the expansion on that side had been checked by extensive private grounds. There were very beautiful woods coming almost close to the town, and in the absence of the owner, a great moneyed man, they were open to all those who did not make themselves obnoxious to the keepers; and these, under an absentee proprietor, gave a free interpretation to rights of way. Thither were the Ogilvies bound, in search of primrose banks, but their way led them past two or three houses on the hill-top, one of which, being constructed on supposed Chinese principles of architecture, was known to its friends as "the Pagoda," to its foes as "the Folly." It had been long untenanted, but this winter it had been put into complete repair, and two rooms, showing a sublime indifference to consistency of architecture, had been lately built out with sash windows and a slated roof, contrasting oddly with the frilled and fluted tiles of the tower from which it jutted.

Suddenly there sounded close to their ears the words —"School time, my dear!"

Starting and looking round for some impertinent street boy, Mr. Ogilvie exclaimed, "What's that?"

"Mother Carey! We are all Mother Carey's chickens."

"See, there," exclaimed Mary, and a great parrot was visible on the branch of a sumach, which stretched over the railings of the low wall of the pagoda garden. "O you appropriate bird,—you surely ought not to be here!"

To which the parrot replied, "Hic, haec, hoc!" and burst out in a wild scream of laughing, spreading her grey wings, and showing intentions of flying away; but Mr. Ogilvie caught hold of the chain that hung from her leg.

Just then voices broke out—

"That's Polly! Where is she? That's you, Jock, you horrid boy."

"Well, I didn't see why she shouldn't enjoy herself."

"Now you've been and lost her. Poll, Poll!"

"I have her!" called back Mr. Ogilvie. "I'll bring her to the gate."

Thanks came through the hedge, and the brother and sister walked on.

"It's old Ogre. Cut!" growled in what was meant to be an aside, a voice the master knew full well, and there was a rushing off of feet, like ponies in a field.

When the sheep gate was reached, a great furniture van was seen standing at the door of the "Folly," and there appeared a troop of boys and girls in black, eager to welcome their pet.

"Thank you, sir; thank you very much. Come, Polly," said the eldest boy, taking possession of the bird.

"I think we have met before," said the schoolmaster to the

younger ones, glad to see that two—i.e. the new Robert and Armine Brownlow—had not joined in the sauve qui peut.

Nay, Robert turned and said, "Mother, it is Mr. Ogilvie."

Then that gentleman was aware that one of the black figures had a widow's cap, with streamers flying behind her in the breeze, but while he was taking off his hat and beginning, "Mrs. Brownlow," she held out her hands to his sister, crying, "Mary, Mary Ogilvie," and there was an equally fervent response. "Is it? Is it really Caroline Allen?" and the two friends linked eager hands in glad pressure, turning, after the first moment, towards the house, while Mary said, "David, it is my dear old schoolfellow; Carey, this is my brother."

"You were very kind to these boys," said Carey, warmly shaking hands with him. "The name sounded friendly, but I little thought you were Mary's brother. Are you living here, Mary? How delightful!"

"Alas, no; I am only keeping holiday with David. I go back to-morrow."

"Then stay now, stay and let me get all I can of you, in this frightful muddle," entreated Caroline. "Chaos is come again, but you won't mind."

"I'll come and help you," said Mary. "David, you must go on alone and come back for me."

"Can't I be of use?" offered David, feeling rather shut out in the cold; "I see a bookcase. Isn't that in my line?"

"And here's the box with its books," said Janet. "Oh! mother,

do let that be finished off at least! Bobus, there are the shelves, and I have all their pegs in my basket."

The case was happily in its place against the wall, and Janet had seized on her recruit to hold the shelves while she pegged them, while the two friends were still exchanging their first inquiries, Carey exclaiming, "Now, you naughty Mary, where have you been, and why didn't you write?"

"I have been in Russia, and I didn't write, because nobody answered, and I didn't know where anybody was."

"In Russia! I thought you were with a Scottish family, and wrote to you to the care of some laird with an unearthly name."

"But you knew that they took me abroad."

"And Alice Brown told me that letters sent to the place in Scotland would find you. I wrote three times, and when you did not answer my last—" and Caroline broke off with things unutterable in her face.

"I never had any but the first when you were going to London. I answered that. Yes, I did! Don't look incredulous. I wrote from Sorrento."

"That must have miscarried. Where did you address it."

"To the old place, inside a letter to Mrs. Mercer."

"I see! Poor Mrs. Mercer went away ill, and did not live long after, and I suppose her people never troubled themselves about her letters. But why did not you get ours."

"Mrs. McIan died at Venice, and the aunts came out, and considering me too young to go on with the laird and his girls,

they fairly made me over to a Russian family whom we had met. Unluckily, as I see now, I wrote to Mrs. Mercer, and as I never heard more I gave up writing. Then the Crimean War cut me off entirely even from David. I had only one letter all that time."

"How is it that you are a governess? I thought one was sure of a pension from a Russian grandee!"

"These were not very grand grandees, only counts, and though they paid liberally, they could not pension one. So when I had done with the youngest daughter, I came to England and found a situation in London. I tried to look up our old set, but could not get on the track of anyone except Emily Collins, who told me you had married very soon, but was not even sure of your name. Very soon! Why, Caroline, your daughter looks as old as yourself."

"I sometimes think she is older! And have you seen my Eton boy?"

"Was it he who received the delightful popinjay, who 'Up and spak' so much to the purpose?" asked Mr. Ogilvie.

"Yes, it was Allen. He is the only one you did not see in the morning. Did they do tolerably?"

"I only wish I had any boys who did half as well," said Mr. Ogilvie, the lads being gone for more books.

"I was afraid for John and Armine, for we have been unsettled, and I could not go on so steadily with them as before," she said eagerly, but faltering a little. "Armine told me he blundered in Phaedrus, but I hope he did fairly on the whole."

"So well that if you ask my advice, I should say keep him to

yourself two years more."

"Oh! I am so glad," with a little start of joy. "You'll tell his uncle? He insisted—he had some impression that they were very naughty boys, whom I could not cope with, poor little fellows."

"I can decidedly say he is learning more from you than he would in school among those with whom, at his age, I must place him."

"Thank you, thank you. Then Babie won't lose her companion. She wanted to go to school with Armie, having always gone on with him. And the other two—what of them? Bobus is sure to work for the mere pleasure of it—but Jock?"

"I don't promise that he may not let himself down to the standard of his age and develop a capacity for idleness, but even he has time to spare, and he is at that time of life when boys do for one another what no one else can do for them."

"The Colonel said the boys were a good set and gentlemanly," said Carey wistfully.

"I think I may say that for them," returned their master. "They are not bad boys as boys go. There is as much honour and kindliness among them as you would find anywhere. Besides, to boys like yours this would be only a preparatory school. They are sure to fly off to scholarships."

"I don't know," said Carey. "I want them to be where physical science is an object. Or do you think that thorough classical training is a better preparation than taking up any individual line?"

"I believe it is easier to learn how to learn through languages than through anything else."

"And to be taught how to learn is a much greater thing than to be crammed," said Carey. "Of course when one begins to teach oneself, the world has become "mine oyster," and one has the dagger. The point becomes how to sharpen the dagger."

At that moment three or four young people rushed in with arms full of books, and announcing that the uncle and aunt were coming. The next moment they appeared, and stood amazed at the accession of volunteer auxiliaries. Mr. Ogilvie introduced his sister, while Caroline explained that she was an old friend,—meanwhile putting up a hand to feel for her cap, as she detected in Ellen's eyes those words, "Caroline, your cap."

"We came to see how you were getting on," said the Colonel, kindly.

"Thank you, we are getting on capitally. And oh, Robert, Mr. Ogilvie will tell you; he thinks Armine too—too—I mean he thinks he had better not go into school yet," she added, thankful that she had not said "too clever for the school."

The Colonel turned aside with the master to discuss the matter, and the ladies went into the drawing-room, the new room opening on the lawn, under a verandah, with French windows. It was full of furniture in the most dire confusion. Mrs. Robert Brownlow wanted to clear off at once the desks and other things that seemed school-room properties, saying that a little room downstairs had always served the purpose.

"That must be nurse's sitting-room," said Carey.

"Old nurse! She can be of no use, my dear!"

"Oh yes, she is; she has lived with us ever since dear grandmamma married, and has no home, and no relations. We could not get on without dear old nursey!"

"Well, my dear, I hope you will find it answer to keep her on. But as to this room! It is such a pity not to keep it nice, when you have such handsome furniture too."

"I want to keep it nice with habitation," said Caroline. "That's the only way to do it. I can't bear fusty, shut-up smart rooms, and I think the family room ought to be the pleasantest and prettiest in the house for the children's sake."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Brownlow, with a serene good nature, contrasting with the heat with which Caroline spoke, "it is your affair, my dear, but my boys would not thank me for shutting them in with my pretty things, and I should be sorry to have them there. Healthy country boys like to have their fun, and I would not coop them up."

"Oh, but there's the studio to run riot in, Ellen," said Carey. "Didn't you see? The upper story of the tower. We have put the boy's tools there, and I can do my modelling there, and make messes and all that's nice," she said, smiling to Mary, and to Allen, who had just come in.

"Do you model, Carey?" Mary asked, and Allen volunteered to show his mother's groups and bas-reliefs, thereby much increasing the litter on the floor, and delighting Mary a good deal

more than his aunt, who asked, “What will you do for a store-room then?”

“Put up a few cupboards and shelves anywhere.”

It is not easy to describe the sort of air with which Mrs. Robert Brownlow received this answer. She said nothing but “Oh,” and was perfectly unruffled in a sort of sublime contempt, as to the hopelessness of doing anything with such a being on her own ground.

There did not seem overt provocation, but poor Caroline, used to petting and approval, chafed and reasoned: “I don’t think anything so important as a happy home for the boys, where they can have their pursuits, and enjoy themselves.”

Mrs. Brownlow seemed to think this totally irrelevant, and observed, “When I have nice things, I like to keep them nice.”

“I like nice boys better than nice things,” cried Carey.

Ellen smiled as though to say she hoped she was not an unnatural mother, and again said “Oh!”

Mary Ogilvie was very glad to see the two gentlemen come in from the hall, the Colonel saying, “Mr. Ogilvie tells me he thinks Armine too small at present for school, Caroline.”

“You know I am very glad of it, Robert,” she said, smiling gratefully, and Ellen compassionately observed, “Poor little fellow, he is very small, but country air and food will soon make a man of him if he is not overdone with books. I make it a point never to force my children.”

“No, that you don’t,” said Caroline, with a dangerous smile

about the corners of her mouth.

"And my boys do quite as well as if they had their heads stuffed and their growth stunted," said Ellen. "Joe is only two months older than Armine, and you are quite satisfied with him, are you not, Mr. Ogilvie?"

"He is more on a level with the others," said Mr. Ogilvie politely; "but I wish they were all as forward as this little fellow."

"Schoolmasters and mammas don't always agree on those points," said the Colonel good-humouredly.

"Very true," responded his wife. "I never was one for teasing the poor boys with study and all that. I had rather see them strong and well grown. They'll have quite worry enough when they go to school."

"I'm sorry you look at me in that aspect," said Mr. Ogilvie.

"Oh, I know you can't help it," said the lady.

"Any more than Trois Echelles and Petit Andre," said Carey, in a low voice, giving the two Ogilvies the strongest desire to laugh.

Just then out burst a cry of wrath and consternation, making everyone hurry out into the hall, where, through a perfect cloud of white powder, loomed certain figures, and a scandalised voice cried "Aunt Caroline, Jock and Armine have been and let all the arrowroot fly about."

"You told me to be useful and open parcels," cried Jock.

"Oh, jolly, jolly! first-rate!" shouted Armine in ecstasy. "It's just like Paris in the cloud! More, more, Babie. You are Venus,

you know."

"Master Armine, Miss Barbara! For shame," exclaimed the nurse's voice. "All getting into the carpet, and in your clothes, I do declare! A whole case of best arrowroot wasted, and worse."

""Twas Jessie's doing," replied Jock. "She told me."

Jessie, decidedly the most like Venus of the party, being a very pretty girl, with an oval face and brown eyes, had retreated, and was with infinite disgust brushing the white powder out of her dress, only in answer ejaculating, "Those boys!"

Jock had not only opened the case, but had opened it upside down, and the classical performances of Armine and Barbara had powdered themselves and everything around, while the draught that was rushing through all the wide open doors and windows dispersed the mischief far and wide.

"Can you do nothing but laugh, Caroline?" gravely said Mrs. Brownlow. "Janet, shut that window. Children, out of the way! If you were mine, I should send you to bed."

"There's no bed to be sent to," muttered Jock, running round to give a sly puff to the white heap, diffusing a sprinkling of white powder over his aunt's dress.

"Jock," said his mother with real firmness and indignation in her voice, "that is not the way to behave. Beg your aunt's pardon this instant."

And to everyone's surprise the imp obeyed the hand she had laid on him, and muttered something like, "beg pardon," though it made his face crimson.

His uncle exclaimed, "That's right, my boy," and his aunt said, with dignity, "Very well, we'll say no more about it."

Mary Ogilvie was in the meantime getting some of the powder back into the tin, and Janet running in from the kitchen with a maid, a soup tureen, and sundry spoons, everyone became busy in rescuing the remains—in the midst of which there was a smash of glass.

"Jock again!" quoth Janet.

"Oh, mother!" called out Jock. "It's so long! I thought I'd get the feather-brush to sweep it up with, and the other end of it has been and gone through this stupid lamp."

"Things are not unapt to be and go through, where you are concerned, Mr. Jock, I suspect," said Mr. Ogilvie. "Suppose you were to come with me, and your brothers too, and be introduced to the swans on the lake at Belforest."

The boys brightened up, the mother said, "Thank you most heartily, if they will not be a trouble," and Babie put her hand entreatingly into the schoolmaster's, and said, "Me too?"

"What, Venus herself! I thought she had disappeared in the cloud! Let her come, pray, Mrs. Brownlow."

"I thought the children would have been with their cousins," observed the aunt.

"So we were," returned Armine; "but Johnnie and Joe ran away when they saw Mr. Ogilvie coming."

Babie having by this time had a little black hat tied on, and as much arrowroot as possible brushed out of her frock; Carey

warned the schoolmaster not to let himself be chattered to death, and he walked off with the three younger ones.

Caroline would have kept her friend, but Mary, seeing that little good could be gained by staying with her at present, replied that she would take the walk now, and return to her friend in a couple of hours' time; and Carey was fain to consent, though with a very wistful look in her eyes.

At the end of that time, or more, Janet met the party at the garden gate. "You are to go down to my uncle's, children," she said; "mother has one of her very bad headaches."

There was an outcry that they must take her the flowers, of which their hands and arms were full; but Janet was resolute, though Babie was very near tears.

"To-morrow—to-morrow," she said. "She must lie still now, or she won't be able to do anything. Run away, Babie, they'll be waiting tea for you. Allen's there. He'll take care of you."

"I want to give Mother Carey those dear white flowers," still entreated Babie.

"I'll give them, my dear. They want you down there—Ellie and Esther."

"I don't want to play with Ellie and Essie," sturdily declared Barbara. "They say it is telling falsehoods when one wants to play at anything."

"They don't understand pretending," said Armine. "Do let us stay, Janet, we'll not make one smallest little atom of noise, if Jock doesn't stay."

"You can't," said Janet, "for there's nothing for you to eat, and nurse and Susan are as savage as Carribee islanders."

This last argument was convincing. The children threw their flowers into Janet's arms, gave their hands to Miss Ogilvie, and Babie between her two brothers, scampered off, while Miss Ogilvie uttered her griefs and regrets.

"My mother would like to see you," said Janet; "indeed, I think it will do her good. She told me to bring you in."

"Such a day of fatigue," began Mary.

"That and all the rest of it," said Janet moodily.

"Is she subject to headaches?"

"No, she never had one, till—" Janet broke off, for they had reached her mother's door.

"Bring her in," said a weary voice, and Mary found herself beside a low iron bed, where Carey, shaking off the handkerchief steeped in vinegar and water on her brow, and showing a tear-stained, swollen-eyed face, threw herself into her friend's arms.

But she did not cry now, her tears all came when she was alone, and when Mary said something of being so sorry for her headache, she said, "Oh! it's only with knocking one's head against a mattress like mad people," in such a matter-of-fact voice, that Mary for a moment wondered whether she had really knocked her head.

Mary doubted what to say, and wetted the kerchief afresh with the vinegar and water.

"Oh, Mary, I wish you were going to stay here."

"I wish! I wish I could, my dear!"

"I think I could be good if you were here!" she sighed. "Oh, Mary, why do they say that troubles make one good?"

"They ought," said Mary.

"They don't," said Carey. "They make me wicked!" and she hid her face in the pillow with a great gasp.

"My poor Carey!" said the gentle voice.

"Oh! I want to tell you all about it. Oh! Mary, we have been so happy!" and what a wail there was in the tone. "But I can't talk," she added faintly, "it makes me sick, and that's all her doing too."

"Don't try," said Mary tenderly. "We know where to find each other now, and you can write to me."

"I will," said Caroline; "I can write much better than tell. And you will come back, Mary?"

"As soon as I can get a holiday, my dear, indeed I will."

Carey was too much worn out not to repose on the promise, and though she was unwilling to let her friend go, she said very little more.

Mary longed to give her a cup of strong coffee, and suggested it to Janet; but headaches were so new in the family, that domestic remedies had not become well-known. Janet instantly rushed down to order it, but in the state of the house at that moment, it was nearly as easy to get a draught of pearls.

"But she shall have it, Miss Ogilvie," said Janet, putting on her hat. "Where's the nearest grocer?"

"Oh, never mind, my dear," sighed the patient. "It will go off

of itself, when I can get to sleep."

"You shall have it," returned Janet.

And Mary having taken as tender a farewell as Caroline was able to bear, they walked off together; but the girl did not respond to the kindness of Miss Ogilvie.

She was too miserable not to be glum, too reserved to be open to a stranger. Mary guessed a little of the feeling, though she feared that an uncomfortable daughter might be one of poor Carey's troubles, and she could not guess the girl's sense of banishment from all that she had enjoyed, society, classes, everything, or her feeling that the Magnum Bonum itself was imperilled by exile into the land of dulness, which of course the poor child exaggerated in her imagination. Her only consolation was to feel herself the Masterman Ready of the shipwreck.

CHAPTER VI. – ENCHANTED GROUND

And sometimes a merry train
Comes upon us from the lane
All through April, May, or June,
Every gleaming afternoon;
All through April, May, and June,
Boys and maidens, birds and bees,
Airy whisperings from all trees.

Petition of the Flowers—Keble.

The headache had been carried off by a good night's rest; a droll, scrambling breakfast had been eaten, German fashion, with its headquarters on the kitchen table; and everybody running about communicating their discoveries. Bobus and Jock had set off to school, and poor little Armine, who firmly believed that his rejection was in consequence of his confusion between os, ossis, and os, oris, and was very sore about it, had gone with Allen and Barbara to see them on their way, and Mother Carey and Janet had agreed to get some real work done and were actually getting through business, when in rushed, rosy and eager, Allen, Armine, and Babie, with arms stretched and in breathless haste.

"Mother Carey! Oh, mother! mammie, dear! come and see!"

"Come—where?"

"To fairy-land. Get her bonnet, Babie."

"Out of doors, you boy? just look there!"

"Oh! bother all that! It can wait."

"Do pray come, mother," entreated Armine; "you never saw anything like it!"

"What is it? Will it take long?" said she, beginning to yield, as Babie danced about with her bonnet, Armine tugged at her, and Allen look half-commanding, half-coaxing.

"She is not to know till she sees! No, don't tell her," said Armine. "Bandage her eyes, Allen. Here's my silk handkerchief."

"And Janet. She mustn't see," cried Babie, in ecstasy.

"I'm not coming," said Janet, rather crossly. "I'm much too busy, and it is only some nonsense of yours."

"Thank you," said Allen, laughing; "mother shall judge of that."

"It does seem a shame to desert you, my dear," said Carey, "but you see—"

What Janet was to see was stifled in the flap of the handkerchief with which Allen was binding her eyes, while Armine and Babie sang rapturously—

> "Come along, Mother Carey,
> Come along to land of fairy;"

an invocation to which, sooth to say, she had become so much accustomed that it prevented her from expecting a fairy-land

where it was not necessary to "make believe very much."

Janet so entirely disapproved of the puerile interruption that she never looked to see how Allen and Babie managed the bonnet. She only indignantly picked up the cap which had fallen from the sofa to the floor, and disposed of it for security's sake on the bronze head of Apollo, which was waiting till his bracket could be put up.

Guided most carefully by her eldest son, and with the two little ones dancing and singing round her, and alternately stopping each other's mouths when any premature disclosure was apprehended, pausing in wonder when the cuckoo note, never heard before, came on them, making them laugh with glee.

Thus she was conducted much further than she expected. She heard the swing of the garden gate and felt her feet on the road and remonstrated, but she was coaxed on and through another gate, and a path where Allen had to walk in front of her, and the little ones fell behind.

Then came an eager "Now."

Her eyes were unbound, and she beheld what they might well call enchanted ground.

She was in the midst of a curved bank where the copsewood had no doubt been recently cut away, and which was a perfect marvel of primroses, their profuse bunches standing out of their wrinkled leaves at every hazel root or hollow among the exquisite moss, varied by the pearly stars of the wind-flower, purple orchis spikes springing from black-spotted leaves, and deep-grey

crested dog-violets. On one side was a perfect grove of the broad-leaved, waxen-belled Solomon's seal, sloping down to moister ground where was a golden river of king-cups, and above was a long glade between young birch-trees, their trunks gleaming silvery white, the boughs over head breaking out into foliage that looked yellow rather than green against the blue sky, and the ground below one sheet of that unspeakably intense purple blue which is only produced by masses of the wild hyacinth.

"There!" said Allen.

"There!" re-echoed the children. "Oh mammy, mammy dear! Is it not delicious?"

Carey held up her hand in silence, for a nightingale was pouring out his song close by; she listened breathlessly, and as it ceased she burst into tears.

"O mother!" cried Allen, "it is too much for you."

"No, dear boy, it is—it is—only too beautiful. It is what papa always talked of and would have so enjoyed."

"Do you think he has better flowers up there?" asked Babie. "I don't think they can be much better."

And without waiting for more she plunged down among the primroses and spread her little self out with a scream of ecstasy.

And verily the strange sense of rapture and enchantment was no less in the mother herself. There is no charm perhaps equal to that of a primrose bank on a sunny day in spring, sight, sound, scent all alike exquisite. It comes with a new and fresh delight even to those to whom this is an annual experience, and

to those who never saw the like before it gives, like the first sight of the sea or of a snowy mountain, a sensation never to be forgotten. Fret, fatigue, anxiety, sorrow all passed away like dreams in that sweet atmosphere. Carey, like one of her children, absolutely forgot everything in the charm and wonder of the scene, in the pure, delicate unimaginable odour of the primroses, in debating with Allen whether (cockneys that they were) it could be a nightingale "singing by day when every goose is cackling," in listening to the marvellous note, only pausing to be answered from further depths, in the beauty of the whole, and in the individual charm of every flower, each heavily-laden arch of dark blue-bells with their curling tips, so infinitely more graceful than their pampered sister, the hyacinth of the window-glass, of each pure delicate anemone she gathered, with its winged stem, of the smiling primrose of that inimitable tint it only wears in its own woodland nest; and when Allen lighted on a bed of wood-sorrel, with its scarlet stems, lovely trefoil leaves, and purple striped blossoms like insect's wings, she absolutely held her breath in an enthusiasm of reverent admiration. No one can tell the happiness of those four, only slightly diminished by Armine's getting bogged on his way to the golden river of king-cups, and his mother in going after him, till Allen from an adjacent stump pulled them out, their feet deeply laden with mud.

They had only just emerged when the strokes of a great bell came pealing up from the town below; Allen and his mother looked at each other in amused dismay, then at their watches. It

was twelve o'clock! Two hours had passed like as many minutes, and the boys would be coming home to dinner.

"Ah! well, we must go," said Carey, as they gathered up their armloads of flowers. "You naughty children to make me forget everything."

"You are not sorry you came though, mother. It has done you good," said Allen solicitously. He was the most affectionate of them all.

"Sorry! I feel as if I cared for nothing while I have a place like that to drink up delight in."

With which they tried to make their way back to the path again, but it was not immediately to be found; and their progress was further impeded by a wood-pigeon dwelling impressively on the notes "Take two cows, Taffy; Taffy take TWO!" and then dashing out, flapping and grey, in their faces, rather to Barbara's alarm, and then by Armine's stumbling on his first bird's nest, a wren's in the moss of an old stump, where the tiny bird unadvisedly flew out of her leafy hole full before their eyes. That was a marvel of marvels, a delight equal to that felt by any explorer the world has seen. Armine and Barbara, who lived in one perpetual fairy tale, were saying to one another that

"One needn't make believe here, it was every bit real."

"And more;" added the other little happy voice. Barbara did however begin to think of the numerous children in the wood, and to take comfort that it was unprecedented that their mother and big brother should be with them, but they found the park

palings at last, and then a little wicket gate, where they were very near home.

"Mother, where *have* you been?" exclaimed Janet, somewhat suddenly emerging from the door.

"In Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver," said Carey, pointing to the armsful of king-cups, cuckoo-flowers, and anemones, besides blue-bells, orchises, primroses, &c. "My poor child, it was a great shame to leave you, but they got me into the enchanted land and I forgot all about everything."

"I think so," said a gravely kind voice, and Caroline was aware of Ellen's eye looking at her as the Court Queen might have looked at Ophelia if she had developed her taste for "long purples" as Hamlet's widow. At least so it struck Mother Carey, who immediately became conscious that her bonnet was awry, having been half pulled off by a bramble, that her ankles were marked by the bog, and that bits of green were sticking all over her.

"Have you been helping Janet? Oh, how kind!" she said, refreshed by her delightsome morning into putting a bright face on it.

"We have done all we could in your absence," said her sister-in-law, in a reproachful voice.

"Thank you; I'm sure it is very good of you. Janet—Janet, where's the great Dutch bowl—and the little Salviati? Nothing else is worthy of this dear little fairy thing."

"What is it? Just common wood-sorrel," said the other lady,

in utter amaze.

"Ah, Ellen, you think me demented. You little know what it is to see spring for the first time. Ah! that's right, Janet. Now, Babie, we'll make a little bit of fairy-land—"

"Don't put all those littering flowers on that nice clean chintz, children," exclaimed the aunt, as though all her work were about to be undone.

And then a trampling of boy's boots being heard and shouts of "Mother," Carey darted out into the hall to hear fragments of school intelligence as to work and play, tumbling over one another, from Bobus and Jock both at once, in the midst of which Mrs. Robert Brownlow came out with her hat on, and stood, with her air of patient serenity, waiting for an interval.

Caroline looked up, and said, "I beg your pardon, Ellen—what is it?"

"If you can attend a moment," said she, gravely; "I must be going to my boys' dinner. But Robert wishes to know whether he shall order this paper for the drawing-room. It cannot be put up yet, of course; but Smith has only a certain quantity of it, and it is so stylish that he said the Colonel had better secure it at once."

She spread the roll of paper on the hall table. It was a white paper, slightly tinted, and seemed intended to represent coral branches, with starry-looking things at the ends.

"The aquarium at the Zoo," muttered Bobus; and Caroline herself, meeting Allen's eye, could not refrain from adding,

"The worms they crawled in,
And the worms they crawled out."

"Mother!" cried Jock, "I thought you were going to paint it all over with jolly things."

"Frescoes," said Allen; "sha'n't you, mother?"

"If your uncle does not object," said his mother, choking down a giggle. "Those plaster panels are so tempting for frescoes, Ellen."

"Frescoes! Why, those are those horrid improper-looking gods and goddesses in clouds and chariots on the ceilings at Belforest," observed that lady, in a half-puzzled, half-offended tone of voice, that most perilously tickled the fancy of Mother Carey and her brood! and she could hardly command her voice to make answer, "Never fear, Ellen; we are not going to attempt allegorical monstrosities, only to make a bower of green leaves and flowers such as we see round us; though after what we have seen to-day that seems presumptuous enough. Fancy, Janet! golden green trees and porcelain blue ground, all in one bath of sunshine. Such things must be seen to be believed in."

Poor Mrs. Robert Brownlow! She went home and sighed, as she said to her husband, "Well, what is to become of those poor things I do not know. One would sometimes think poor Caroline was just a little touched in the head."

"I hope not," said the Colonel, rather alarmed.

"It may be only affectation," said his lady, in a consolatory

tone. “I am afraid poor Joe did live with a very odd set of people —artists, and all that kind of thing. I am sure I don’t blame her, poor thing! But she is worse to manage than any child, because you can’t bid her mind what she is about, and not talk nonsense. When she leaves her house in such a state, and no one but that poor girl to see to anything, and comes home all over mud, raving about fairyland, and gold trees and blue ground; when she has just got into a bog in Belforest coppice—littering the whole place, too, with common wild flowers. If it had been Essie and Ellie, I should just have put them in the corner for making such a mess!”

The Colonel laughed a little to himself, and said, consolingly, “Well, well, you know all these country things are new to her. You must be patient with her.”

Patient! That had to be the burthen of the song on both sides. Carey was pushing back her hair with a fierce, wild sense of impatience with that calm assumption that fretted her beyond all bearing, and made her feel desolate beyond all else. She would have, she thought, done well enough alone with her children, and scrambled into her new home; but the directions, however needful, seemed to be continually insulting her understanding. When she was advised as to the best butcher and baker, there was a ring in her ears as if Ellen meant that these were safe men for a senseless creature like her, and she could not encounter them with her orders without wondering whether they had been told to treat her well.

Indeed, one of the chief drawbacks to Carey’s comfort was her

difficulty in attending to what her brother and sister-in-law said to her. Something in the measured tones of the Colonel always made her thoughts wander as from a dull sermon; and this was more unlucky in his case than in his wife's—for Ellen used such reiterations that there was a fair chance of catching her drift the second or third time, if not the first, whereas all he said was well weighed and arranged, and was only too heavy and sententious.

Kencroft, the home of the Colonel and his family, Mrs. Robert Brownlow's inheritance, was certainly "a picture of a place." It had probably been an appendage of the old minster, though the house was only of the seventeenth century; but that was substantial and venerable of its kind, and exceedingly comfortable and roomy, with everything kept in perfect order. Caroline could not quite think the furniture worthy of it, but that was not for want of the desire to do everything handsomely and fashionably. Moreover, in spite of the schoolroom and nurseryful of children, marvels of needlework and knitting adorned every table, chair, and sofa, while even in the midst of the town Kencroft had its own charming garden; a lawn, once devoted to bowls and now to croquet, an old-fashioned walled kitchen garden, sloping up the hill, and a paddock sufficient to make cows and pigs part of the establishment.

The Colonel had devoted himself to gardening and poultry with the mingled ardour and precision of a man who needed something to supply the place of his soldierly duties; and though his fervour had relaxed under the influence of ease, gout, and

substantial flesh, enough remained to keep up apple-pie order without-doors, and render Kencroft almost a show place. The meadow lay behind the house, and a gravel walk leading along its shaded border opened into the lane about ten yards from the gate of the Pagoda, as Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow and the post office laboured to call it; the Folly, as came so much more naturally to everyone's lips. It had been the work of the one eccentric man in Mrs. Robert Brownlow's family, and was thus her property. It had hung long on hand, being difficult to let, and after making sufficient additions, it had been decided that, at a nominal rent, it would house the family thrown upon the hands of the good Colonel.

CHAPTER VII. – THE COLONEL'S CHICKENS

They censured the bantam for strutting and crowing,
In those vile pantaloons that he fancied looked knowing;
And a want of decorum caused many demurs
Against the game chicken for coming in spurs.

The Peacock at Home.

Left to themselves, Mother Carey, with Janet and old nurse, completed their arrangements so well that when Jessie looked in at five o'clock, with a few choice flowers covering a fine cucumber in her basket, she exclaimed in surprise, "How nice you have made it all look, I shall be so glad to tell mamma."

"Tell her what?" asked Janet.

"That you have really made the room look nice," said Jessie.

"Thank you," said her cousin, ironically. "You see we have as many hands as other people. Didn't Aunt Ellen think we had?"

"Of course she did," said Jessie, a pretty, kindly creature, but slow of apprehension; "only she said she was very sorry for you."

"And why?" cried Janet, leaping up in indignation.

"Why?" interposed Allen, "because we are raw cockneys, who go into raptures over primroses and wild hyacinths, eh, Jessie?"

"Well, you have set them up very nicely," said Jessie; "but fancy taking so much trouble about common flowers."

"What would you think worth setting up?" asked Janet. "A big dahlia, I suppose, or a great red cactus?"

"We have a beautiful garden," said Jessie: "papa is very particular about it, and we always get the prize for our flowers. We had the first prizes for hyacinths and forced roses last week, and we should have had the first for forced cucumbers if the gardener at Belforest had not had a spite against Spencer, because he left him for us. Everybody said there was no comparison between the cucumbers, and Mr. Ellis said—"

Janet had found the day before how Jessie could prattle on in an endless quiet stream without heeding whether any one entered into it or replied to it; but she was surprised at Allen's toleration of it, though he changed the current by saying, "Belforest seems a jolly, place."

"But you've only seen the wood, not the gardens," said Jessie.

"I went down to the lake with Mr. Ogilvie," said Allen, "and saw something splendiferous looking on the other side."

"Oh! they are beautiful!" cried Janet, "all laid out in ribbon gardens and with the most beautiful terrace, and a fountain—only that doesn't play except when you give the gardener half-a-crown, and mamma says, that is exorbitant—and statues standing all round—real marble statues."

"Like the groves of Blarney," muttered Janet:

"Heathen goddesses most rare,
Homer, Venus, and Nebuchadnezzar,
All standing naked in the open air."

Allen, seeing Jessie scandalised, diverted her attention by asking, "Whom does it belong to?"

"Mr. Barnes," said Jessie; "but he is hardly ever there. He is an old miser, you know—what they call a millionaire, or mill-owner; which is it?"

"One is generally the French for the other," put in Janet.

"Never mind her, Jessie," said Allen, with a look of infinite displeasure at his sister. "What does he do which keeps him away?"

"I believe he is a great merchant, and is always in Liverpool," said Jessie. "Any way, he is a very cross old man, and won't let anybody go into his park and gardens when he comes down here; and he is very cruel too, for he disinherited his own nephew and niece for marrying. Only think Mrs. Watson at the grocer's told our Susan that there's a little girl, who is his own great-niece, living down at River Hollow Farm with Mr. and Mrs. Gould, just brought up by common farmers, you know, and he won't take any notice of her, nor give one farthing for bringing her up. Isn't it shocking? And even when he is at home, he only has two chops or two steaks, or just a bit of kidney, and that when he is literally rolling in gold."

Jessie opened her large brown eyes to mark her horror, and

Allen, made a gesture of exaggerated sympathy, which his sister took for more earnest than it was, and she said, scornfully, "I should like to see him literally rolling in gold. It must be like Midas. Do you mean that he sleeps on it, Jessie? How hard and cold!"

"Nonsense," said Jessie; "you know what I mean."

"I know what literally rolling in gold means, but I don't know what you mean."

"Don't bully her, Janet," said Allen; "we are not so stupid, are we, Jessie? Come and show me the walnut-tree you were telling me about."

"What's the matter, Janet?" said her mother, coming in a moment or two after, and finding her staring blankly out of the window, where the two had made their exit.

"O mother, Jessie has been talking such gossip, and Allen likes it, and won't have it stopped! I can't think what makes Allen and Bobus both so foolish whenever she is here."

"She is a very pretty creature," said Carey, smiling a little.

"Pretty!" repeated Janet. "What has that to do with it?"

"A great deal, as you will have to find out in the course of your life, my dear."

"I thought only foolish people cared about beauty."

"It is very convenient for us to think so," said Carey, smiling.

"But mother—surely everybody cares for you just as much or more than if you were a great handsome, stupid creature! How I hate that word handsome!"

"Except for a cab," said Carey.

"Ah! when shall I see a Hansom again?" said Janet in a slightly sentimental tone. But she returned to the charge, "Don't go, mother, I want you to answer."

"Beauty versus brains! My dear, you had better open your eyes to the truth. You must make up your mind to it. It is only very exceptional people who, even in the long run, care most for feminine brains."

"But, mother, every one did."

"Every one in our world, Janet; but your father made our home set of those exceptional people, and we are cast out of it now!" she added, with a gasp and a gesture of irrepressible desolateness.

"Yes, that comes of this horrid move," said the girl, in quite another tone. "Well, some day—" and she stopped.

"Some day?" said her mother.

"Some day we'll go back again, and show what we are," she said, proudly.

"Ah, Janet! and that's nothing now without *him*."

"Mother, how can you say so, when—?" Jane just checked herself, as she was coming to the great secret.

"When we have his four boys," said her mother. "Ah! yes, Janet—if—and when—But that's a long way off, and, to come back to our former subject," she added, recalling herself with a sigh, "it will be wise in us owlets to make up our minds that owlets we are, and to give the place to the eaglets."

"But eaglets are very ugly, and owlets very pretty," quoth

Janet.

Carey laughed. “That does not seem to have been the opinion of the Beast Epic,” said she, and the entrance of Babie prevented them from going further.

Janet turned away with one of her grim sighs at the unappreciative world to which she was banished. She had once or twice been on the point of mentioning the Magnum Bonum to her mother, but the reserve at first made it seem as if an avowal would be a confession, and to this she could not bend her pride, while the secrecy made a strange barrier between her and her mother. In truth, Janet had never been so devoted to Mother Carey as to either granny or her father, and now she missed them sorely, and felt it almost an injury to have no one but her mother to turn to.

Her character was not set in the same mould, and though both could meet on the common ground of intellect, she could neither enter into the recesses of her mother’s grief, nor understand those flashes of brightness and playfulness which nothing could destroy. If Carey had chosen to unveil the truth to herself, she would have owned that Allen, who was always ready, tender and sympathetic to her, was a much greater comfort than his sister; nay, that even little Babie gave her more rest and peace than did Janet, who always rubbed against her whenever they found themselves tete-a-tete or in consultation.

Meantime Babie had been out with her two little cousins, and came home immensely impressed with the Belforest gardens.

The house was shut up, but the gardens were really kept up to perfection, and the little one could not declare her full delight in the wonderful blaze she had seen of banks of red, and flame coloured, and white, flowering trees. "They said they would show me the Americans," she said. "Why was it, mother? I thought Americans were like the gentleman who dined with you one day, and told me about the snow birds. But there were only these flower-trees, and a pond, and statues standing round it, and I don't think they were Americans, for I know one was Diana, because she had a bow and quiver. I wanted to look at the rest, but Miss James said they were horrid heathen gods, not fit for little girls to look at; and, mother, Ellie is so silly, she thought the people at Belforest worshipped them. Do come and see them, mother. It is like the Crystal Palace out-of-doors."

"Omitting the Crystal," laughed some one; but Babie had more to say, exclaiming, "O mother, Essie says Aunt Ellen says Janet and I are to do lessons with Miss James, but you won't let us, will you?"

"Miss James!" broke out Janet indignantly; "we might as well learn of old nurse! Why, mother, she can't pronounce French, and she never heard of terminology, and she thinks Edward I. killed the bards!" For the girls had spent a day or two with their cousins in the course of the move.

"Yes," broke in Barbara, "and she won't let Essie and Ellie teach their dolls their lessons! She was quite cross when I was showing them how, and said it was all nonsense when I told her I

heard you say that I half taught myself by teaching Juliet. And so the poor dolls have no advantages, mother, and are quite stupid for want of education," pursued the little girl, indignantly. "They aren't people, but only dolls, and Essie and Ellie can't do anything with them but just dress them and take them out walking."

"That's what they would wish to make Babie like!" said her elder sister.

"But you'll not let anybody teach me but you, dear, dear Mother Carey," entreated the child.

"No, indeed, my little one." And just then the boys came rushing in to their evening meal, full of the bird's nest that they had been visiting in their uncle's field, and quite of opinion that Kenminster was "a jolly place."

"And then," added Jock, "we got the garden engine, and had such fun, you don't know."

"Yes," said Bobus, "till you sent a whole cataract against the house, and that brought out her Serene Highness!"

The applicability of the epithet set the whole family off into a laugh, and Jock further made up a solemn face, and repeated—

"Buff says Buff to all his men,
And I say Buff to you again.
Buff neither laughs nor smiles,
But carries his face
With a very good grace."

It convulsed them all, and the mother, recovering a little, said,

"I wonder whether she ever can laugh."

"Poor Aunt Ellen!" said Babie, in all her gravity; "she is like King Henry I. and never smiled again."

And with more wit than prudence, Mrs. Buff, her Serene Highness, Sua Serenita, as Janet made it, became the sobriquets for Aunt Ellen, and were in continual danger of oozing out publicly. Indeed the younger population at Kencroft probably soon became aware of them, for on the next half-holiday Jock crept in with unmistakable tokens of combat about him, and on interrogation confessed, "It was Johnnie, mother. Because we wanted you to come out walking with us, and he said 'twas no good walking with one's mother, and I told him he didn't know what a really jolly mother was, and that his mother couldn't laugh, and that you said so, and he said my mother was no better than a tomboy, and that she said so, and so—"

And so, the effects were apparent on Jock's torn and stained collar and swelled nose.

But the namesake champions remained unconvinced, except that Johnnie may have come over to the opinion that a mother no better than a tomboy was not a bad possession, for the three haunted the "Folly" a good deal, and made no objection to their aunt's company after the first experiment.

Unfortunately, however, their assurances that their mother could laugh as well as other people were not so conclusive but that Jock made it his business to do his utmost to produce a laugh, in which he was apt to be signally unsuccessful, to his own great

surprise, though to that of no one else. For instance, two or three days later, when his mother and Allen were eating solemnly a dinner at Kencroft, by way of farewell ere Allen's return to Eton, an extraordinarily frightful noise was heard in the poultry yard, where dwelt various breeds of Uncle Robert's prize fowls.

Thieves—foxes—dogs—what could it be? Even the cheese and celery were deserted, and out rushed servants, master, mistress, and guests, being joined by the two girls from the school-room; but even then Carey was struck by the ominous absence of boys. The poultry house door was shut—locked—but the noises within were more and more frightful—of convulsive cocks and hysterical hens, mingled with human scufflings and hushes and snortings and snigglings that made the elders call out in various tones of remonstrance and reprobation, "Boys, have done! Come out! Open the door."

A small hatch door was opened, a flourish on a tin trumpet was heard, and out darted, in an Elizabethan ruff and cap, a respectable Dorking mother of the yard, cackling her displeasure, and instantly dashing to the top of the wall, followed at once by a stately black Spaniard, decorated with a lace mantilla of cut paper off a French plum box, squawking and curtseying. Then came a dapper pullet, with a doll's hat on her unwilling head, &c., &c.

The outsiders were choking with breathless surprise at first, then the one lady began indignantly to exclaim, "Now, boys! Have done—let the poor things alone. Come out this minute."

The other fairly reeled against the wall with laughter, and Janet and Jessie screamed at each fresh appearance, till they made as much noise as the outraged chickens, though one shrieked with dismay, the other with diversion. At last the Colonel, slower of foot than the rest, arrived on the scene, just as the pride of his heart, the old King Chanticleer of the yard, made his exit, draped in a royal red paper robe and a species of tinsel crown, out of which his red face looked most ludicrous as he came halting and stupefied, having evidently been driven up in a corner and pinched rather hard; but close behind him, chuckling forth his terror and flapping his wings, came the pert little white bantam, belted and accoutred as a page.

Colonel Brownlow's severe command to open the door was not resisted for one moment, and forth rushed a cloud of dust and feathers, a quacking waggling substratum of ducks, and a screaming flapping rabble of chickens, behind whom, when the mist cleared, were seen, looking as if they had been tarred and feathered, various black and grey figures, which developed into Jock, Armine, Robin, Johnny, and Joe. Jock, the foremost, stared straight up in his aunt's face, Armine ran to his mother with —"Did you see the old king, mother, and his little page? Wasn't it funny—"

But he was stopped by the sight of his uncle, who laid hold of his eldest son with a fierce "How dare you, sir?" and gave him a shake and blow. Robin stood with a sullen look on his face, and hands in his pockets, and his brothers followed suit. Armine

hid his face in his mother's dress, and burst out crying; but Jock stepped forth and, with that impish look of fearlessness, said, "I did it, Uncle Robert! I wanted to make Aunt Ellen laugh. Did she laugh, mother?" he asked in so comical and innocent a manner that, in spite of her full consciousness of the heinousness of the offence, and its general unluckiness, Mother Carey was almost choked. This probably added to the gravity with which the other lady decreed with Juno-like severity, "Robin and John must be flogged. Joe is too young."

"Certainly," responded the Colonel; but Caroline, instead of, as they evidently expected of her, at once offering up her victim, sprang forward with eager, tearful pleadings, declaring it was all Jock's fault, and he did not know how naughty it was—but all in vain. "Robert knew. He ought to have stopped it," said the Colonel. "Go to the study, you two."

Jock did not act as the generous hero of romance would have done, and volunteer to share the flogging. He cowered back on his mother, and put his arm round her waist, while she said, "Jock told the truth, so I shall not ask you to flog him, Uncle Robert. He shall not do such mischief again."

"If he does," said his uncle, with a look as if her consent would not be asked to what would follow.

CHAPTER VIII. – THE FOLLY

There will we sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks
By summer rivers, by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.—Marlowe.

"How does my little schoolfellow get on?" asked Mary Ogilvie, when she had sat down for her first meal with her brother in her summer holidays.

"Much as Ariel did in the split pine, I fancy."

"For shame, David! I'm afraid you are teaching her to see Sycorax and Caliban in her neighbours."

"Not I! How should I ever see her! Do you hear from her?"

"Sometimes; and I heard of her from the Actons, who had an immense regard for her husband, who, they say, was a very superior man."

"It is hardly necessary to be told so."

"They mean to take lodgings somewhere near here this next month, and see what they can do to cheer her in her present life, which must be the greatest possible contrast to her former one. Do you wish to set out on our expedition before August, Davie? I should like you to see them."

"By all means let us wait for them. Indeed I should not be at

liberty till the last week in July."

"And how go the brains of Kenminster? You look enlivened since last time I saw you."

"It is the infusion the brains have received. That one woman has made more difference to the school than I could have done in ten years."

"You find her boys, at any rate, pupils worth teaching."

"More than that. Of course it is something to have a fellow capable of ideas before one; but besides that, lads who had gone on contentedly at their own level have had to bestir themselves not to be taken down by him. When he refused to have it forced upon him that study was not the thing at Kenminster, they found the only way to make him know his place was to keep theirs, and some of them have really found the use of their wits, and rejoice in them. Even in the lower form, the Colonel's second boy has developed an intellect. Then the way those boys bring their work prepared has raised the standard!"

"I heard something of that on my way."

"You did?"

"Yes; two ladies were in full career of talk when the train stopped at the Junction, and I heard—'I am always obliged to spend one hour every evening seeing that Arthur knows his lessons. So troublesome you know; but since that Mrs. Joseph Brownlow has come, she helps her boys so with their home-work that the others have not a chance if one does not look to it oneself.' Then it appeared that she told Mr. Ogilvie it wasn't fair,

and that he would give her no redress."

"Absurd woman! It is not a matter of unfairness, as I told her. They don't get help in sums or exercises; they only have grammar to learn and construing to prepare, and all my concern is that it should be got up thoroughly. If their mothers help them, so much the better."

"The mothers don't seem to think so. However, she branched off into incredulity that Mrs. Joe Brownlow could ever really teach her children anything, for she was always tramping all over the country with them at all hours of the day and night. She has met her herself, with all those boys after her, three miles from home, in a great straw hat, when her husband hadn't been dead a year."

"I'm sure she is always in regulation veils, and all the rest of it, at Church, if that's what you ladies want."

"But the crown of the misdoings seemed to be that she had been met at some old castle, sacred to picnics, alone with her children—no party nor anything. I could not make out whether the offence consisted in making the ruin too cheap, or in caring for it for its own sake, and not as a lion for guests."

"The latter probably. She has the reputation of being very affected!!!"

"Poor dear! I heard that she was a great trial to dear Mrs. Brownlow," said Mary, in an imitative voice. "Why, do you know, she sometimes is up and out with her children before six o'clock in the morning; and then Colonel Brownlow went in one

day at twelve o'clock, and found the whole family fast asleep on different sofas."

"The sensible way, too, to spend such days as these. To go out in the cool of the morning, and take a siesta, is the only rational plan!"

"I'm afraid one must conform to one's neighbours' ways."

"Trust a woman for being conventional."

"I confess I did not like the tone in which my poor Carey was spoken of. I am afraid she can hardly have taken care enough not to be thought flighty."

"Mary! you are as absurd as the rest of them!"

"Why? what have you seen of her?"

"Nothing, I tell you, except once meeting her in the street, and once calling on her to ask whether her boy should learn German." And David Ogilvie spoke with a vehemence that somewhat startled his sister.

It was a July evening, and though the walls of the schoolmaster's house were thick, it was sultry enough within to lead the brother and sister out immediately after dinner, looking first into the play-fields, where cricket was of course going on among the bigger boys, but where Mary looked in vain for her friend's sons.

"No, they are not much of cricketers," said her brother; "they are small for it yet, and only take their turn in watching-out by compulsion. I wish the senior had more play in him. Shall we walk on by the river?"

So they did, along a paved causeway which presently got clear of the cottages and gables of old factories, and led along, with the brightly glassy sheet of water on one side, and the steep wooded slope on the other, loose-strife and meadow-sweet growing thickly on the bank, amid long weeds with feathery tops, rich brown fingers of sedge, and bur-reeds like German morgensterns, while above the long wreaths of dog-roses projected, the sweet honeysuckle twined about, and the white blossoms of traveller's joy hung in festoons from the hedge of the bordering plantation. After a time they came on a kind of glade, opening upwards though the wood, with one large oak-tree standing alone in the centre, and behold! on the grass below sat or lay a company—Mrs. Joseph Brownlow in the midst, under the obnoxious mushroom-hat, reading aloud. Radiating from her were five boys, the biggest of all on his back, with his hat over his eyes, fast asleep; another cross-legged, with a basket between his knees, dividing his attention between it and the book; two more lying frog-like, with elbows on the ground, feet erected behind them, chin in hand, devouring the narrative with their eyes; the fifth wriggling restlessly about, evidently in search of opportunities of mischief or of tormenting tricks. Just within earshot, but sketching the picturesque wooden bridge below, sat one girl. The little one, with her youngest brother, was close at their mother's feet, threading flowers to make a garland. It was a pretty sight, and so intent were most of the party on their occupations that they never saw the pair on the bank till Joe, the

idler, started and rolled round with "Hollo!" when all turned, it may be feared with muttered growls from some of the boys; but Carey herself gave a cry of joy, ran down the bank like a girl, and greeted Mary Ogilvie with an eager embrace.

"You are holding a Court here," said the school-master.

"We have had tea out here. It is too hot for indoors, and I am reading them the 'Water Babies.'"

"To a large audience, I see."

"Yes, and some of which are not quite sure whether it is fact or fiction. Come and sit down."

"The boys will hate us for breaking up their reading," said Mary.

"Why should not we listen!" said her brother.

"Don't disturb yourselves, boys; we've met before to-day."

Bobus and Jock were, however, on their feet, and Johnny had half risen; Robin lay still snoring, and Joe had retreated into the wood from the alarming spectacle of "the schoolmaster abroad."

After a greeting to the two girls, who comported themselves, according to their ages, as young ladies might be expected to do, the Ogilvies found accommodation on the roots of the tree, and listened. The "Water Babies" were then new, and Mr. Ogilvie had never heard them. Luckily the reading had just come to the history of the "Do as You Likes," and the interview between the last of the race and M. Du Chaillu diverted him beyond measure. He laughed so much over the poor fellow's abortive attempt to say "Am I not a man and a brother?" that his three scholars burst out

into a second edition of shouts of laughter at the sight of him, and thus succeeded in waking Robin, who, after a great contortion, sat up on the grass, and, rubbing his eyes, demanded in an injured tone what was the row?

"'The Last of the Do as You Likes,'" said Armine.

"Oh I say—isn't it jolly," cried Jock, beating his breast gorilla-fashion and uttering a wild murmur of "Am I not a man and a brother?" then tumbling head over heels, half in ecstasy, half in imitation of the fate of the Do as You Like, setting everybody off into fits again.

"It's just what Robin is coming to," observed Bobus, as his namesake stretched his arms and delivered himself of a waking howl; then suddenly becoming conscious of Mr. Ogilvie, he remained petrified, with one arm fully outstretched, the other still lifted to his head.

"Never mind, Brownlow maximus," said his master; "it was hardly fair to surprise you in private life, was it?"

The boy made no answer, but scrambled up, sheepish and disconcerted; and indeed the sun was entirely down and the dew almost falling, so that the mother called to the young ones to gather up their things and come home.

Such a collection! Bobus picked up a tin-case and basket full of flowers, interspersed with bottles of swimming insects. The trio and Armine shouldered their butterfly-nets, and had a distribution of pill-boxes and bottles, in some of which were caterpillars intended to live, in others butterflies dead (or dying,

it may be feared) of laurel leaves. Babie had a mighty nosegay; Janet put up the sketch, which showed a good deal of power; and the whole troop moved up the slope to go home by the lanes.

"What collectors you are!" said Mr. Ogilvie.

"For the museum," answered Armine, eagerly.

"Haven't you seen our museum?" cried Barbara, who had taken his hand. "Oh, it is such a beauty! We have got an Orobanche major, only it is not dry yet."

"I'm afraid Babie likes fine words," said her mother; "but our museum is a great amusement to us Londoners."

They all walked home together, talking merrily, and Mr. and Miss Ogilvie came in with them, on special entreaty, to share the supper—milk, fruit, bread and butter and cheese, and sandwiches, which was laid out on the round table in the octagon vestibule, which formed the lowest story of the tower. It was partaken of standing, or sitting at case on the window-seats, a form or two, an old carved chair, or on the stairs, the children ascending them after their meal, and after securing in their own fashion their treasures for the morrow. The two cousins had already bidden good-night at the gate and gone home, and the Ogilvies followed their example in ten minutes, Caroline begging Mary to come up to her as soon as Mr. Ogilvie was disposed of by school hours.

"But you will be busy?" said Mary.

"Never mind, I am afraid we are not very regular," said Carey.

It was by this time ten o'clock, and the two younger children

were still to be heard shouting to one another up stairs about the leaves for their chrysalids. So when Mary came up the hill at half-past ten the next morning, she was the less surprised to find these two only just beginning breakfast, while their mother was sitting at the end of the table knitting, and hearing Janet repeat German poetry. The boys had long been in school.

Caroline jumped up and threw her arms round Mary's neck, declaring that now they would enjoy themselves. "We are very late," she added, "but these late walks make the little people sleep, and I think it is better for them than tossing about, hot and cross."

Mary was rather entertained at this new code, but said nothing, as Carey pointed out to the children how they were to occupy themselves under Janet's charge, and the work they had to do showed that for their age they had lost no time.

The drawing-room showed indeed a contrast to the chaotic state in which it had been left. It was wonderfully pleasant-looking. The windows of the deep bay were all open to the lawn, shaded with blinds projecting out into the garden, where the parrot sat perched on her pole; pleasant nooks were arranged in the two sides of the bay window, with light chairs and small writing-tables, each with its glass of flowers; the piano stood across the arc, shutting off these windows into almost a separate room; low book-cases, with chiffonier cupboards and marble tops, ran round the walls, surmounted with many artistic ornaments. The central table was crowned with a tall glass of

exquisitely-arranged grasses and wild flowers, and the choice and graceful nicknacks round it were such as might be traced to a London life in the artist world, and among grateful patients.

Brackets with vases and casts here and there projected from the walls, and some charming crayons and water-colours hung round them. The plastered walls had already been marked out in panels, and a growth of frescoes of bulrushes, ivy, and leaves of all kinds was beginning to overspread them, while on a nearer inspection the leaves proved to be fast becoming peopled with living portraits of butterflies and other insects; indeed Mary started at finding herself in, as she thought, unpleasant proximity to a pair of cockchafers.

"Ah! I tell the children that we shall be suspected of putting those creatures there as a trial to the old ladies' nerves," said Caroline, laughing.

"I confess they are startling to those who don't like creeping things! Have you many old ladies, Carey?"

"Not very many. I fancy they don't take to me more than I take to them, so we are mutually satisfied."

"But is that a good thing?" said Mary anxiously.

"I don't know," said Carey, indifferently. "At least I do know," she added, "that I always used to be told I didn't try to make small talk, and I can do it less than ever now that it is the smallest of small, and my heart faints from it. Oh Mary!"

"My poor dear Caroline! But you say that you were told you ought to do it?"

"Well, yes. Dear granny wished it; but I think that was rather with a view to Joe's popularity, and we haven't any patients to think of now. I should think the less arrant gossip the children heard, the better."

"But is it well to let them despise everybody?"

"Then the less they see of them, the better!"

"For shame, Carey!"

"Well, Mary, I dare say I am naughty. I do feel naughtier now than ever I did in my life; but I can't help it! It just makes me mad to be worried or tied down," and she pushed back her hair so that her unfortunate cap was only withheld from tumbling entirely off by the pin that held it.

"Oh, that wretched cap!" she cried, jumping up, petulantly, and going to the glass to set it to rights, but with so hasty a hand that the pin became entangled in her hair, and it needed Mary's quiet hand to set it to rights; "it's just an emblem of all the rest of it; I wouldn't wear it another day, but that I'm afraid of Ellen and Robert, and it perfectly drives me wild. And I know Joe couldn't have borne to see me in it." At the Irishism of which she burst out laughing, and laughed herself into the tears that had never come when they were expected of her.

Mary caressed and soothed her, and told her she could well guess it was sadder to her now than even at first.

"Well, it is," said Carey, looking up. "If one was sent out to sea in a boat, it wouldn't be near so bad as long as one could see the dear old shore still, as when one had got out—out into the

wide open—with nothing at all."

And she stretched out her hands with a dreary, yearning gesture into the vacant space, such as it went to her friend's heart to see.

"Ah! but there's a haven at the end."

"I suppose there is," said Carey; "but it's a long way off, and there's dying first, and when people want to begin about it, they get so conventional, and if there's one thing above another that I can't stand, it is being bored."

"My poor child!"

"There, don't be angry with me, because I'm telling you just what I am!"

Before any more could be said Janet opened the door, saying, "Mother, Emma wants to see you."

"Oh! I forgot," cried Carey, hurrying off, while Janet came forward to the guest in her grown-up way, and asked—

"Have you been to the Water-Colour Exhibition, Miss Ogilvie?"

"Yes; Mr. Acton took me one Saturday afternoon."

"Oh! then he would be sure to show you Nita Ray's picture. I want so much to know how it strikes people."

And Janet had plunged into a regular conversation about exhibitions, pictures, artists, concerts, lectures, &c., before her mother came back, talking with all the eagerness of an exile about her native country. As a governess in her school-room, Miss Ogilvie had had little more than a key-hole view of all these

things; but then what she had seen and heard had been chiefly through the Actons, and thus coincided with Janet's own side of the world, and they were in full discussion when Caroline came back.

"There, I've disposed of the butcher and baker!" she said. "Now we can be comfortable again."

Mary expected Janet to repair to her own lessons, or to listen to those scales which Babie might be heard from a distance playing; but she only appealed to her mother about some picture of last year, and sat down to her drawing, while the conversation on pictures and books continued in animated style. So far from sending her away, Mary fancied that Carey was rather glad to keep to surface matters, and to be prevented from another outbreak of feeling.

The next interruption was from the children, each armed with a pile of open books on the top of a slate. Carey begged Mary to wait, and went outside the window with them, sitting down under a tree whence the murmured sounds of repetition could be heard, lasting about twenty minutes between the two, and then she returned, the little ones jumping on each side of her, Armine begging that Miss Ogilvie would come and see the museum, and Barbara saying that Jock wanted to help to show it off.

"Well, run now and put your own corners tidy," suggested their mother. "If Jock does not stay in the playground, he will come back in a quarter of an hour."

"And Mr. Ogilvie will come then. I invited him," said Babie.

At which Carey laughed incredulously; but Janet, observing that she must go and see that the children did not do more harm than good, walked off, and Mary said—

"I should not wonder if he did act on the invitation."

"I hope he will. It would have only been civil in me to have asked him, considering that I have taken possession of you," said Caroline.

"I fully expect to see him on Miss Barbara's invitation. Do you know, Carey, he says you have transformed his school."

"Translated it, like Bottom the Weaver."

"In the reverse direction. He says you have made the mothers see to their boys' preparation, and wakened up the intellects."

"Have I? I thought I had only kept my own boys up to the mark. Yes, and there's Johnny. Do you know, Mary, it is very funny, but that boy Johnny has adopted me. He comes after me everywhere like a shadow, and there's nothing he won't do for me, even learning his lessons. You see the poor boy has a good deal of native sense, Brownlow sense, and mind had been more stifled than wanting in him. Nobody had ever put things to him by the right end, and when he once let me do it for him, it was quite a revelation, and he has been so happy and prosperous that he hardly knows himself. Poor boy, there is something very honest and true about him, and so affectionate! He is a little like his uncle, and I can't help being fond of him. Then Robin is just as devoted to Jock, though I can't say the results are so very desirable, for Jock *is* a monkey, I must confess, and it

is irresistible to a monkey to have a bear that he can lead to do anything. I hear that Robin used to be the good boy of the establishment, and I am afraid he is not that now."

"But can't you stop that?"

"My dear, nobody could think of Jock's devices so as to stop them, who had not his own monkey brain. Who would have thought of his getting the whole set to dress up as nigger singers, with black faces and banjoes, and coming to dance and sing in front of the windows?"

"There wasn't much harm in that."

"There wouldn't have been if it had been only here. And, oh dear, the irresistible fun of Jock's capering antics, and Rob moving by mechanism, as stiff and obedient as the giant porter to Flibberti-gibbet." Carey stopped to laugh. "But then I never thought of their going on to present themselves to Ellen in the middle of a mighty and solemn dinner party! All the grandees, the county people (this in a deep and awful voice), sitting up in their chignons of state, in the awful pause during the dishing-up, when these five little wretches, in finery filched from the rag bag, appear on the smooth lawn, mown and trimmed to the last extent for the occasion, and begin to strike up at their shrillest, close to the open window. Ellen rises with great dignity. I fancy I can see her, sending out to order them off. And then, oh dear, Jock only hopping more frantically than ever round the poor man the hired waiter, who, you must know, is the undertaker's chief mute, and singing—

‘Leedle, leedle, leedle,
Our cat’s dead.
What did she die wi’?
Wi’ a sair head.
A’ you that kenned her
While she was alive,
Come to her burying
At half-past five.’

And then the Colonel, bestirring himself to the rescue, with ‘go away boys, or I’ll send for the police.’ And then the discovery, when in the height of his wrath, Jock perked up, and said, ‘I thought you would like to have the ladies amused, Uncle Robert.’ He did box his ears then—small blame to him, I must say. I could stand that better than the jaw Ellen gave us afterwards. I beg your pardon, Mary, but it really was one. She thinks us far gone in the ways of depravity, and doesn’t willingly let her little girls come near us.”

“Isn’t that a pity?”

“I don’t know; Essie and Ellie have feelings in their clothes, and don’t like our scrambling walks, and if Ellie does get allured by our wicked ways, she is sure to be torn, or splashed, or something, and we have shrieks and lamentations, and accusations of Jock and Joe, amid floods of tears; and Jessie comes to the rescue, primly shaking her head and coaxing her little sister, while she brings out a needle and thread. I can’t help

it, Mary. It does aggravate me to look at her!"

Mary could only shake her head with a mixture of pity, reproof, and amusement, and as a safer subject could not help asking—

"By the bye, why do you confuse your friends by having all the two families named in pairs?"

"We didn't know we were going to live close together," said Carey. "But the fact is that the Janets were named after their fathers' only sister, who seems to have been an equal darling to both. We would have avoided Robert, but we found that it would have been thought disrespectful not to call the boy after his grandfather and uncle."

"And Bobus *is* a thoroughly individual name."

"Then Jock's name is John Lucas, and we did mean to call him by the second, but it wouldn't stick. Names won't sometimes, and there's a formality in Lucas that would never fit that skipjack of a boy. He got called Jock as a nickname, and now he will abide by it. But Joseph Armine's second name does fit him, and so we have kept to it; and Barbara was dear grandmamma's own name, and quite our own."

Therewith Babie rushed downstairs with "He's coming, Mother Carey," and darted out at the house door to welcome Mr. Ogilvie at the gate, and lead him in in triumph, attended by her two brothers. The two ladies laughed, and Carey said, with a species of proud apology—

"Poor children, you see they have been used to be noticed by

clever men."

"Mr. Ogilvie is come to see our museum," cried Babie, in her patronising tone, jumping and dancing round during his greetings and remarks that he hoped he might take advantage of her invitation; he had been thinking whether to begin a school museum would not be a very good thing for the boys, and serve to open their minds to common things. On which, before any one else could answer, the parrot, in a low and sententious tone, observed, "Excellent."

"There, you have the consent of your first acquaintance," said Carey, while the bird, excited by one of those mysterious likings that her kind are apt to take, held her grey head to Mr. Ogilvie to be scratched, chuckling out, "All Mother Carey's chickens," and Janet exclaimed—

"That's an adoption."

The troop were climbing the stairs to the third story, where Armine and Bobus were already within an octagon room, corresponding to the little hall below, and fitted with presses and shelves, belonging to the store-room of the former thrifty inhabitant; but now divided between the six children, Mother Carey, as Babie explained, being "Mine own, and helping me more specially."

The table was likewise common to all; but one of the laws of the place was that everything left there after twelve o'clock on Saturday was, as Babie's little mouth rolled out the long words, "confiscated by the inexorable Eumenides."

"And who are they?" asked Mr. Ogilvie, who was always much entertained by the simplicity with which the little maid uttered the syllables as if they were her native speech.

"Janet, and Nurse, and Emma," she said; "and they really are inex-o-rable. They threw away my snail shell that a thrush had been eating, though I begged and prayed them."

"Yes, and my femur of a rabbit," said Armine, "and said it was a nasty old bone, and the baker's Pincher ate it up; but I did find my turtle-dove's egg in the ash-heap, and discovered it over again, and you don't see it is broken now; it is stuck down on a card."

"Yes," said his mother, "it is wonderful how valuable things become precisely at twelve on Saturday."

Each had some department: Janet's, which was geology, was the fullest, as she had inherited some youthful hoards of her father's; Bobus's, which was botany, was the neatest and most systematic. Mary thought at first that it did not suit him; but she soon saw that with him it was not love of flowers, but the study of botany. He pronounced Jock's butterflies to be perfectly disgraceful.

"You said you'd see to them," returned Jock.

"Yes, I shall take up insects when I have done with plants," said Bobus, coolly.

"And say, 'Solomon, I have surpassed thee'?" asked Mr. Ogilvie.

Bobus looked as if he did not like it; but his mother shook

her head at him as one who well deserved the little rebuke for self-sufficiency. There was certainly a wonderful winning way about her—there was a simplicity of manner almost like that of Babie herself, and yet the cleverness of a highly-educated woman. Mary Ogilvie did not wonder at what Mr. and Mrs. Acton had said of the charm of that unpretending household, now broken up.

There was, too, the perception that, beneath the surface on which, like the children, she played so lightly, there were depths of sorrow that might not be stirred, which added a sweetness and pathos to all she said and did.

Of many a choice curiosity the children said, in lowered tones of reverence, that "*he* found it;" and these she would not allow to be passed over, but showed fondly off in all their best points, telling their story as if she loved to dwell upon it.

Barbara, who had specially fastened herself on Mr. Ogilvie, according to the modern privileges of small girls, after having much amused him by doing the honours of her own miscellaneous treasury, insisted on exhibiting "Mother Carey's studio."

Caroline tried to declare that this meant nothing deserving of so grand a name; it was only the family resort for making messes in. She never touched clay now, and there was nothing worth seeing; but it was in vain; Babie had her way; and they mounted to the highest stage of the pagoda, where the eaves and the twisted monsters that supported them were in close juxtaposition with

the four windows.

The view was a grand one. Belforest Park on the one side, the town almost as if in a pit below, with a bird's-eye prospect of the roofs, the gardens and the school-yard, the leaden-covered church, lying like a great grey beetle with outspread wings. Beyond were the ups-and-downs of a wooded, hilly country, with glimpses of blue river here and there, and village and town gleaming out white; a large house, "bosomed high in tufted trees;" a church-tower and spire, nestled on the hill-side, up to the steep grey hill with the tall land-mark tower, closing in the horizon—altogether, as Carey said, a thorough "allegro" landscape, even to "the tanned haycock in the mead." But the summer sun made the place dazzling and almost uninhabitable, and the visitors, turning from the glare, could hardly see the casts and models that filled the shelves; nor was there anything in hand; so that they let themselves be hurried away to share the midday meal, after which Mr. Ogilvie and the boys betook themselves to the school, and Carey and her little ones to the shade of the garden-wall, to finish their French reading, while Mary wondered the less at the Kenminster ladies.

CHAPTER IX. – FLIGHTS

Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?—Twelfth-Night.

The summer holidays not only brought home Allen Brownlow from Eton, but renewed his mother's intercourse with several of her friends, who so contrived their summer outing as to "see how poor little Mrs. Brownlow was getting on," and she hailed them as fragments of her dear old former life.

Mr. and Mrs. Acton came to a farmhouse at Redford, about a mile and a half off, where Mr. Acton was to lay up a store of woodland and home sketches, and there were daily meetings for walks, and often out-of-door meals. Mr. Ogilvie declared that he was thus much more rested than by a long expedition in foreign scenery, and he and his sister stayed on, and usually joined in the excursion, whether it were premeditated or improvised, on foot, into copse or glade, or by train or waggonette, to ruined abbey or cathedral town.

Then came two sisters, whom old Mrs. Brownlow had befriended when the elder was struggling, as a daily governess, to provide home and education for the younger. Now, the one was a worthy, hard-working law-copier, the other an artist in a small way, who had transmogrified her name of Jane into

Juanita or Nita, wore a crop, short petticoats, and was odd. She treated Janet on terms of equal friendship, and was thus a much more charming companion than Jessie. They always came into cheap sea-side lodgings in the vacation, but this year had settled themselves within ten minutes walk of the Folly, a title which became more and more applicable, in Kenminster eyes, to the Pagoda, and above all in those of its proper owner. Mrs. Robert Brownlow, in the calm dignity of the heiress, in a small way, of a good family, had a bare toleration for professional people, had regretted the vocation of her brother-in-law, and classed governesses and artists as "that kind of people," so that Caroline's association with them seemed to her absolute love of low company. She would have stirred up her husband to remonstrate, but he had seen more of the world than she had, and declared that there was no harm in Caroline's friends. "He had met Mr. Acton in the reading-room, smoked pipes with him in the garden, and thought him a very nice fellow; his wife was the daughter of poor Cartwright of the Artillery, and a sensible ladylike woman as ever he saw."

With a resigned sigh at the folly of mankind, his wife asked, "How about the others? That woman with the hair? and that man with the velvet coat? Jessie says Jock told her that he was a mere play-actor!"

"Jock told Jessie! Nonsense, my dear! The man is going out to China in the tea trade, and is come to take leave. I believe he did sing in public at one time; but Joe attended him in an illness

which damaged his voice, and then he put him in the way of other work. You need not be afraid. Joe was one of the most particular men in the world in his own way."

Mrs. Brownlow could do no more. She had found that her little sister-in-law could be saucy, and personal squabbles, as she justly thought, had better be avoided. She could only keep Jessie from the contamination by taking her out in the carriage and to garden parties, which the young lady infinitely preferred to long walks that tired her and spoilt her dress; to talk and laughter that she could not understand, and games that seemed to her stupid, though everybody else seemed to find them full of fun. True, Allen and Bobus were always ready to push and pull her through, and to snub Janet for quizzing her; but Jessie was pretty enough to have plenty of such homage at her command, and not specially to prefer that of her cousins, so that it cost her little to turn a deaf ear to all their invitations.

Her brothers were not of the same mind, for Rob was never happy out of sight of Jock. Johnny worshipped his aunt, and Joe was gregarious, so there was generally an accompanying rabble of six or seven boys, undistinguishable by outsiders, though very individual indeed in themselves and adding a considerable element of noise, high spirits, and mischievous enterprise. The man in the velvet coat, whose proper name was Orlando Hughes, was as much of a boy as any of them, and so could Mr. Acton be on occasion, thus giving a certain Bohemian air to their doings.

Things came to a crisis on one of the dog-days. Young Dr.

Drake had brought his bride to show to his old friend, and they were staying at the Folly, while a college friend of Mr. Ogilvie's, a London curate, had come to see him in the course of a cathedral tour, and had stayed on, under the attraction of the place, taking the duty for a few Sundays.

The weather was very sultry, forbidding exertion on the part of all save cricketers; but there was a match at Redford, and Kenminster was eager about it, so that all the boys, grown up or otherwise, walked over to see it, accompanied by Nita Ray with her inseparable Janet, meaning to study village groups and rustic sports. The other ladies walked in the cool to meet them at the Acton's farmhouse, chiefly, it was alleged, in deference to the feelings of the bride, who could not brave the heat, but had never yet been so long separated from her bridegroom.

The little boys, however, were alone to be found at the farm, reporting that their elders had joined the cricket supper. So Mrs. Acton made them welcome, and spread her cloth in the greensward, whence could be seen the evening glow on the harvest fields. Then there was a feast of cherries, and delicious farmhouse bread and butter, and inexhaustible tea, which was renewed when the cricketers joined them, and called for their share.

Thus they did not set out on their homeward walk, over fragrant heath and dewy lanes, till just as the stars were coming out, and a magnificent red moon, scarcely past the full, was rising in the east, and the long rest, and fresh dewiness after the day's

heat, gave a delightful feeling of exhilaration.

Babie went skipping about in the silvery flood of light, quite wild with delight as they came out on the heath, and, darting up to Mr. Ogilvie, asked if now he did not think they might really see a fairy.

"Perhaps I do," he said.

"Oh where, where, show me?"

"Ah! you're the one that can't see her."

"What, not if I did my eyes with that Euphrasia and Verbena officinalis?" catching tight hold of his hand, as a bright red light went rapidly moving in a straight line in the valley beneath their feet.

"Robin Goodfellow," said Mr. Hughes, overhearing her, and immediately began to sing—

"I know a bank"—

Then the curate, as he finished, began to sing some other appropriate song, and Nita Ray and others joined in. It was very pretty, very charming in the moonlight, very like "Midsummer Night's Dream;" but Mary Ogilvie, who was a good way behind, felt a start of dismay as the clear notes pealed back to her. She longed to suggest a little expediency; but she was impeded; for poor Miss Ray, entirely unused to long country walks and nocturnal expeditions, and further tormented by tight boots, was panting up the hill far in the rear, half-frightened, and a good

deal distressed, and could not, for very humanity's sake, be left behind.

"And after all," thought Mary, as peals of the boys' merry laughter came to her, and then again echoes of "spotted snakes with double tongue" awoke the night echoes; "this is such a solitary place that it cannot signify, if they will only have the sense to stop when we get into the roads."

But they hadn't. Mary heard a chorus from "Der Freischutz," beginning just as she was dragging her companion over a stile, which had been formidable enough by day, but was ten times worse in the confusing shadows. That brought them into a lane darkened by its high hedges, where there was nothing for it but to let Miss Ray tightly grapple her arm, while the songs came further and further on the wind, and Mary felt the conviction that middle-aged spinsters must reckon on being forgotten, and left behind alike by brothers, sisters, and friends.

Nor did they come up with the party till they found them waiting in the road, close to the Rays' lodgings, having evidently just missed them, for Mr. Ogilvie and the clergyman were turning back to look for them when they were gladly hailed, half apologised to, half laughed at by a babel of voices, among which Nita's was the loudest, informing her sister that she had lost the best bit of all, for just at the turn of the lane there had come on them Babie's fiery-eyed monster, which had "burst on the path," when they were in mid song, flashing over them, and revealing, first a horse, and then a brougham, wherein there sat the august

forms of Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow, going home from a state dinner, the lady's very marabouts quivering with horror.

Mary stepped up to Nita, and gave her a sharp, severe grasp.

"Hush! remember their boys are here," she whispered; and, with an exaggerated gesture, Nita looked about her in affected alarm, and, seeing that none were near, added—

"Thank you; I was just going to say it would be a study for Punch"

"O do send it up, they'll never know it," cried Janet; but there Caroline interfered—

"Hush, Janet, we ought to be at home. Don't stand here, Armine is tired to death! 11.5 at the station to-morrow. Good-night."

They parted, and Mary and her brother turned away to their own home. If it had not been for the presence of the curate, Mary would have said a good deal on the way home. As it was, she was so silent as to inspire her brother with enough compunction for having deserted her, to make him follow her, when she went to her own room. "Mary, I am sorry we missed you," he said; "I ought to have looked about for you more, but I thought—"

"Nonsense, David; of course I do not mind that, if only I could have stopped all that singing."

"That singing; why it was very pretty, wasn't it?"

"Pretty indeed! Did it never occur to you what a scrape you may be getting that poor little thing into with her relations, and yourself, too?"

David looked more than half-amused, and she proceeded more resolutely—

"Well! what do you think must be Mrs. Brownlow's opinion of what she saw and heard to-night? I blame myself exceedingly for not having urged the setting off sooner; but you must remember that what is all very well for holiday people, only here for a time, may do infinite mischief to residents."

David only observed, "I didn't want all those men, if that's what you mean. They made the noise, not I."

"No, nor I; but we swelled the party, and I am much disposed to believe that the best thing we can do is to take ourselves off, or do anything to break up this set."

He looked for a moment much disconcerted; but then with a little masculine superiority, answered—

"Well, well, we'll think over it, Mary. See how it appears to you to-morrow when you aren't tired," and then, with a smile and a kiss, bade her good-night.

"So that's what we get," said Mary, to herself, half amused, half annoyed; "those men think it is all because one is left behind in the dark! David is the best boy in the world, but there's not a man of them all who has a notion of what gets a woman into trouble! I believe he was rather gratified than otherwise to be found out on a lark. Well, I'll talk to Clara; she will have some sense!"

They were all to meet at the station the next morning, to go to an old castle, about an hour from Kenminster by railway; and

they filled the platform, armed with sketching tools, sandwich baskets, botanical tins, and all other appliances; but when Mr. Ogilvie accosted Mrs. Joseph Brownlow, saying, "You have only half your boys," she looked up, with a drolly guilty air, saying, "No, there's an embargo on the other poor fellows."

They had just taken their seats, and the train was in motion, when a heated headlong boy came dashing over the platform, and clung to the door of the carriage, standing on the step. It was Johnny. Orlando Hughes, who was next the window, grasped his hands, and, in answer to the cries of dismay and blame that greeted him, he called out, "Yes, here I am; Rob and Joe couldn't run so fast."

"Then you've got leave?" asked his aunt.

Johnny's grin said "No."

She looked up at Mr. Ogilvie in much vexation and anxiety.

"Don't say any more to him now. It might put him in great danger. Wait till the next station," he said.

It was a stopping train, and ten minutes brought a halt, when the guard came up in a fury, and Johnny found no sympathy for his bold attempt. Carey had no notion of fostering flat disobedience, and she told Johnny that unless he would promise to go home by himself and beg his father's pardon, she should stay behind and go back with him, for she could have no pleasure in an expedition with him when he was behaving so outrageously.

The boy looked both surprised and abashed. His affection for his aunt was very great, as for one who had opened to him the

gates of a new world, both within himself and beyond himself. He would not hear of her giving up the expedition, and promised her with all his heart to walk home, and confess, "Though 'twasn't papa, but mamma!" were his last words, as they left him on the platform, crestfallen, but with a twinkle in his eye, and with the station-master keeping watch over him as a dangerous subject.

Mr. Ogilvie said it would do the boy good for life; Caroline mourned over him a little, and wondered how his mother would treat him; and Mary sat and thought till the arrival at their destination, when they had to walk to the castle, dragging their appurtenances, and then to rouse their energies to spread out the luncheon.

Then, when there had been the usual amount of mirth, mischief, and mishap, and the party had dispersed, some to sketch, some to scramble, some to botanize, the "Duck and Drake to spoon,"—as said the boys, Mary Ogilvie found a turfy nook where she could hold council with Mrs. Acton about their poor little friend, for whose welfare she was seriously uneasy.

But Clara did not sympathise as much as she expected, having been much galled by Mrs. Robert Brownlow's supercilious manner, and thinking the attempt to conciliate her both unworthy and useless.

"Of course I do not mean that poor Carey should truckle to her," said Mary, rather nettled at the implication; "but I don't think these irregular hours, and all this roaming about the country at all times, can be well in themselves for her or the

children."

"My dear Mary, did you never take a party of children into the country in the spring for the first time? If not, you never saw the prettiest and most innocent of intoxications. I had once to take the little Pyrtons to their place in the country one April and May, months that they had always spent in London; and I assure you they were perfectly mad, only with the air, the sight of the hawthorns, and all the smells. I was obliged to be content with what they could do, not what ought to be done, of lessons. There was no sitting still on a fine morning. I was as bad myself; the blood seemed to dance in one's veins, and a room to be a prison."

"This is not spring," said Mary.

"No, but she began in spring, and habits were formed."

"No doubt, but they cannot be good. They keep up flightiness and excitability."

"Oh, that's grief, poor dear!"

"We bain't carousing, we be dissembling grief, as the farmer told the clergyman who objected to merry-making after a funeral," said Mary, rather severely. Then she added, seeing Clara looked annoyed, "You think me hard on poor dear Carey, but indeed I am not doubting her affection or her grief."

"Remember, a woman with children cannot give herself entirely up to sorrow without doing them harm."

"Poor Carey, I am sure I do not want to see her given up to sorrow, only to have her a little more moderate, and perhaps select—so as not to do herself harm with her relations—who

after all must be more important to her than any outsiders."

The artist's wife could not but see things a little differently from the schoolmaster's sister, who moreover knew nothing of Carey's former life; and Clara made answer—

"Sending her down to these people was the greatest error of dear good Dr. Brownlow's life."

"I am not sure of that. Blood is thicker than water."

"But between sisters-in-law it is apt to be only ill-blood, and very turbid."

"For shame, Clara."

"Well, Mary, you must allow something for human nature's reluctance to be treated as something not quite worthy of a handshake from a little country town Serene Highness! I may be allowed to doubt whether Dr. Brownlow would not have done better to leave her unbound to those who can never be congenial."

"Granting that (not that I do grant it, for the Colonel is worthy), should not she be persuaded to conform herself."

"To purr and lay eggs? My dear, that did not succeed with the ugly duckling, even in early life."

"Not after it had been among the swans? You vain Clara!"

"I only lay claim to having seen the swans—not to having brought many specimens down here."

"Such as *that* Nita, or Mr. Hughes?"

"More like the other bird, certainly," said Clara, smiling; "but Mary, if you had but seen what that house was. Joe Brownlow was one of those men who make themselves esteemed and

noted above their actual position. He was much thought of as a lecturer, and would have had a much larger practice but for his appointment at the hospital. It was in the course of the work he had taken for a friend gone out of town that he caught the illness that killed him. His lectures brought men of science about him, and his practice had made him acquainted with us poor Bohemians, as you seem to think us. Old Mrs. Brownlow had means of her own, and theirs was quite a wealthy house among our set. Any of us were welcome to drop into five o'clock tea, or at nine at night, and the pleasantness and good influence were wonderful. The motherliness and yet the enthusiasm of Mrs. Brownlow made her the most delightful old lady I ever saw. I can't describe how good she was about my marriage, and many more would say they owed all that was brightest and best in them to that house. And there was Carey, like a little sunshiny fairy, the darling of everyone. No, not spoilt—I see what you are going to say."

"Only as we all spoilt her at school. Nobody but her Serene Highness ever could help making a pet of her."

"That's more reasonable, Mary," said Mrs. Acton, in a more placable voice; "she did plenty of hard work, and did not spare herself, or have what would seem indulgences to most women; but nobody could see the light of her eyes and smile without trying to make it sparkle up; and she was just the first thought in life to her husband and his mother. I am sure in my governess days I used to think that house paradise, and her the undoubted

queen of it. And now, that you should turn against her, Mary, when she is uncrowned, and unappreciated, and brow-beaten."

She had worked herself up, and had tears in her eyes.

Mary laughed a little.

"It is hard, when I only want to keep her from making herself be unappreciated."

"And I say it is in vain!" cried Clara, "for it is not in the nature of the people to appreciate her, and nothing will make them get on together."

Poor Mary! she had expected her friend to be more reasonable and less defensive; but she remembered that even at school Clara had always protected Caroline whenever she had attempted to lecture her. All she further tried to say was—

"Then you won't help me to advise her to be more guarded, and not shock them?"

"I will not tease the poor little thing, when she has enough to torment her already. If you had known her husband, and watched her last winter, you would be only too thankful to see her a little more like herself."

Mary was silent, finding that she should only argue round and round if they went on, and feeling that Clara thought her old-maidish, and could not enter into her sense that, the balance-weight being gone, gusts of wind ought to be avoided. She sat wondering whether she herself was prim and old-maidish, or whether she was right in feeling it a duty to expostulate and deliver her testimony.

There was no doing it on this day. Carey was always surrounded by children and guests, and in an eager state of activity; but though again they all went home in the cool of the evening, an attempt to sing in the second-class carriage, which they filled entirely, was quashed immediately—no one knew how, and nothing worse happened than that a very dusty set, carrying odd botanical, entomological, and artistic wares, trailed through the streets of Kenminster, just as Mrs. Coffinkey, escorted by her maid, was walking primly home from drinking tea at the vicarage.

Still Mary's reflections only strengthened her resolution. On the next day, which was Sunday, she ascended to the Folly, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and found the family, including the parrot, spread out upon the lawn under the shade of the acacia, the mother reading to them.

"Oh, please don't stop, mother," cried Babie; while the more courteous Armine exclaimed—

"Miss Ogilvie, don't you like to hear about Bevis and Jocelin Joliffe?"

"You don't mind waiting while we finish the chapter," added their mother; "then we break up our sitting."

"Pray go on with the chapter," said Mary, rather coolly, for she was a good deal taken aback at finding them reading "Woodstock" on a Sunday; "but afterwards, I do want to speak to you."

"Oh! don't want to speak to me. The Colonel has been

speaking to me," she said, with a cowering, shuddering sort of action, irresistibly comic.

"And he ate up half our day," bemoaned more than one of the boys.

Miss Ogilvie sat down a little way off, not wishing to listen to "Woodstock" on a Sunday, and trying to work out the difficult Sabbatarian question in her mind.

"There!" said Caroline, closing the book, amid exclamations of "I know who Lewis Kerneguy was." "Wasn't Roger Wildrake jolly?" "O, mother, didn't he cut off Trusty Tomkins' head?" "Do let us have a wee bit more, mother; Miss Ogilvie won't mind."

But Carey saw that she did mind, and answered—

"Not now; there won't be time to feed all the creatures, or to get nurse's Sunday nosegays, if you don't begin." Then, coming up to her guest, she said, "Now is your time, Mary; we shall have the Rays and Mr. Hughes in presently; but you see we are too worldly and profane for the Kencroft boys on Sunday; and so they make experiments in smoking, with company less desirable, I must say, than Sir Harry Lee's. Am I very bad to read what keeps mine round me?"

"Is it an old fashion with you?"

"Well, no; but then we had what was better than a thousand stories! And this is only a feeble attempt to keep up a little watery reflection of the old sunshine."

It was a watery reflection indeed!

"And could it not be with something that would be—"

"Dull and goody?" put in Carey. "No, no, my dear, that would be utterly futile. You can't catch my birds without salt. Can we, Polly?"

To which the popinjay responded, "We are all Mother Carey's chickens."

"I did mean salt—very real salt," said Mary, rather sadly.

"I have not got the recipe;" said Carey. "Indeed I do try to do what must be done. My boys can hold their own in Bible and Catechism questions! Ask your brother if they can't. And Army is a dear little fellow, with a bit of the angel, or of his father, in him; but when we've done our church, I see no good in decorous boredom; and if I did, what would become of the boys?"

"I don't agree to the necessity of boredom," said Mary; "but let that pass. There are things I wanted to say."

"I knew it was coming. The Colonel has been at me already, levelling his thunders at my devoted head. Won't that do?"

"Not if you heed him so little."

"My dear, if I heeded, I should be annihilated. When he says 'My good little sister,' I know he means 'You little idiot;' so if I did not think of something else, what might not be the consequence? Why, he said I was not behaving decently!"

"No more you are."

"And that I had no proper feeling," continued she, laughing almost hysterically.

"No one can wonder at his being pained. It ought never to have happened."

"Are you gone over to Mrs. Grundy? However, there's this comfort, you'll not mention Mrs. Coffinkey's sister-in-law."

"I'm sure the Colonel didn't!"

"Ellen does though, with tragic effect."

"You are not like yourself, Carey."

"No, indeed I'm not! I was a happy creature a little while ago; or was it a very long, long time ago? Then I had everybody to help me and make much of me! And now I've got into a great dull mist, and am always knocking my head against something or somebody; and when I try to keep up the old friendships and kindnesses—poor little fragments as they are—everybody falls upon me, even you, Mary."

"Pardon me, dearest. Some friendships and kindnesses that were once admirable, may be less suitable to your present circumstances."

"As if I didn't know that!" said Carey, with an angry, hurt little laugh; "and so I waited to be chaperoned up to the eyes between Clara Acton and the Duck in the very house with me. Now, Mary, I put it to you. Has one word passed that could do harm? Isn't it much more innocent than all the Coffinkey gossip? I have no doubt Mrs. Coffinkey's sister-in-law looks up from her black-bordered pocket-handkerchief to hear how Mrs. Brownlow's sister-in-law went to the cricket-match. Do you know, Robert really thought I had been there? I only wonder how many I scored. I dare say Mrs. Coffinkey's sister-in-law knows."

"It just shows how careful you should be."

"And I wonder what would become of the children if I shut myself up with a pile of pocket-handkerchiefs bordered an inch deep. What right have they to meddle with my ways, and my friends, and my boys?"

"Not the Coffinkeys, certainly," said Mary; "but indeed, Carey, I myself was uncomfortable at that singing in the lanes at eleven at night."

"It wasn't eleven," said Carey, perversely.

"Only 10.50—eh?"

"But what was the possible harm in it?"

"None at all in itself, only remember the harm it may do to the children for you to be heedless of people's opinion, and to get a reputation for flightiness and doing odd things."

"I couldn't be like the Coffinkey pattern any more than I could be tied down to a rope walk."

"But you need not do things that your better sense must tell you may be misconstrued. Surely there was a wish that you should live near the Colonel and be guided by him."

"Little knowing that his guidance would consist in being set at me by Ellen and the Coffinkeys!"

"Nonsense," said Mary, vexed enough to resume their old school-girl manners. "You know I am not set on by anybody, and I tell you that if you do not pull up in time, and give no foundation for ill-natured comments, your children will never get over it in people's estimation. And as for themselves, a little steadiness and regularity would be much better for their whole dispositions."

"It is holiday time," said Carey, in a tone of apology.

"If it is only in holiday time—"

"The country has always seemed like holiday. You see we used to go—all of us—to some seaside place, and be quite free there, keeping no particular hours, and being so intensely happy. I haven't yet got over the feeling that it is only for a time, and we shall go back into the dear old home and its regular ways." Then clasping her hands over her side as though to squeeze something back, she broke out, "O Mary, Mary, you mustn't scold me! You mustn't bid me tie myself to regular hours till this summer is over. If you knew the intolerable stab when I recollect that he is gone—gone—gone for ever, you would understand that there's nothing for it but jumping up and doing the first thing that comes to hand. Walking it down is best. Oh! what will become of me when the mornings get dark, and I can't get up and rush into those woods? Yes"—as Mary made some affectionate gesture —"I know I have gone on in a wild way, but who would not be wild who had lost *him*? And then they goad me, and think me incapable of proper feeling," and she laughed that horrid little laugh. "So I am, I suppose; but feeling won't go as other people think *proper*. Let me alone, Mary, I won't damage the children. They are Joe's children, and I know what he wanted and wished for them better than Robert or anybody else. But I must go my own way, and do what I can bear, and as I can, or—or I think my heart would break quite, and that would be worse for them than anything."

Mary had tears in her eyes, drawn forth by the vehement passion of grief apparent in the whole tone of her poor little friend. She had no doubts of Carey's love, sorrow, or ability, but she did seriously doubt of her wisdom and judgment, and thought her undisciplined. However, she could say no more, for Nita Ray and Janet were advancing on them.

The next day Caroline was in bed with one of her worst headaches. Mary felt that she had been a cruel and prim old duenna, and meekly bore Clara's reproachful glances.

CHAPTER X. – ELLEN'S MAGNUM BONUMS

He put in his thumb
And he pulled out a plum,
And cried, "What a good boy am I!"

Jack Horner.

Whether it were from the effects of the warnings, or from that of native good sense, from that time forward Mrs. Joseph Brownlow sobered down, and became less distressing to her sister-in-law. Mary carried off her brother to Wales, and the Acton and Ray party dispersed, while Dr. and Mrs. Lucas came for a week, giving much relief to Mrs. Brownlow, who could discuss the family affairs with them in a manner she deemed unbecoming with Mrs. Acton or Miss Ogilvie. Had Caroline heard the consultation, she would have acquitted Ellen of malice; and indeed her Serene Highness was much too good to gossip about so near a connection, and had only confided her wonder and perplexity at the strange phenomenon to her favourite first cousin, who unfortunately was not equally discreet.

With the end of the holidays finished also the trying series of first anniversaries, and their first excitements of sorrow, so that it became possible to be more calm and quiet.

Moreover, two correctives came of themselves to Caroline. The first was Janet's inordinate correspondence with Nita Ray, and the discovery that the girl held herself engaged to stay with the sisters in November.

"Without asking me!" she exclaimed, aghast.

"I thought you heard us talking," said Janet, so carelessly, that her mother put on her dignity.

"I certainly had no conception of an invitation being given and accepted without reference to me."

"Come, now, Mother Carey," said this modern daughter; "don't be cross! We really didn't know you weren't attending."

"If I had I should have said it was impossible, as I say now. You can never have thought over the matter!"

"Haven't I? When I am doing no good here, only wasting time?"

"That is my fault. We will set to work at once steadily."

"But my classes and my lectures!"

"You are not so far on but that our reading together will teach you quite as much as lectures."

Janet looked both sulky and scornful, and her mother continued—

"It is not as if we had not modern books, and I think I know how to read them so as to be useful to you."

"I don't like getting behindhand with the world."

"You can't keep up even with the world without a sound foundation. Besides, even if it were more desirable, the Rays

cannot afford to keep you, nor I to board you there."

"I am to pay them by helping Miss Ray in her copying."

"Poor Miss Ray!" exclaimed Carey, laughing. "Does she know your handwriting?"

"You do not know what I can do," said Janet, with dignity.

"Yes, I hope to see it for myself, for you must put this notion of going to London out of your head. I am sure Miss Ray did not give the invitation—no, nor second it. Did she, Janet?"

Janet blushed a little, and muttered something about Miss Ray being afraid of stuck-up people.

"I thought so! She is a good, sensible person, whom grandmamma esteemed very much; but she has never been able to keep her sister in order; and as to trusting you to their care, or letting you live in their set, neither papa nor grandmamma would ever have thought of it."

"You only say so because her Serene Highness turns up her nose at everything artistic and original."

"Janet, you forget yourself," Caroline exclaimed, in a tone which quelled the girl, who went muttering away; and no more was ever heard of the Ray proposal, which no doubt the elder sister at least had never regarded as anything but an airy castle.

However, Caroline was convinced that the warnings against the intimacy had not been so uncalled for as she had believed; for she found, when she tried to tighten the reins, that her daughter was restive, and had come to think herself a free agent, as good as grown up. Spirit was not, however, lacking to Caroline,

and when she had roused herself, she made Janet understand that she was not to be disregarded or disobeyed. Regular hours were instituted, and the difficulty of getting broken into them again was sufficient proof to her that she had done wrong in neglecting them. Armine yawned portentously, and declared that he could not learn except at his own times; and Babie was absolutely naughty more than once, when her mother suffered doubly in punishing her from the knowledge of whose fault it was. However, they were good little things, and it was not hard to re-establish discipline with them. After a little breaking in, Babie gave it to her dolls as her deliberate opinion that "Wegulawity settles one's mind. One knows when to do what."

Janet could not well complain of the regularity in itself, though she did cavil at the actual arrangements, and they were altered all round to please her, and she showed a certain contempt for her teacher in the studies she resumed with her mother; but after the dictionary, encyclopaedia and other authorities, including Mr. Ogilvie, proved almost uniformly to be against her whenever there was a difference of opinion, she had sense enough to perceive that she could still learn something at home.

Moreover, after one or two of these references, Mr. Ogilvie offered to look over her Latin and Greek exercises, and hear her construe on his Saturday half-holidays, declaring that it would be quite a refreshment. Caroline was shocked at the sacrifice, but she could not bear to affront her daughter, so she consented; but as she thought Janet was not old enough to need a chaperon,

and as her boys did want her, she was hardly ever present at the lessons.

Moreover, Mr. Ogilvie had a lecturer from London to give weekly lectures on physical science to his boys, and opened the doors to ladies. This was a great satisfaction, chiefly for the sake of Bobus and Jock, but also for Janet's and her mother's. The difficulty was to beat up for ladies enough to keep one another in countenance; but happily two families in the country, and one bright little bride in the town, were found glad to open their ears, so that Ellen had no just cause of disapproval of the attendance of her sister and niece.

Ellen had more cause to sigh when Michaelmas came, and for the first time taught poor Carey what money matters really meant. Throughout her married life, her only stewardship had concerned her own dress and the children's; Mrs. Brownlow's occasional plans of teaching her housekeeping had always fallen through, Janet being always her grandmamma's deputy.

Thus Janet and nurse had succeeded to the management when poor Carey was too ill and wretched to attend to it; and it had gone on in their hands at the Pagoda. Janet was pleased to be respected accordingly by her aunt, who always liked her the best, in spite of her much worse behaviour, for were not her virtues her own, and her vices her mother's?

Caroline had paid the weekly books, and asked no questions, until the winding up of the executor's business; and the quarterly settlement of accounts made startling revelations that the balance

at her bankers was just eleven shillings and fourpence halfpenny, and what was nearly as bad, the discovery was made in the presence of her fellow executor, who could not help giving a low whistle. She turned pale, and gasped for breath, in absolute amazement, for she was quite sure they were living at much less expense than in London, and there had been no outgoings worth mentioning for dress or journeys. What were they to do? Surely they could not live upon less! Was it her fault?

She was so much distressed, that the good-natured Colonel pitied her, and answered kindly—

"My good little sister, you were inexperienced. You will do better another year."

"But there's nothing to go on upon!"

He reminded her of the rent for the London house, and the dividends that must soon come in.

"Then it will be as bad as ever! How can we live more cheaply than we do?"

"Ellen is an excellent manager, and you had better consult her on the scale of your expenditure."

Caroline's spirit writhed, but before she had time to say anything, or talk to Janet, the Colonel had heard his excellent housewife's voice, and called her into the council. She was as good as possible, too serenely kind to manifest surprise or elation at the fulfilment of her forebodings. To be convicted of want of economy would have been so dreadful and disgraceful, that she deeply felt for poor Caroline, and dealt with her tenderly and

delicately, even when the weekly household books were opened, and disclosed how much had been spent every week in items, the head and front of which were oft repeated in old nurse's self-taught writing—

"Man..... Glas of beare. 1d.
Creme..... 3d."

For had not the Colonel's wife warned against the endless hospitality of glasses of beer to all messengers; and had not unlimited cream with strawberries and apple-tarts been treated as a kind of spontaneous luxury produced at the Belforest farm agent's? To these, and many other small matters, Caroline was quite relieved to plead guilty, and to promise to do her best by personal supervision; and Ellen set herself to devise further ways of reduction, not realising how hopeless it is to prescribe for another person's household difficulties. It is not in the nature of things that such advice should be palatable, and the proverb about the pinching of the shoe is sure to be realised.

"Too many servants," said prudence. "If old nurse must be provided for—and she ought to have saved enough to do without—it would be much better to pension her off, or get her into an almshouse."

Caroline tried to endure, as she made known that she viewed nurse as a sacred charge, about whom there must be no question.

Ellen quietly said—

"Then it is no use to argue, but she must be allowed no more discretion in the housekeeping."

"No, I shall do that myself," said Caroline.

"An extravagant cook."

"That may be my fault. I will try to judge of that."

"Irregular hours."

"They shall end with the holidays."

There was still another maid, whom Ellen said was only kept to wait on nurse, but who, Caroline said, did all their needlework, both making and mending.

"That," said Ellen, "I should have thought you and Janet could do. I do nearly all our work with the girls' help; I am happy to say that Jessie is an excellent needlewoman, and Essie and Ellie can do something. I only direct the nursery maid; I never trust anything to servants."

"I could never bear not to trust people," said Caroline.

Ellen sighed, believing that she would soon be cured of that; and Carey added—

"On true principles of economy, surely it is better that Emma, who knows how, should mend the clothes, than that I should botch them up in any way, when I can earn more than she costs me!"

"Earn!"

"Yes; I can model, and I can teach. Was I not brought up to it?"

"Yes, but now it is impossible! It is not a larger income that you want, but proper attention to details in the spending of it, as I will show you."

Whereupon Mrs. Brownlow, in her neat figures, built up a

pretty little economical scheme, based on a thorough knowledge of the subject. Caroline tried to follow her calculations, but a dreaminess came over her; she found herself saying "Yes," without knowing what she was assenting to; and while Ellen was discoursing on coals and coke, she was trying to decide which of her casts she could bear to offer for sale, and going off into the dear old associations connected with each, so that she was obliged at the end, instead of giving an unqualified assent, to say she would think it over; and Ellen, who had marked her wandering eye, left off with a conviction that she had wasted her breath.

Certainly she was not prepared for the proposal with which Mother Carey almost rushed into the room the next day, just as she was locking up her wine, and the Colonel lingering over his first glance at the day's Times.

"I know what to do! Miss James is not coming back? And you have not heard of any one? Then, if you would only let me teach your girls with mine! You know that is what I really can do. Yes, indeed, I would be regular. I always was. You know I was, Robert, till I came here, and didn't quite know what I was about; and I have been regular ever since the end of the holidays, and I really can teach."

"My dear sister," edged in the Colonel, as she paused for breath, "no one questions your ability, only the fitness of—"

"I had thought over two things," broke in Caroline again. "If you don't like me to have Jessie, and Essie, and Ellie, I would

offer to prepare little boys. I've been more used to them than to girls, and I know Mr. Ogilvie would be glad. I could have the little Wrights, and Walter Leslie, and three or four more directly, but I thought you might like the other way better."

"I can see no occasion for either," said Ellen. "You need no increase in income, only to attend to details."

"And I had rather do what I can—than what I can't," said Caroline.

"Every lady should understand how to superintend her own household," said her Serene Highness.

"Granted; oh, granted, Ellen! I'm going to superintend with all my might and main, but I don't want to be my own upper servant, and I know I should make no hand of it, and I had much rather earn something by my wits. I can do it best in the way I was trained; and you know it is what I have been used to ever since my own children were born."

Ellen heaved a sigh at this obtuseness towards what she viewed as the dignified and ladylike mission of the well-born woman, not to be the bread-winner, but the preserver and steward, of the household. Here was poor little Caroline so ignorant as actually to glory in having been educated for a governess!

The Colonel, wanting to finish his Times in peace, looked up and said, with the gracious tone he always used to his brother's wife—

"My good little sister, it is very praiseworthy in you to wish to exert yourself, and very kind and proper to desire to begin at

home, but you must allow us a little time to consider."

She took this as a hint to retreat; and her Serene Highness likewise feeling it a dismissal, tried at once to obviate all ungraciousness by saying, "We are preserving our magnum bonums, Caroline dear; I will send you some."

"Magnum bonum!" gasped Caroline, hearing nothing but the name. "Do you know—?"

"I know the recipe of course, and can give you an excellent one. I will come over by-and-by and explain it to you."

Caroline stood confounded. Had Joe revealed all to his brother? Was it to be treated as a domestic nostrum? "Then you know what the magnum bonum is?" she faltered.

"Are you asking as a philosopher," said the Colonel, amused by her tone

"I don't know what you mean, Colonel," said his wife. "I offered Caroline a basket of magnum bonums for preserving, and one would think I had said something very extraordinary."

"Perhaps it is my cockney ignorance," said Caroline, beginning to breathe freely, and thinking it would have been less oppressive if Sua Serenita would have either laughed or scolded, instead of gravely leading her past the red-baize door which shut out the lower regions to the room where white armies of jam-pots stood marshalled, and in the midst two or three baskets of big yellow plums, which awoke in her a remembrance of their name, and set her laughing, thanking, and preparing to carry home the basket.

This, however, as she was instantly reminded, was not country-town manners. The gardener was to be sent with them, and Ellen herself would copy out the recipe, and by-and-by bring it, with full directions.

Each lady felt herself magnanimously forbearing, as Caroline went home to the lessons, and Ellen repaired to her husband on his morning inspection of his hens and chickens.

"Poor thing," she said, "there are great allowances to be made for her. I believe she wishes to do right."

"She knows how to teach," rejoined the Colonel. "Bobus is nearly at the head of the school, and Johnny has improved greatly since he has been so much with her."

"Johnny was always clever," said his mother. "For my part, I had rather see them playing at good honest games than messing about with that museum nonsense. The boys did not do half so much mischief, nor destroy so many clothes, before they were always running down to the Pagoda. And as to this setting up a school, you would never consent to have Joe's wife doing that!"

"There is no real need."

"None at all, if she only would—if she only knew how to attend to her proper duties."

"At the same time, I should be very glad of an excuse for making her an advance, enough to meet the weekly bills, till her rent comes in, so that she may not begin a debt. Could you not send the girls to her for a few hours every day?"

"That's not so bad as her taking pupils, for nobody need know

that she was paid for it," said his wife, considering. "I don't believe it will answer, or that she will ever keep to it steadily; but it can hardly hurt the children to try, if Jessie has an eye on Essie and Ellie. I will not have them brought on too fast, nor taught Latin, and all that poor little Babie is learning. I am sure it is dreadful to hear that child talk. I am always expecting that she will have water on the brain."

The decision, which really involved a sacrifice and a certain sense of risk on the part of these good people, was conveyed in a note, together with a recipe for the preservation of magnum bonums, and a very liberal cheque in advance for the first quarter of her three pupils, stipulating that no others should be admitted, that the terms should be kept secret, that the hours should be regular, and above all, that the pupils should not be forced.

Caroline was touched and grateful, but could hardly keep a little satire out of her promise that Essie and Ellie should not be too precocious. She wrote her note of thanks, despatched it, and then, in the interest of some arithmetical problems which she was working with Janet, forgot everything else, till a sort of gigantic buzz was heard near at hand. A sudden thought struck her, and out she darted into the hall. There stood the basket in the middle of the table, just where the boys were wont to look for refections of fruit or cake when they tumbled in from school. Six boys and Babie hovered round, each in the act of devouring a golden-green, egg-like plum, and only two or three remained in the leaves at the bottom!

"Oh, the magnum bonums!" she cried; and Janet came rushing out in dismay at the sound, standing aghast, but not exclaiming.

"Weren't they for us?" asked Bobus, the first to get the stone out of his mouth.

"No; oh, no!" answered his mother, as well as laughter would permit; "they are your aunt's precious plums, which she gave us as a great favour, and I was going to be so good and learn to preserve and pickle them! Oh, dear!"

"Never mind, Mother Carey," mumbled her nephew Johnny, with his stone swelling out his cheek, where it was tucked for convenience of speech; "I'll go and get you another jolly lot more."

"You can't," grunted Robin; "they are all gathered."

"Then we'll get them off the old tree at the bottom of the orchard, where they are just as big and yellow, and mamma will never know the difference."

"But they taste like soap!"

"That doesn't matter. She'd no more taste a magnum bonum, before it is all titivated up with sugar, than—than—than—"

"Babie's head with brain sauce," gravely put in Bobus, as his cousin paused for a comparison. "It's a wasting of good gifts to make jam of these, for jam is nothing but a vehicle for sugar."

"Then the grocer's cart is jam," promptly retorted Armine, "for I saw a sugarloaf come in one yesterday."

"Come on, then," cried Jock, ripe for the mischief; "I know the tree! They are just like long apricots. Aunt Ellen will think

her plums have been all a-growing!"

"No, no, boys!" cried his mother, "I can't have it done. To steal your aunt's own plums to deceive her with!"

"We always may do as we like with that tree," said Johnny, "because they are so nasty, and won't keep."

"How nice for the preserves!" observed Bobus.

"They would do just as well to hinder Mother Carey from catching it."

"No, no, boys; I ought to 'catch it!' It was all my fault for not putting the plums away."

"You won't tell of us," growled Robin, between lips that he opened wide enough the next moment to admit one of three surviving plums.

"If I tell her I left them about in the boys' way, she will arrive at the natural conclusion."

"Do they call those things magnum bonum?" asked Janet, as the boys drifted away.

"Yes," said her mother, looking at her rather wonderingly; and adding, as Janet coloured up to the eyes, "My dear, have you any other association with the name?"

Many a time Janet had longed to tell all she knew; now, when so good an opportunity had come, all was choked back by the strange leaden weight of reserve, and shame in that long reserve.

She opened her eyes and stared as stupidly at her mother as Robin could have done, feeling an utter incapacity of making any reply; and Caroline, who had for a moment thought she

understood, was baffled, and durst not pursue the subject for fear of betraying her own secret, deciding within herself that Janet might have caught up the word without understanding.

They were interrupted the next minute, and Janet ran away, feeling that she had had an escape, yet wishing she had not.

Caroline did effectually shelter her nephews under her general term "the boys," and if their mother was not conciliated, their fellow-feeling with her was strengthened, as well as their sense of honour. Nay, Johnny actually spent the next half-holiday in walking three miles and back to his old nurse, whom he beguiled out of a basket of plums—hard, little blue things, as unlike magnum bonums as could well be, but which his aunt received as they were meant, as full compensation; nay, she took the pains to hunt up a recipe, and have them well preserved, in hopes of amazing his mother.

It was indeed one difficulty that the two sisters-in-law had such different notions of the aim and end of economy. The income at Kencroft had not increased with the family, which numbered eight, for there were two little boys in the nursery, and it was only by diligent housewifery that Mrs. Brownlow kept up the somewhat handsome establishment she had started with at her marriage. Caroline felt that she neither could nor would have made herself such a slave to domestic details; yet this was life and duty and interest to Ellen. Where one sister would be unheeding of shabby externals, so that all her children might be free and on an equality, if they did not go beyond

her, in all enjoyments, physical, artistic, or intellectual; the other toiled to keep up appearances, kept her children under restraint and in the background, and made all sorts of unseen sacrifices to the supposed duty of always having a handsome dinner for whomsoever the Colonel might bring in, and keeping the horses, carriages, and servants that she thought his due.

But then Ellen had a husband, and, as Caroline sighed to herself, that made all the difference! and she was no Serene Highness, and had no dignity.

The three girls from Kencroft did actually become pupils at the Folly, but the beginnings were not propitious, for, in her new teacher's eyes, Jessie knew nothing accurately, but needed to have her foundations looked to—to practise scales, draw square boxes, and work the four first rules of arithmetic.

"Simple things," complained Jessie to her mother, "that I used to do when I was no bigger than Essie, and yet she is always teasing one about how and why! She wanted me to tell why I carried one."

"Have a little patience for the present, my dear, your papa wants to help her just at present, and after this autumn we will manage for you to have some real good music lessons."

"But I don't like wasting time over old easy things made difficult," sighed Jessie.

"It is very tiresome, my dear; but your papa wishes it, and you see, poor thing, she can't teach you more than she knows herself; and while you are there, I am sure it is all right with Essie and

Ellie."

"She does not teach them a bit like Miss James," said Jessie. "She makes their sums into a story, and their spelling lessons too. It is like a game."

Indeed, Essie and Ellie were so willing to go off to their lessons every morning, that their mother often thought it could not be all right, and that the progress, which they undoubtedly made, must be by some superficial trick; but as their father had so willed it, she submitted to the present arrangement, deciding that "poor Caroline was just able to teach little children."

The presence of Essie and Ellie much assisted in bringing Babie back to methodical habits; nor was she, in spite of her precocious intelligence, too forward in the actual drill of education to be able to work with her little cousins.

The incongruous elements were the two elder girls, who could by no means study together, since they were at the two opposite ends of the scale; but as Jessie was by no means aggressive, being in fact as sweet and docile a shallow girl as ever lived, things went on peaceably, except when Janet could not conceal her displeasure that Bobus would not share her contempt for Jessie's intellect.

If she told him that Jessie thought that the Odyssey was about a voyage to Odessa, and was written by Alfred Tennyson, he only declared that anything was better than being a spiteful cat; and when he came in from school, and found his cousin in wild despair over the conversion of 2,861 florins into half-crowns, he

stood by, telling her every operation, and leaving her nothing to do but to write down the figures. He was reckless of Janet, who tried to wither them both by her scorn; but Jessie looked up with her honest eyes, saying—

"I wish you hadn't put it into my head, Janet, for now I must rub it out and do it again, and it won't be so hard now Bobus has shown me how."

"No, no, Jessie," said Bobus; "I wouldn't be bullied."

"For shame, Bobus," said his sister; "how is she to learn anything in that way?"

"And if she doesn't?" said Bobus.

"That's a disgrace."

"A grace," said provoking Bobus. "She is much nicer as she is, than you will ever be."

"Don't talk such nonsense," said Janet, with an elder sisterly air. "It is not kind to encourage Jessie to think anyone can care for an empty-headed doll."

"Empty-headed dolls are all the go," said Bobus. "Never mind, Jessie, a girl's business is to be pretty and good-humoured, not to stuff herself with Latin and Greek. You should leave that to us poor beggars!"

"Yes, I know, that's all your envy and jealousy," retorted Janet.

All the time Jessie stood by, plump, gentle, and pretty, though with a certain cloud of perplexity on her white open brow, and as her aunt returned into the room, she said—

"I think my sum is right now, Aunt Caroline; but Bobus helped

me. Must I do it over again?"

"You shall begin with it to-morrow, my dear," said her aunt; "then I daresay it will go off easily."

Jessie thanked with an effusion of gratitude which made her prettier than ever, and then was claimed by Bobus to help him in the making of some paper bags that he needed for some of his curiosities.

Janet liked to fancy that it was beauty versus genius that made Jessie the greater favourite. She had not taken into account that she was always too much engrossed with her own concerns to be helpful, while Jessie's pretty dexterous hands were always at everyone's service, and without in the least entering into the cause of science, she was invaluable in the museum, whenever her ideas of neatness and symmetry were not in too absolute opposition to the requirements of system.

The two little ones, Essie and Ellie, were equally graceful, or indeed still more so, as being still in their kittenhood, and their attitudes were so charming as to revive their aunt's artistic instincts.

All the earlier part of the year, when her time was her own, it had been mere wretchedness and heart-sickness to think of the art which had given her husband so much pleasure, and, but for Allen, the studio would never have been arranged. But no sooner was her time engrossed, than the artist fever awoke in her, and all the time she could steal by early rising, or on wet afternoons, and birthday holidays, was devoted to her clay.

Before the end of the autumn she had sent up to Mr. Acton some lovely little groups of children, illustrating Wordsworth's poems. She had been taught anatomy enough to make her work superior to that of most women, and Mr. Acton found no difficulty in disposing of them to a porcelain manufactory, to be copied in Parian, bringing in a sum that made her feel rich.

Vistas opened before her sanguine eyes of that clay educating her son for the Magnum Bonum, her great thought. Her boys must be brought up to be worthy of the quest, high-minded, disinterested, and devoted, as well as intellectual and religious. So said their father; and thus the Magnum Bonum had become very nearly a religion to her, giving her a definite aim and principle.

Unfortunately there was not much in her present surroundings to lead her higher. The vicar, Mr. Rigby, was a dull, weak man, of a wornout type, a careful visitor of the sick and poor, but taking little heed to the educated, except as subscribers and Sunday-school teachers. Carey had done little in the first capacity, Janet had refused to act in the latter.

His sermons were very sleepy performances, except for a tendency to jumble up metaphors, that kept the audience from the Folly just awake enough to watch for them. The hearer was proud who could repeat by heart such phrases as "let us not, beloved brethren, as gaudy insects, flutter out life's little day, bound to the chariot wheels of vanity, whirling in the vortex of dissipation, until at length we lie moaning over the bitter dregs

of the intoxicating draught." Some of these became household proverbs at "the Folly," under the title of "Rigdum Funnidoses," and might well be an extreme distress to the good, reverent, and dutiful Jessie.

Mrs. Rigby was an inferior woman, a sworn member of the Coffinkey clique, admiring and looking up to her Serene Highness as the great lady of the place, and wearing an almost abject manner when receiving good counsels from her. Neither of them commanded respect, nor were they likely to change the belief, which prevailed at the Folly, that all ability resided among the London clergy.

CHAPTER XI. – UNDINE

Lithest, gaudiest harlequin,
Prettiest tumbler ever seen,
Light of heart and light of limb.

Wordsworth.

Long walks continued to be almost a necessity to Mrs. Joseph Brownlow, even when comparatively sobered down, and there were few days on which she was not to be met a mile or two from Kenminster, attended by a train of boys larger or smaller, according to the demands of the school for work or play.

The winter was of the description least favourable to collective boyish sports, as there was no snow and very little frost. The Christmas holidays led to more walking than ever. The gravelled roads of Belforest were never impassable, even in moist weather; and even the penetralia of the place had been laid open to the Brownlows, in consequence of a friendship which the two Johns had established with Alfred Richards, the agent's son. They had brought him in to see the museum, and he had proved so nice and intelligent a lad, that Mother Carey, to the great scandal of her Serene Highness, allowed Jock to ask him to partake of a birthday feast.

When Allen came home at Christmas, he introduced

stilt walking, and the Coffinkey world had the pleasure of communicating to one another that "Mrs. Folly Brownlow" had been seen with all her boys walking on stilts; and of course in the next stage, Mrs. "Folly" Brownlow herself was said to have been walking on stilts with all her boys, a libel, which caused Mrs. Robert Brownlow much pain and trouble in the contradiction.

"Poor Caroline! walking seemed to be necessary to her health, and she was out a great deal, but always walking along in the lanes on foot with her little girls—yes, I assure you, always on foot!"

It was thus that Caroline, with Babie and Armine, was descending a hill on the other side of Belforest Park, fully employed in picking the way through the mud from stone to stone, when a cry of dismay came to them from a distance, and whilst they were still struggling towards a gate, which broke the line of the high hedge, the two Johns came back at speed, crying —"Mother, Mother Carey! come quick, here's Allen had a spill —came down on his shoulder—his stilt went into a hole, and he went right over; they think he must have broken something, he howls so when they touch him."

Feeling her limbs and breath inadequate to bear her on as fast as her spirit flew forward, Caroline dashed through the slippery mud far too swiftly for poor little Babie to keep up with her, leaving one boy to take care of the little ones, while the other acted as her guide down the long steep lane. She was unable to see over the hedges till she came through a gate into a meadow, where Jock looked about, rubbed his eyes, and

exclaimed—"Hallo, where are they?" pointing to the place where Allen had fallen, but whence he seemed to have been spirited away like Sir Piercie Shafton. However, Rob and Joe came running out of a farmyard at a little distance, with tidings that Allen had been taken in there, and replying to her breathless question, that they could not tell how much he was hurt.

A fine looking white-haired farmer met her next, saying —"Your young gentleman is not very seriously hurt, ma'am. I think a dislocation of the shoulder is the extent of the injury. He is feeling rather faint, but you must not be alarmed."

It was spoken with a kind courtesy that gave her confidence, and the old man led her to the parlour, where his daughter-in-law, a gentle looking person, was most kindly attending on Allen, who lay on the sofa, exceedingly white, and in much pain, but able to smile at his mother, and assure her that he should soon be all right.

"Had they sent for a surgeon?"

"No, but they had sent for a bone-setter, who would be there in a minute."

The old farmer explained that it would be two hours at the least before a surgeon could be fetched from Kenminster, while Higg, the blacksmith, who lived close at hand, was better for man and beast than any surgeon he had known, and his son had instantly set out to fetch him. As the mother doubtfully asked of his fitness, instances were quoted of his success. The family had a "gift," inherited and kept up from time immemorial, and the

farmer's wife declared that he was as tender as possible; she had seen him operate on a neighbour's child, and should not be afraid to trust him with one of her own.

The man's voice was heard; they went out to speak to him, and Caroline was left with her boy.

"What do you think, Ali, my dear," she said, kneeling by him, "I have often heard dear papa speak of the wonderful instinct of those bone-setting families."

"I'd have nothing to do with a humbugging quack," put in Bobus.

"He may humbug as much as he likes, if he'll only get me out of this pain," said poor Allen.

"He will only make it ever so much worse, and then you'll have to have it done over again," croaked Bobus.

"That is not the way to talk of it, Bobus," said his mother. "I know a dislocated shoulder does not require any great skill, and that promptness is of greater use than knowledge in such a case."

"Well, if you like to encourage abominable humbug and have Allen lamed for life, I don't," said Bobus. "I shan't stay in the house with the blackguard."

He stalked out of the room with great loftiness of demeanour, just as the operator was being introduced—a tall, sinewy man, with one of those strong yet meek faces often to be found among the peasantry. He came in after the old farmer, pulling his forelock to the lady, and waiting for orders as if he had been sent for to mend the grate; but Caroline saw in a moment that he

was a man to trust in, and that his hands were not only clean, but were well-formed, and powerful, with a great air of dexterity.

"I am afraid my boy's arm is put out," she said, trembling a good deal.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And—and," said she, feeling sick, and more desolate and left to her own judgment than ever before. "Can you undertake to push it in again."

"Please God, ma'am," Higg said, gravely, coming nearer for examination.

Allen shrank and shuddered.

"Won't it hurt awfully?" he asked.

"Well, sir, it won't just be a bed of roses, but it won't last, not long, if you sets your will to it."

He asked for various needments, and while he was inspecting them, Allen's courage began to fail, and he breathed out whispers that the man was rougher and more ignorant than he expected, and they had better wait and send to Kenminster for a doctor; but those who thought Caroline helpless and childish would have been amazed at the gentle resolution with which she refused to listen to his falterings, and braced him to endure, knowing well that her husband had said that skill was hardly needed in such a case, only resolution. She would not let herself be taken out of the room, and indeed never thought of herself, only of Allen, whose other hand she held, and to whom she seemed to give patience and courage. When all was well over, there was a hospitable

invitation to the patient to remain till he was fit to return, and an extension of the invitation to his mother, but with promises of every care if she must leave him, and this she was forced to decide on doing, as such a household as hers could not well spare her, especially on a Saturday evening; and she also saw that the inconvenience to her hosts would have been great.

Allen was so much relieved, that she had no fear of leaving him to these kind people, to whom she had taken a great fancy.

"I shall learn the habits of the genuine species, British farmer," said he, as his mother kissed him, and declared him the best and most conformable of boys.

Old Mr. Gould would not be denied driving her home in his gig, and when she thought about it, she found she had a strange relaxed aching of the knees, which made her glad of kindness for herself and the little ones. In the fine old kitchen she found that Armine had had an overpowering fit of crying, which had been kindly soothed by motherly Mrs. Gould, and the whole party were partaking of a luxurious tea, enlivened by mince pies and rosy-cheeked apples, which had diverted his attention to the problem why the next year's prosperity should depend on the number of mince pies consumed before Christmas.

Bobus was not among them, having marched off in his contempt of the bone-setter, and his mother was not without fears that he might bring a real surgeon down on her at any moment, so she quickly drank off her cup of tea, and took her seat in Farmer Gould's gig with Babie as bodkin in front, and Joe

and Armine in the little seat behind. Robin and the two Johns were to stilt themselves home, while she was taken so long and rugged a way, that at every jolt she was ready to renew her thanks for sparing it to her son's shoulder; and they were at home before her.

The whole family came pouring out to meet her, and the Colonel made warm acknowledgments of the farmer's kindness, speaking of him when he was gone as one of the most estimable men in the neighbourhood, staunch in his politics, and very ill-used by old Barnes of Belforest.

Caroline looked anxiously for Bobus; and Janet, who had stayed at home to finish some papers for her essay society, said that he had only hurried in to tell her and take off his stilts, and had then gone down to Dr. Leslie's.

"Then has Dr. Leslie gone? We did not meet him, but he may have gone through Belforest," exclaimed Caroline.

"O no, he has not gone; he would not when he heard about that Higg," said Janet, with uneasy and much disgusted face. "He couldn't do any good after his meddling."

"Do you mean that he said so?" asked Carey, much alarmed.

"Never mind," said the Colonel, "you did quite right, Caroline, whatever the doctor says. Any man of sense, with good strong hands, can manage a shoulder like that, and I should have thought Leslie had sense to see it; but those professional men can't stand outsiders."

"Where is Bobus?" asked Caroline; "I should like to

distinguish between what Dr. Leslie said to him and what he told Janet. He might be more zealous for Dr. Leslie than Dr. Leslie for himself."

Bobus was unearthed, and by much pumping was made to allow that Dr. Leslie had told him that there was nothing more to be done, and that his brother was quite safe in Higg's hands; but Bobus evidently did not believe it. He kept silence while his uncle remained, but he had hunted up his father's surgical books, and went on about humeral clavicles and ligatures all the evening, till his mother felt sick, in the nervous contemplation of possibilities, though her better sense was secure that she had done right, while Janet was moodily silent and angered with her, in the belief that she had weakly let Allen be injured for life; and Bobus seemed as if he had rather it should be so than that he should be wrong, and Higg's native endowments turn out a reality.

Caroline abstained from looking at the book herself, partly because she thought she might only alarm herself the more without confuting Bobus, and partly because she knew that the old law which forbade Janet to meddle with the medical books, would be considered as abrogated if she touched them herself.

Both she and Janet were much more anxious than they confessed, except by the looks which betrayed their broken rest the next morning. Each was bent on walking to River Hollow, and they would fain have done so immediately after breakfast, but to take the whole tribe was impossible; and to let them go to Church without her, would infallibly lead to Jock's getting into

a scrape with his relatives, if not with the whole congregation. Was it not all her eyes could do to hinder palpable smiles in the sermon, and her monkey from playing tricks on his bear, who, by some fatality, always sat in front, with his irresistible broad back, down which, in spite of all her vigilance, Jock had once thrust a large bluebottle fly. She also knew that both her husband and his mother would have thought she ought to go to Church, and that if matters went amiss with her boy, she should reproach herself with the omission. Her children, too, influenced her, though very oppositely, for Janet was found preparing to start for River Hollow, and on being told that she must wait, to go with her mother, till after Church, declared defiantly that "she saw no sense in staying at home to hear Rigdum when she did not know how ill Allen might be."

"You would not have said that to grandmamma," said Carey.

"Well, if you like to go to Church, you can. I can go alone."

"No, I will not have you take that long walk alone."

"Then I will take one of the boys."

"No, Janet, I mean to be obeyed. Go and put on your other hat, and do not make us late for Church."

Janet was forced to submit, for she never came to the point of actual disobedience to her mother. Caroline's ruffled feelings were soothed by little Armine, who ran in from feeding his rabbits to ask to have the place in his Prayer-book shown to him where he should pray for poor Allen. She marked the Litany sentence for him, and meant to have thrown her own heart into

it, but when the moment came, her mind was far astray, building vague castles about her boys.

Still she felt as if her church going had its reward, for Dr. Leslie met her a little way outside the porch, and, after asking after her boy, said—

"I hope his brother explained to you that Higg is quite to be trusted. He always knows what he can do, and when a case is beyond him. If I had come there would have been nothing for me to do."

"There!" said Jock, triumphantly to his brother and sister.

"Much you know about it," grunted Bobus.

"Mother Carey was right. She always is," persisted Jock.

"It would have been just the same if the man had known nothing about it," said Janet. "I hate your irregular practitioners, and it was very weak in mother to encourage them." Then, as Bobus snarled at the censure of his mother—"You said so yourself yesterday."

"I didn't say any such beastly thing of mother. She could tell whether it was just a simple dislocation, and she was right, having ever so much more sense than *you*, Janet."

"You didn't say so yesterday," repeated Janet.

"I don't like irregular practitioners a bit better than you do, Janet," said Bobus with dignity; "and I thought it right to call in a qualified surgeon, but I never said mother couldn't judge."

However, Bobus would not countenance the irregular practitioner by escorting his mother to River Hollow; and as he

was in one of the surly moods in which he was dangerous to any one who meddled with him, especially Janet, his mother was glad not to have to keep the peace between them.

Janet, though not in the most amiable mood, chose to go with her, and they set forth by the shorter way, across Belforest park, skirting the gardens where the statues stood up, looking shivery and forlorn, as if they were not suited to English winters, and the huge house looked down on them like a London terrace that had lost its way, with a dreary uninhabited air about it. Even by this private way they had two miles and a half of park to traverse, before they reached a heavy miry lane, where the beds of mud, alternated with rugged masses of stone, intended to choke them. It led up between high hedges to the brow of one of the many hills of the county, whence they could look down into the hollow, a perfect cup, scooped out as it were between the hills that closed it in, except at the outlet of the river that intersected it, making the meadow on either side emerald green, even in the winter. Corn lands of rich red soil, pasture fields dotted with cattle, and broad belts of copse wood between clothed the slopes; and a picturesque wooden bridge, with a double handrail, crossed the river. The farm-house, built of creamy stone, stood on the opposite side of the river, some way above the bank, and the mother and daughter agreed that it deserved to be sketched next summer.

They had to pick their way down a lane that was almost a torrent, and emerging at the foot of the bridge, they stood still

in amazement, for in the very centre was something vibrating rapidly, surrounded by a perfect halo of gold and scarlet. It was like a gigantic humming-bird moth at first, but it presently resolved itself into a little girl, clad in something dark purple below, and above with a bright scarlet cloaklet, which flew out and streamed back, beneath the floating locks of glistening gold that glinted in the sun, as with a hand on each rail of the bridge she swung herself backwards and forwards with the most bewildering rapidity. Suddenly becoming aware of the approach of strangers, she stood for one moment gazing in astonishment, then fled so swiftly that she almost seemed to fly, and vanished in the farm buildings!

They stood laughing and declaring that Babie would be convinced that fairies came out on Sunday, then crossed the river and were beginning to ascend the path when a volley of sounds broke on them, a shrill yap giving the alarm, louder notes joining in, and the bass being supplied by a formidable deep-mouthed bark, as out of the farmyard-gate dashed little terrier, curly spaniel, slim greyhounds, surly sheep-dog of the old tailless sort, and big and mighty Newfoundland, and there they stood in a row, shouting forth defiance in all gradations of note, so that, though frightened, Carey and Janet could not help laughing, as the former said—

"This comes of gadding about on Sunday."

"If we went on boldly they would see we are not tramps," said Janet.

"Depend on it they will let no one pass in Church time."

So it proved, for Janet's attempt to move forward elicited a growl from the sheep-dog, and a leap forward of the "little dogs and all," which daunted even her stout heart.

However, calls were heard, and the bright vision of the bridge came darting among the dogs, scolding and driving them in, and Allen himself came out to the gate, all bandaged up on one side, but waving his arm as a signal to his mother and sister to advance. They did so nervously but safely, while the growls of the sheep-dog sounded like distant thunder, and the terrier uttered his protest from the door. Allen declared himself much better, and said he should be quite able to go home to-morrow, only this was such a jolly place; and then he brought them into the beautiful old kitchen with a magnificent open hearth, inclosed by two fine dark walnut-wood settles, making a little carpeted chamber between them. Here Allen had the farmer's armchair and a footstool, and with "Foxe's Martyrs" open at a flaming illustration on the little round table before him, appeared to be spending his Sunday as luxuriously as the big tabby cat who shared the hearth with him.

"They have only one service at Woodbridge, morning and afternoon by turns," he explained, "and so they are all gone to it."

"Who is that girl?" asked Janet.

"Undine," he coolly replied.

"She certainly appeared on the bridge," said his mother, "but I should think Undine's colouring had been less radiant—more

of the blue and white."

"She had not a whiter skin nor bluer eyes," said Allen, "nor made herself more ridiculous either. Did you ever see such hair, mother? Hullo, Elfie. There she is, peeping in at the window, just as Undine did; Come in!" he cried at the door. "No, not she," as he returned baffled; "she is off again!"

"But, Allen, who is she? Not Farmer Gould's daughter."

"Of course not. Don't you know she was fished up in a net, and belonged to a palace under the ocean full of pearls and diamonds. She took such a fancy to me that no power on earth would make her go to Church with the rest. She ran away, and hid, and when they were all gone she came out and curled herself up at my feet and chattered, till I happened to offend her majesty, and off she went like a shot. I'm only thankful that she did not make her pearly teeth meet in my finger in true Undine fashion."

"But who is she, really?"

"I can't quite make out. They call her Elfie, and she calls them grandpapa, and uncle and aunt, but she has been sitting here complaining of everything being cold and dull, and talking about seas and islands, palm-trees, and coral caves, and humming birds, yes, and black slaves, and strings of pearls, so that if she is romancing, like Armine and Babie, she does it uncommonly naturally."

They saw no more of this mysterious little being, and the family soon returned from Church. The father was a fine, old-fashioned yeoman, the son had the style of a modern farmer,

and the wife was so quiet, sensible, and matronly as to be almost ladylike. Her two little girls were dressed as well as Essie and Ellie, but all were essentially commonplace. They were very kind and friendly, anxious that Allen should stay as long as was good for him, as well as pressing in their hospitality to the two ladies. Mr. Gould was very anxious to drive them home in his gig, though he allowed that the road was very rough unless you went through Belforest Park, and that he never did.

This was surprising, for Belforest had always seemed as free as the turnpike-road, and River Hollow was apparently part of the estate, but there was an air of discouraging questions, so Carey suspected quarrels and asked none.

She was enlightened the next day when Colonel Brownlow brought his phaeton to fetch Allen home over the smooth park road. He told her that the Goulds were freeholders who had owned River Hollow from time immemorial, though each successive lord of Belforest tried to buy them out. The alienation between them and Mr. Barnes, the present master, had however much stronger grounds than these. His nephew and intended heir has stolen a match with the old man's pretty daughter, and this had never been forgiven. The young couple had gone out to the West Indian isles, where the early home of her husband had been, and where he held some government office, and there fell a victim to the climate. Old Mr. Gould had gone home to fetch his daughter and her child, but the former had died before he reached her, and he had only brought back the little girl about

two years ago.

Mr. Barnes ignored her entirely, and the Goulds, who had a good deal of pride, did not choose to apply to him. It was very unfortunate, for unless he had any other relations the child must be heiress to his immense wealth, though it was as likely as not that he would leave it all to hospitals out of pure vindictiveness.

They found Allen out of doors attended by the three little girls, all eagerly watching the removal of a sheep-fold. He was a pleasant-mannered boy, ready to adapt himself to all circumstances and to throw ready intelligent interest into everything, and he had won the hearts of the whole River Hollow establishment, from old Mr. Gould down to the smallest puppy.

Elfie, as he called her, stood her ground, and as she looked up under her brown mushroom hat Caroline was struck with her beauty, fair, but with a southern richness of bloom and glow—the carnation cheek of a depth of tint more often found in brunette complexions. The eyes were not merely blue by courtesy, but of a wonderful deep azure, shaded by very long lashes, dark except when the sun glinted them with gold, and round her shoulders hung masses of hair of that exquisite light auburn which cannot be accused of being red.

She let herself be greeted by the strangers with much more ease and grace than the other two children, but the slow walk of her grandfather and Colonel Brownlow seemed more than she could brook, and she went off, flying and spinning round like a little dog.

While all the acknowledgments and farewells were being made, and Colonel Brownlow was taking directions for finding Higg's house and forge so as to remunerate him for his services, Elfie came hurrying up to Allen, holding out a great, gorgeous pink-lined shell, and laid within it two heads of scarlet geranium on a green leaf.

"O Elfie, Elfie! how could you?" exclaimed he, knowing them to be the only flowers in bloom.

"You must have them. There's nothing else pretty to give you, and I love you," said the child, holding up her face to kiss him.

"Elvira!" said her aunt in warning, "how can you! What will this lady think of you?"

Elvira's gesture would in any other child have seemed a sulky thrust of the elbow, but in her it was more like the flutter of the wing of a brilliant bird.

"You must," she repeated; and when he hesitated with "If Mrs. Gould," she broke away, dashed the flowers, shell and all, into the middle of a clump of rosemary, and rushed out of sight like a little fury.

"You will excuse her, Mrs. Brownlow," said Mrs. Gould, much annoyed. "She has been sadly spoilt, living among negro servants and having her own way, so that she is sometimes quite ungovernable."

"Nay, nay, she is a warm-hearted little thing if you don't cross her," said the old farmer; "and the young gentleman has been very kind to her."

Mrs. Gould looked as if she thought she knew her niece better than grandpapa did, but she was too wise to speak; and the little girls, having assisted Allen in the recovery of the shell and the flowers, he tendered them again to her.

"You had better keep them, Mr. Brownlow," she said. "The shell is her own, and if you did not take it she is so *tenacious* that she would be sure to smash it to atoms."

Allen accepted perforce and proceeded with his farewells, but as he was stooping down to kiss little five-year-old Kate Gould, something wet, cold, and sloppy came with great force on them both, almost knocking them down and bespattering them both with black drops. The missile proved to be a dripping sod pulled up from the duck-pond in the next field, and a glimpse might be caught of Elvira's scarlet legs disappearing over the low wall between.

Over poor Mrs. Gould's apologies a veil had best be drawn. Mother Carey pitied her heartily, but it was impossible not to make fun at home over the black tokens on Allen's shirt-collar. His brothers and sisters laughed excessively, and Janet twitted him with his Undine, till he, contrary to his wont, grew so cross as to make his mother recollect that he was still a suffering patient, and insist on his lying quiet on the sofa, while she banished every one, and read Tennyson to him. Poetry, read aloud by her, was Allen's greatest delight, but not often enjoyed, as Bobus and Jock scouted it, and Janet was getting too strong-minded and used to break in with inopportune, criticisms.

So to have Mother Carey to read "Elaine" undisturbed was as great an indulgence as Allen could well have, but she had not gone far before he broke out—

"Mother, please, I wish you could do something for that girl. She really is a lady."

"So it appears," said Carey, much disposed to laugh.

"Now, mother, don't be tiresome. You have more sense than Janet. Her father was Vice-consul at Sant Ildefonso, one of the Antilles."

"But, my dear, I am afraid that is not quite so grand as it sounds —"

"Hush, mother. He was nephew to Mr. Barnes, and they lived out of the town in a perfect paradise of a place, looking out into the bay. Mr. Gould says he can hardly believe he ever saw anything so gorgeously beautiful, and there this poor little Elvira de Menella lived like a princess with a court of black slaves. Just fancy what it must be to her to come to that farm, an orphan too, with an aunt who can't understand a creature like that."

"Poor child."

"Then she can't get any education. Old Gould is a sensible man, who says any school he could afford would only turn her out a sham, and he means, when Mary and Kate are a little older, to get some sort of governess for the three. But, mother, couldn't you just let him bring her in on market days and teach her a little?"

"My dear boy, what would your aunt do? We can't have sods

of mud flying about the house."

"Now, mother, you know better! You could make anything of her, you know you could! And what a model she would make! Think what a poor little desolate thing she is. You always have a fellow feeling for orphans, and we do owe those people a great deal of gratitude."

"Allen, you special pleader, it really will not do! If I had not undertaken Essie and Ellie, I might think about it, but I promised your aunt not to have any other pupils."

Allen bothered Essie and Ellie, but was forced to acquiesce, which was fortunate, for when on the last day of the holidays it was found that he had walked to River Hollow to take leave of the Goulds, his aunt administered to his mother a serious warning on the dangers of allowing him to become intimate there.

Caroline tingled all over during the discourse, and at last jumped up, exclaiming—

"My dear Ellen, half the harm in the world is done by making a fuss. Things don't die half so hard when they die a natural death."

Ellen knew Carey thought she had said something very clever, but was all the more unconvinced.

CHAPTER XII. – KING MIDAS

When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nowl I fixed upon his head.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

In the early spring an unlooked-for obstacle arose to all wanderings in the Belforest woods. The owner returned and closed the gates. From time that seemed immemorial, the inhabitants of Kenminster had disported themselves there as if the grounds had been kept up for their sole behoof, and their indignation at the monopoly knew no bounds.

Nobody saw Mr. Barnes save his doctor, whose carriage was the only one admitted within the lodge gates, intending visitors being there informed that Mr. Barnes was too unwell to be disturbed.

Mrs. "Folly" Brownlow's aberrations lost their interest in the Coffinkey world beside the mystery of Belforest. Opinions varied as to his being a miser, or a lunatic, a prey to conscience, disease, or deformity; and reports were so diverse, that at the "Folly" a journal was kept of them, with their dates, as a matter of curiosity —their authorities marked:—

March 4th.—Mr. Barnes eats nothing but fresh turtle. Brings them down in tubs alive and flapping. Mrs. Coffinkey's Jane

heard them cooing at the station. Gives his cook three hundred pounds per annum.

5th.—Mr. Barnes so miserly, that he turned away the housemaid for burning candles eight to the pound. (H. S. H.)

6th.—Mr. B. keeps a bloodhound trained to hunt Indians, and has six pounds of prime beef steaks for it every day. (Emma.)

8th.—Mr. B.'s library is decorated with a string of human ears, the clippings of his slaves in "the Indies." (Nurse.)

12th.—Mr. B. whipped a little black boy to death, and is so haunted by remorse, that he can't sleep without wax-candles burning all round him. (Mrs. Coffinkey's sister-in-law.)

14th.—Mr. Barnes's income is five hundred thousand pounds, and he does not live at the rate of two hundred pounds. (Col. Brownlow.)

l5th.—He has turned off all his gardeners, and the place will be desolation. (H. S. H.)

16th.—He did turn off one gardener's boy for staring at him when he was being wheeled about in his bath-chair. (Alfred Richards.)

17th.—He threw a stone, which cut the boy's head open, and he lies at the hospital in a dangerous state. (Emma.)

18th.—Mr. Barnes was crossed in love when he was a young man by one Miss Anne Thorpe, and has never been the same man since, but has hated all society. (Query: Is this a version of being a misanthrope?)

19th.—He is a most unhappy man, who has sacrificed all

family affections and all humanity to gold, and whose conscience will not let him rest. He is worn to a shadow, and is at war with mankind. In fine, he is a lesson to weak human nature. (Mrs. Rigby.)

22nd.—All his toilet apparatus is of "virgin gold;" he lets nothing else touch him. (Jessie.)

"Exactly like King Midas." (Babie.)

The exclusion from the grounds was a serious grievance, entailing much loss of time and hindrance to the many who had profited by the private roads. The Sunday promenade was a great deprivation; nurses and children were cut off from grass and shade, and Mother Carey and her brood from all the delights of the enchanted ground.

She could bear the loss better than in that first wild restlessness, which only free nature could allay. She had made her occupations, and knew of other haunts, though many a longing eye was cast at the sweet green wilderness, and many regrets spent on the rambles, the sketches, the plants, and the creatures that had seemed the certain entertainment of the summer.

To one class of the population the prohibition only gave greater zest—namely, the boys. Should there be birds' nests in Belforest unscathed by the youth of St. Kenelm's? What were notice-boards, palings, or walls to boys with arms and legs ready to defy even the celebrated man-traps of Ellangowan, "which, if a man goes in, they will break a horse's leg?" The terrific bloodhound alarmed a few till his existence was denied by Alfred

Richards, the agent's son; and dodging the keepers was a new and exciting sport. At first, these men were not solicitous for captures, but their negligence was so often detected, that they began to believe that their master kept telescopes that could penetrate through trees, and their vigilance increased.

Bobus, in quest of green hellebore, got off with a warning; but a week later, Robin and Jock were inspecting the heronry, when they caught sight of a keeper, and dashed off to find themselves running into the jaws of another. Swift as lightning, Jock sprung up into an ivied ash; but the less ready Bob was caught by the leg as he mounted, and pulled down again, while his captor shouted, "If there's any more of you young varmint up yonder, you'd best come down before I fires up into the hoivy."

He made a click and pointed his gun, and Robin shrieked, "Oh, don't! We are Colonel Brownlow's sons; at least, I mean nephews. Don't! I say. Skipjack, come down."

"You ass!" muttered Jack, as he crackled down, and was collared by the keeper. "Hollo! what's that for?"

"Now, young gents, why will you come larking here to get a poor chap out of his situation. It's as much as my place is worth not to summons you, and yet I don't half like to do it to young gents like you."

"What could they do to us?" asked Jock.

"Well, sir, may be they'd keep you in the lock-up all night; and what would your papa and mamma say to that?"

"My father is Colonel Brownlow," growled Robin.

"More shame for you, sir, to want to get a poor man out of his place."

"Look here, my man," said Jock with London sharpness and impudence, "if you want to bully us into tipping you, it's no go. We've only got one copper between us, and nothing else but our knives; and if we had, we wouldn't do such a sneaking thing!"

"I never meant no such thing, sir," said the keeper; "only in case Mr. Barnes should hear of our good nature."

"Come along, Robin," said Jock; "if we are had up, we'll let 'em know how Leggings wanted us to buy off!"

Wherewith Jock made a rush, Rob plunged after him into the brambles, and they never halted till they had tumbled over the park wall, and lay in a breathless heap on the other side. The adventure was the fruitful cause of mirth at the Folly, but not a word was breathed of it at Kencroft.

A few other lads did actually pay toll to the keepers, and some penniless ones were brought before the magistrates and fined for trespass, "because they could not afford it," as Caroline said, and to the Colonel's great disgust she sent two sovereigns by Allen to pay their fines and set them free.

"It was my own money," she said, in self-defence, "earned by my models of fungi."

The Colonel thought it an unsatisfactory justification, and told her that she would lay up trouble for herself by thus encouraging insubordination. He little thought that the laugh in her eyes was at his complacent ignorance of his own son's narrow escape.

Allen was at home for Easter, when Eton gave longer holidays than did St. Kenelm, so that his brothers were at work again long before he was. One afternoon, which had ended in a soaking mist, the two pairs of Roberts and Johns encountered him at the Folly gate so disguised in mud that they hardly recognised the dainty Etonian.

"That brute Barnes," he ejaculated; "I had to come miles round through a disgusting lane. I wish I had gone on. I'd have proved the right of way if he chose to prosecute me!"

"Father says that's no go," said Robin.

"I say, Allen, what a guy you are," added Johnny.

"And he's got his swell trousers on," cried Jock, capering with glee.

"I see," gravely observed Bobus, "he had got himself up regardless of expense for his Undine, and she has treated him to another dose of her native element.

"She had nothing to do with it," asseverated Allen, "she was as good as gold—"

"Ah! I knew he wasn't figged out for nothing," put in Jock.

"Don't be ashamed, Ali, my boy," added Bobus. "We all understand her little tokens."

"Stop that!" cried Allen, catching hold of Jock's ear so as to end his war-dance in a howl, bringing the ponderous Rob to the rescue, and there was a general melee, ending by all the five rolling promiscuously on the gravel drive. They scrambled up with recovered tempers, and at the sight of an indignant

housemaid rushed in a general stampede to the two large attics opening into one another, which served as the lair of the Folly lads. There, while struggling, with Jock's assistance, to pull off his boots, Allen explained how he had been waylaid "by a beast in velveteens," and walked off to the nearest gate.

"Will he summons you, Ali? We'll all go and see the Grand Turk in the dock," cried Jock.

"Don't flatter yourself; he wouldn't think of it."

"How much did you fork out?" asked Bobus.

Allen declaimed in the last refinement of Eton slang (carefully treasured up by the others for reproduction) against the spite of the keeper, who he declared had grinned with malice as he turned him out at a little back gate into a lane with a high stone wall on each side, and two ruts running like torrents with water, leading in the opposite direction to Kenminster, and ending in a bottom where he was up to the ankles in red clay.

"The Eton boots, oh my!" cried Jock, falling backwards with one of them, which he had just pulled off.

"And then," added Allen, "as I tried to get along under the wall by the bank, what should a miserable stone do, but turn round with me and send me squash into the mud and mire, floundering like a hippopotamus. I should like to get damages from that villain! I should!"

Allen was much more angry than was usual with him, and the others, though laughing at his Etonian airs, fully sympathised with his wrath.

"He ought to be served out."

"We will serve him out!"

"How?"

"Get all our fellows and make a jolly good row under his windows," said Robin.

"Decidedly low," said Allen.

"And impracticable besides," said Bobus. "They'd kick you out before you could say Jack Robinson."

"There was an old book of father's," suggested Jock, "with an old scamp who starved and licked his apprentices, till one of them dressed himself up in a bullock's hide, horns and hoofs, and tail and all, and stood over his bed at night and shouted—

> "'Old man, old man, for thy cruelty,
> Body and soul thou art given to me;
> Let me but hear those apprentices' cries,
> And I'll toss thee, and gore thee, and bore out thine eyes.'

And he was quite mild to the apprentices ever after."

Jock acted and roared with such effect as to be encored, but Rob objected. "He ain't got any apprentices."

"It might be altered," said Allen.

> "Old man, old man, thy gates thou must ope,"

Bobus chimed in.

"Nor force Eton swells in quagmire to grope."

"Bother you, don't humbug and put me out.

"Old man, old man, if for aught thou wouldst hope,
Thy heart, purse, and gates thou must instantly ope.
Let me but—"

"Get Mother Carey to write it," suggested his cousin John.

"No; she must know nothing about it," said Bobus.

"She'd think it a jolly lark," said Jock.

"When it's over," said Allen. "But it's one of the things that the old ones are sure to stick at beforehand, if they are ever so rational and jolly."

"'Tis a horrid pity she is not a fellow," sighed Johnny.

"And who'll do the verses?" said Rob.

"Oh, any fool can do them," returned Bobus. "The point is to bell the cat."

"There'd be no getting in to act the midnight ghost," said Allen.

"No," said Jock; "but one could hide in the big rhododendron in the wolf-skin rug, and jump out on him in his chair."

In Allen's railway rug, Jock rehearsed the scene, and was imitated if not surpassed by both cousins; but Allen and Bobus declared that it could not be carried out in the daylight.

"I could do it still better," said Jock, "if I blacked myself all over, not only my face, but all the rest, and put on nothing but my

red flannel drawers and a turban. They'd take me for the ghost of the little nigger he flogged to death, and Allen could write something pathetic and stunning."

"You might cut human ears out of rabbit-skins and hang them round your neck," added Bobus.

"You'd be awfully cold," said Allen.

"You could mix in a little iodine," suggested Bobus. "That stings like fun, and a coppery tinge would be more natural."

There was great acclamation, but the difficulty was that the only time for effecting an entrance into the garden was between four and five in the morning, and it would be needful to lurk there in this light costume till Mr. Barnes went out. No one would be at liberty from school but Allen, and he declined the oil and lamp-black even though warmed up with iodine.

"Could it not be done by deputy?" said Bobus; "we might blacken the little fat boy riding on a swan, the statue, I mean."

"What, and gild the swan, to show how far his golden goose can carry him?" said Jock.

"Or," said Allen, "there's the statue they say is himself, though that's all nonsense. We could make a pair of donkey's ears in Mother Carey's clay, and clap them on him, and gild the thing in his hand."

"What would be the good of that?" asked Robert.

However, the fun was irresistible, and the only wonder was that the secret was kept for the whole day, while Allen moulded in the studio two things that might pass for ass's ears, and secreted

cement enough to fasten them on. The performance elicited such a rapture of applause that the door had to be fast locked against the incursion of the little ones to learn the cause of the mirth. When Mother Carey asked at tea what they were having so much fun about they only blushed, sniggled, and wriggled in their chairs in a way that would have alarmed a more suspicious mother, but only made her conclude that some delightful surprise was preparing, for which she must keep her curiosity in abeyance.

"Nor was she dismayed by the creaking of boots on the attic stairs before dawn, and when the boys appeared at breakfast with hellebore, blue periwinkle, and daffodils, clear indications of where they had been, she only exclaimed—

"Forbidden sweets! O you naughty boys!" when ecstatic laughter alone replied.

She heard no more till the afternoon, when the return from school was notified by shouts from Allen, and the boys rushed up to the verandah where he was reading.

"I say! here's a go. He thinks Richards has done it, and has written to Ogilvie to have him expelled."

"How do you know?"

"He told me himself."

"But Ogilvie has too much sense to expel him!"

"Of course, but there's worse, for old Barnes means to turn off his father. Nothing will persuade the old fellow that it wasn't his work, for he says that it must be a grammar-school boy."

"Does Dicky Bird guess?"

"Yes, but he's all right, as close as wax. He says he was sure no one but ourselves could have done it, for nobody else could have thought of such things or made them either."

"Then he has seen it?"

"Yes, and he was fit to kill himself with laughing, though his father and old Barnes were mad with rage and fury. His father believes him, but old Barnes believes neither of them, and swears his father shall go."

"We shall have to split on ourselves," elegantly observed Johnny.

"We had better tell Mother Carey. Hullo! here she is, inside the window."

"Didn't you know that," said Allen.

Therefore the boys, leaning and sprawling round her, half in and half out of the window, told the story, the triumph overcoming all compunction, as they described the morning raid, the successful scaling of the park-wall, the rush across the sward, the silence of the garden, the hoisting up of Allen to fasten on the ears, and the wonderful charms of the figure when it wore them and held a golden apple in its hand. "Right of Way," and "Let us in," had been written in black on all the pedestals.

"It is a peculiar way of recommending your admission," said Caroline.

"That's Rob's doing," said Allen. "I couldn't look after him while I was gilding the apple or I would have stopped him. He half blacked the little boy on the swan too—"

"And broke the swan's bill off, worse luck," added Johnny.

"Yes," said Allen, "that was altogether low and unlucky! I meant the old fellow simply to have thought that his statue had grown a pair of ears in the night."

"And what would have been the use of that?" said Robin.

"What was the use of all your scrawling," said Allen, "except just to show it was not the natural development of statues."

"Yes," added Bobus, "it all came of you that poor Dickey Bird is suspected and it is all blown up."

"As if he would have thought it was done by nobody," said Rob.

"Why not?" said Jock. "I'm sure I'd never wonder to see ass's ears growing on you. I think they are coming."

There was a shout of laughter as Rob hastily put up his hands to feel for them, adding in his slow, gruff voice—"A statue ain't alive."

"It made a fool of the whole matter," proceeded Bobus. "I wish we'd kept a lout like you out of it."

"Hush, hush, Bobus," put in his mother, "no matter about that. The question is what is to be done about poor Mr. Richards and Alfred."

"Write a poetical letter," said Allen, beginning to extemporise in Hiawatha measure.

"O thou mighty man of money,
Barnes, of Belforest, Esquire,

Innocent is Alfred Richards;
Innocent his honest father;
Innocent as unborn baby
Of development of Midas,
Of the smearing of the Cupid,
Of the fracture of the goose-bill,
Of the writing of the mottoes.
All the Brownlows of St. Kenelm's,
From the Folly and from Kencroft.
Robert, the aspiring soldier,
Robert, too, the sucking chemist,
John, the Skipjack full of mischief,
John, the great originator,
Allen, the—"

"Allen the uncommon gaby," broke in Bobus. "Come, don't waste time, something must be done."

"Yes, a rational letter must be written and signed by you all," said his mother. "The question is whether it would be better to do it through your uncle or Mr. Ogilvie."

"I don't see why my father should hear of it, or Mr. Ogilvie either," growled Rob. "I didn't do those donkeyfied ears."

"You did the writing, which was five hundred times more donkeyfied," said Jock.

"It is quite impossible to keep either of them in ignorance," said Caroline.

"Yes," repeated all her own three; Jock adding "Father would have known it as soon as you, and I don't see that my uncle is

much worse."

"He ain't so soft," exclaimed Johnny, roused to loyal defence of his parent.

"Soft!" cried Jock, indignantly; "I can tell you father did pitch into me when I caught the old lady's bonnet out at the window with a fishing-rod."

"He never flogged you," said Johnny contemptuously.

"He did!" cried Jock, triumphantly. "At least he flogged Bobus, when—"

"Shut up, you little ape," thundered Bobus, not choosing to be offered up to the manes of his father's discipline.

"You think you must explain it to my uncle, mother," said Allen, rather ruefully.

"Certainly. He ought to be told first, and Mr. Ogilvie next. Depend upon it, he will be far less angry if it is freely confessed and put into his hands and what is more important, Mr. Barnes must attend to him, and acquit the Richardses."

The general voice agreed, but Rob writhed and muttered, "Can't you be the one to tell him, Mother Carey?"

"That's cool," said Allen, "to ask her to do what you're afraid of."

"He couldn't do anything to her," said Rob.

However, public opinion went against Rob, and the party of boys dragged him off in their train the less reluctantly that Allen would be spokesman, and he always got on well with his uncle. No one could tell how it was, but the boy had a frank manner,

with a sort of address in the manner of narration, that always went far to disarm displeasure, and protected his comrades as well as himself. So it was that, instead of meeting with unmitigated wrath, the boys found that they were allowed the honours and graces of voluntary confession. Allen even thought that his uncle showed a little veiled appreciation of the joke, but this was not deemed possible by the rest.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.