SECOND SCENE.--THE INN.

CHAPTER THE NINTH. - ANNE.

"YE'LL just permit me to remind ye again, young leddy, that the hottle's full--exceptin' only this settin'-room, and the bedchamber yonder belonging to it."

So spoke "Mistress Inchbare," landlady of the Craig Fernie Inn, to Anne Silvester, standing in the parlor, purse in hand, and offering the price of the two rooms before she claimed permission to occupy them.

The time of the afternoon was about the time when Geoffrey Delamayn had started in the train, on his journey to London. About the time also, when Arnold Brinkworth had crossed the moor, and was mounting the first rising ground which led to the inn.

Mistress Inchbare was tall and thin, and decent and dry. Mistress Inchbare's unlovable hair clung fast round her head in wiry little yellow curls. Mistress Inchbare's hard bones showed themselves, like Mistress Inchbare's hard Presbyterianism, without any concealment or compromise. In short, a savagely-respectable woman who plumed herself on presiding over a savagely-respectable inn.

There was no competition to interfere with Mistress Inchbare. She regulated her own prices, and made her own rules. If you objected to her prices, and revolted from her rules, you were free to go. In other words, you were free to cast yourself, in the capacity of houseless wanderer, on the scanty mercy of a Scotch wilderness. The village of Craig Fernie was a collection of hovels. The country about Craig Fernie, mountain on one side and moor on the other, held no second house of public entertainment, for miles and miles round, at any point of the compass. No rambling individual but the helpless British Tourist wanted food and shelter from strangers in that part of Scotland; and nobody but Mistress Inchbare had food and shelter to sell. A more thoroughly independent person than this was not to be found on the face of the hotel-keeping earth. The most universal of all civilized terrors--the terror of appearing unfavorably in the newspapers--was a sensation absolutely unknown to the Empress of the Inn. You lost your temper, and threatened to send her bill for exhibition in the public journals. Mistress

Inchbare raised no objection to your taking any course you pleased with it. "Eh, man! send the bill whar' ye like, as long as ye pay it first. There's nae such thing as a newspaper ever darkens my doors. Ye've got the Auld and New Testaments in your bedchambers, and the natural history o' Pairthshire on the coffee-room table--and if that's no' reading eneugh for ye, ye may een gae back South again, and get the rest of it there."

This was the inn at which Anne Silvester had appeared alone, with nothing but a little bag in her hand. This was the woman whose reluctance to receive her she innocently expected to overcome by showing her purse.

"Mention your charge for the rooms," she said. "I am willing to pay for them beforehand."

Her majesty, Mrs. Inchbare, never even looked at her subject's poor little purse.

"It just comes to this, mistress," she answered. "I'm no' free to tak' your money, if I'm no' free to let ye the last rooms left in the hoose. The Craig Fernie hottle is a faimily hottle--and has its ain gude name to keep up. Ye're ower-well-looking, my young leddy, to be traveling alone."

The time had been when Anne would have answered sharply enough. The hard necessities of her position made her patient now.

"I have already told you," she said, "my husband is coming here to join me." She sighed wearily as she repeated her ready-made story--and dropped into the nearest chair, from sheer inability to stand any longer.

Mistress Inchbare looked at her, with the exact measure of compassionate interest which she might have shown if she had been looking at a stray dog who had fallen footsore at the door of the inn.

"Weel! weel! sae let it be. Bide awhile, and rest ye. We'll no' chairge ye for that--and we'll see if your husband comes. I'll just let the rooms, mistress, to him,, instead o' lettin' them to you. And, sae, good-morrow t' ye." With that final announcement of her royal will and pleasure, the Empress of the Inn withdrew.

Anne made no reply. She watched the landlady out of the room--and then struggled to control herself no longer. In her position, suspicion was doubly insult. The hot tears of shame gathered in her eyes; and the heart-ache wrung her, poor soul--wrung her without mercy.

A trifling noise in the room startled her. She looked up, and detected a man in a corner, dusting the furniture, and apparently acting in the capacity of attendant at the inn. He had shown her into the parlor on her arrival; but he had remained so quietly in the room that she had never noticed him since, until that moment.

He was an ancient man--with one eye filmy and blind, and one eye moist and merry. His head was bald; his feet were gouty; his nose was justly celebrated as the largest nose and the reddest nose in that part of Scotland. The mild wisdom of years was expressed mysteriously in his mellow smile. In contact with this wicked world, his manner revealed that happy mixture of two extremes--the servility which just touches independence, and the independence which just touches servility--attained by no men in existence but Scotchmen. Enormous native impudence, which amused but never offended; immeasurable cunning, masquerading habitually under the double disguise of quaint prejudice and dry humor, were the solid moral foundations on which the character of this elderly person was built. No amount of whisky ever made him drunk; and no violence of bell-ringing ever hurried his movements. Such was the headwaiter at the Craig Fernie Inn; known, far and wide, to local fame, as "Maister Bishopriggs, Mistress Inchbare's right-hand man."

"What are you doing there?" Anne asked, sharply.

Mr. Bishopriggs turned himself about on his gouty feet; waved his duster gently in the air; and looked at Anne, with a mild, paternal smile.

"Eh! Am just doostin' the things; and setin' the room in decent order for ye."

"For me? Did you hear what the landlady said?"

Mr. Bishopriggs advanced confidentially, and pointed with a very unsteady forefinger to the purse which Anne still held in her hand.

"Never fash yoursel' aboot the landleddy!" said the sage chief of the Craig Fernie waiters. "Your purse speaks for you, my lassie. Pet it up!" cried Mr. Bishopriggs, waving temptation away from him with the duster. "In wi' it into yer pocket! Sae long as the warld's the warld, I'll uphaud it any where--while there's siller in the purse, there's gude in the woman!"

Anne's patience, which had resisted harder trials, gave way at this.

"What do you mean by speaking to me in that familiar manner?" she asked, rising angrily to her feet again.

Mr. Bishopriggs tucked his duster under his arm, and proceeded to satisfy Anne that he shared the landlady's view of her position, without sharing the severity of the landlady's principles. "There's nae man livin'," said Mr. Bishopriggs, "looks with mair indulgence at human frailty than my ain sel'. Am I no' to be familiar wi' ye--when I'm auld eneugh to be a fether to ye, and ready to be a fether to ye till further notice? Hech! hech! Order your bit dinner lassie. Husband or no husband, ye've got a stomach, and ye must een eat. There's fesh and there's fowl--or, maybe, ye'll be for the sheep's head singit, when they've done with it at the tabble dot?"

There was but one way of getting rid of him: "Order what you like," Anne said, "and leave the room." Mr. Bishopriggs highly approved of the first half of the sentence, and totally overlooked the second.

"Ay, ay--just pet a' yer little interests in my hands; it's the wisest thing ye can do. Ask for Maister Bishopriggs (that's me) when ye want a decent 'sponsible man to gi' ye a word of advice. Set ye doon again--set ye doon. And don't tak' the arm-chair. Hech! hech! yer husband will be coming, ye know, and he's sure to want it!" With that seasonable pleasantry the venerable Bishopriggs winked, and went out.

Anne looked at her watch. By her calculation it was not far from the hour when Geoffrey might be expected to arrive at the inn, assuming Geoffrey to have left Windygates at the time agreed on. A little more patience, and the landlady's scruples would be satisfied, and the ordeal would be at an end.

Could she have met him nowhere else than at this barbarous house, and among these barbarous people?

No. Outside the doors of Windygates she had not a friend to help her in all Scotland. There was no place at her disposal but the inn; and she had only to be thankful that it occupied a sequestered situation, and was not likely to be visited by any of Lady Lundie's friends. Whatever the risk might be, the end in view justified her in confronting it. Her whole future depended on Geoffrey's making an honest woman of her. Not her future with him--that way there was no hope; that way her life was wasted. Her future with Blanche--she looked forward to nothing now but her future with Blanche.

Her spirits sank lower and lower. The tears rose again. It would only irritate him if he came and found her crying. She tried to divert her mind by looking

about the room.

There was very little to see. Except that it was solidly built of good sound stone, the Craig Fernie hotel differed in no other important respect from the average of second-rate English inns. There was the usual slippery black sofa--constructed to let you slide when you wanted to rest. There was the usual highly-varnished arm-chair, expressly manufactured to test the endurance of the human spine. There was the usual paper on the walls, of the pattern designed to make your eyes ache and your head giddy. There were the usual engravings, which humanity never tires of contemplating. The Royal Portrait, in the first place of honor. The next greatest of all human beings--the Duke of Wellington--in the second place of honor. The third greatest of all human beings--the local member of parliament--in the third place of honor; and a hunting scene, in the dark. A door opposite the door of admission from the passage opened into the bedroom; and a window at the side looked out on the open space in front of the hotel, and commanded a view of the vast expanse of the Craig Fernie moor, stretching away below the rising ground on which the house was built.

Anne turned in despair from the view in the room to the view from the window. Within the last half hour it had changed for the worse. The clouds had gathered; the sun was hidden; the light on the landscape was gray and dull. Anne turned from the window, as she had turned from the room. She was just making the hopeless attempt to rest her weary limbs on the sofa, when the sound of voices and footsteps in the passage caught her ear.

Was Geoffrey's voice among them? No.

Were the strangers coming in?

The landlady had declined to let her have the rooms: it was quite possible that the strangers might be coming to look at them. There was no knowing who they might be. In the impulse of the moment she flew to the bedchamber and locked herself in.

The door from the passage opened, and Arnold Brinkworth--shown in by Mr. Bishopriggs--entered the sitting-room.

"Nobody here!" exclaimed Arnold, looking round. "Where is she?"

Mr. Bishopriggs pointed to the bedroom door. "Eh! yer good leddy's joost in the bedchamber, nae doot!"

Arnold started. He had felt no difficulty (when he and Geoffrey had discussed the question at Windygates) about presenting himself at the inn in the assumed character of Anne's husband. But the result of putting the deception in practice was, to say the least of it, a little embarrassing at first. Here was the waiter describing Miss Silvester as his "good lady;" and leaving it (most naturally and properly) to the "good lady's" husband to knock at her bedroom door, and tell her that he was there. In despair of knowing what else to do at the moment, Arnold asked for the landlady, whom he had not seen on arriving at the inn.

"The landleddy's just tottin' up the ledgers o' the hottle in her ain room," answered Mr. Bishopriggs. "She'll be here anon--the wearyful woman!--speerin' who ye are and what ye are, and takin' a' the business o' the hoose on her ain pair o' shouthers." He dropped the subject of the landlady, and put in a plea for himself. "I ha' lookit after a' the leddy's little comforts, Sir," he whispered. "Trust in me! trust in me!"

Arnold's attention was absorbed in the very serious difficulty of announcing his arrival to Anne. "How am I to get her out?" he said to himself, with a look of perplexity directed at the bedroom door.

He had spoken loud enough for the waiter to hear him. Arnold's look of perplexity was instantly reflected on the face of Mr. Bishopriggs. The head-waiter at Craig Fernie possessed an immense experience of the manners and customs of newly-married people on their honeymoon trip. He had been a second father (with excellent pecuniary results) to innumerable brides and bridegrooms. He knew young married couples in all their varieties:--The couples who try to behave as if they had been married for many years; the couples who attempt no concealment, and take advice from competent authorities about them. The couples who are bashfully talkative before third persons; the couples who are bashfully silent under similar circumstances. The couples who don't know what to do, the couples who wish it was over; the couples who must never be intruded upon without careful preliminary knocking at the door; the couples who can eat and drink in the intervals of "bliss," and the other couples who can't. But the bridegroom who stood helpless on one side of the door, and the bride who remained locked in on the other, were new varieties of the nuptial species, even in the vast experience of Mr. Bishopriggs himself.

"Hoo are ye to get her oot?" he repeated. "I'll show ye hoo!" He advanced as rapidly as his gouty feet would let him, and knocked at the bedroom door. "Eh, my leddy! here he is in flesh and bluid. Mercy preserve us! do ye lock the door of the nuptial chamber in your husband's face?"

At that unanswerable appeal the lock was heard turning in the door. Mr. Bishopriggs winked at Arnold with his one available eye, and laid his forefinger knowingly along his enormous nose. "I'm away before she falls into your arms! Rely on it I'll no come in again without knocking first!"

He left Arnold alone in the room. The bedroom door opened slowly by a few inches at a time. Anne's voice was just audible speaking cautiously behind it.

"Is that you, Geoffrey?"

Arnold's heart began to beat fast, in anticipation of the disclosure which was now close at hand. He knew neither what to say or do--he remained silent.

Anne repeated the question in louder tones:

"Is that you?"

There was the certain prospect of alarming her, if some reply was not given. There was no help for it. Come what come might, Arnold answered, in a whisper:

"Yes."

The door was flung wide open. Anne Silvester appeared on the threshold, confronting him.

"Mr. Brinkworth!!!" she exclaimed, standing petrified with astonishment.

For a moment more neither of them spoke. Anne advanced one step into the sitting-room, and put the next inevitable question, with an instantaneous change from surprise to suspicion.

"What do you want here?"

Geoffrey's letter represented the only possible excuse for Arnold's appearance in that place, and at that time.

"I have got a letter for you," he said--and offered it to her.

She was instantly on her guard. They were little better than strangers to each other, as Arnold had said. A sickening presentiment of some treachery

on Geoffrey's part struck cold to her heart. She refused to take the letter.

"I expect no letter," she said. "Who told you I was here?" She put the question, not only with a tone of suspicion, but with a look of contempt. The look was not an easy one for a man to bear. It required a momentary exertion of self-control on Arnold's part, before he could trust himself to answer with due consideration for her. "Is there a watch set on my actions?" she went on, with rising anger. "And are you the spy?"

"You haven't known me very long, Miss Silvester," Arnold answered, quietly. "But you ought to know me better than to say that. I am the bearer of a letter from Geoffrey."

She was an the point of following his example, and of speaking of Geoffrey by his Christian name, on her side. But she checked herself, before the word had passed her lips.

"Do you mean Mr. Delamayn?" she asked, coldly.

"Yes."

"What occasion have I for a letter from Mr. Delamayn?"

She was determined to acknowledge nothing--she kept him obstinately at arm's-length. Arnold did, as a matter of instinct, what a man of larger experience would have done, as a matter of calculation--he closed with her boldly, then and there.

"Miss Silvester! it's no use beating about the bush. If you won't take the letter, you force me to speak out. I am here on a very unpleasant errand. I begin to wish, from the bottom of my heart, I had never undertaken it."

A quick spasm of pain passed across her face. She was beginning, dimly beginning, to understand him. He hesitated. His generous nature shrank from hurting her.

"Go on," she said, with an effort.

"Try not to be angry with me, Miss Silvester. Geoffrey and I are old friends. Geoffrey knows he can trust me--"

"Trust you?" she interposed. "Stop!"

Arnold waited. She went on, speaking to herself, not to him.

"When I was in the other room I asked if Geoffrey was there. And this man answered for him." She sprang forward with a cry of horror.

"Has he told you--"

"For God's sake, read his letter!"

She violently pushed back the hand with which Arnold once more offered the letter. "You don't look at me! He has told you!"

"Read his letter," persisted Arnold. "In justice to him, if you won't in justice to me."

The situation was too painful to be endured. Arnold looked at her, this time, with a man's resolution in his eyes--spoke to her, this time, with a man's resolution in his voice. She took the letter.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," she said, with a sudden humiliation of tone and manner, inexpressibly shocking, inexpressibly pitiable to see. "I understand my position at last. I am a woman doubly betrayed. Please to excuse what I said to you just now, when I supposed myself to have some claim on your respect. Perhaps you will grant me your pity? I can ask for nothing more."

Arnold was silent. Words were useless in the face of such utter self-abandonment as this. Any man living--even Geoffrey himself--must have felt for her at that moment.

She looked for the first time at the letter. She opened it on the wrong side. "My own letter!" she said to herself. "In the hands of another man!"

"Look at the last page," said Arnold.

She turned to the last page, and read the hurried penciled lines. "Villain! villain! villain!" At the third repetition of the word, she crushed the letter in the palm of her hand, and flung it from her to the other end of the room. The instant after, the fire that had flamed up in her died out. Feebly and slowly she reached out her hand to the nearest chair, and sat down in it with her back to Arnold. "He has deserted me!" was all she said. The words fell low and quiet on the silence: they were the utterance of an immeasurable despair.

"You are wrong!" exclaimed Arnold. "Indeed, indeed you are wrong! It's no excuse--it's the truth. I was present when the message came about his father."

She never heeded him, and never moved. She only repeated the words

"He has deserted me!"

"Don't take it in that way!" pleaded Arnold--"pray don't! It's dreadful to hear you; it is indeed. I am sure he has not deserted you." There was no answer; no sign that she heard him; she sat there, struck to stone. It was impossible to call the landlady in at such a moment as this. In despair of knowing how else to rouse her, Arnold drew a chair to her side, and patted her timidly on the shoulder. "Come!" he said, in his single-hearted, boyish way. "Cheer up a little!"

She slowly turned her head, and looked at him with a dull surprise.

"Didn't you say he had told you every thing?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Don't you despise a woman like me?"

Arnold's heart went back, at that dreadful question, to the one woman who was eternally sacred to him--to the woman from whose bosom he had drawn the breath of life.

"Does the man live," he said, "who can think of his mother--and despise women?"

That answer set the prisoned misery in her free. She gave him her hand--she faintly thanked him. The merciful tears came to her at last.

Arnold rose, and turned away to the window in despair. "I mean well," he said. "And yet I only distress her!"

She heard him, and straggled to compose herself "No," she answered, "you comfort me. Don't mind my crying--I'm the better for it." She looked round at him gratefully. "I won't distress you, Mr. Brinkworth. I ought to thank you--and I do. Come back or I shall think you are angry with me." Arnold went back to her. She gave him her hand once more. "One doesn't understand people all at once," she said, simply. "I thought you were like

other men--I didn't know till to-day how kind you could be. Did you walk here?" she added, suddenly, with an effort to change the subject. "Are you tired? I have not been kindly received at this place--but I'm sure I may offer you whatever the inn affords."

It was impossible not to feel for her--it was impossible not to be interested in her. Arnold's honest longing to help her expressed itself a little too openly when he spoke next. "All I want, Miss Silvester, is to be of some service to you, if I can," he said. "Is there any thing I can do to make your position here more comfortable? You will stay at this place, won't you? Geoffrey wishes it."

She shuddered, and looked away. "Yes! yes!" she answered, hurriedly.

"You will hear from Geoffrey," Arnold went on, "to-morrow or next day. I know he means to write."

"For Heaven's sake, don't speak of him any more!" she cried out. "How do you think I can look you in the face--" Her cheeks flushed deep, and her eyes rested on him with a momentary firmness. "Mind this! I am his wife, if promises can make me his wife! He has pledged his word to me by all that is sacred!" She checked herself impatiently. "What am I saying? What interest can you have in this miserable state of things? Don't let us talk of it! I have something else to say to you. Let us go back to my troubles here. Did you see the landlady when you came in?"

"No. I only saw the waiter."

"The landlady has made some absurd difficulty about letting me have these rooms because I came here alone."

"She won't make any difficulty now," said Arnold. "I have settled that."

"You!"

Arnold smiled. After what had passed, it was an indescribable relief to him to see the humorous side of his own position at the inn.

"Certainly," he answered. "When I asked for the lady who had arrived here alone this afternoon--"

"Yes."

"I was told, in your interests, to ask for her as my wife."

Anne looked at him--in alarm as well as in surprise.

"You asked for me as your wife?" she repeated.

"Yes. I haven't done wrong--have I? As I understood it, there was no alternative. Geoffrey told me you had settled with him to present yourself here as a married lady, whose husband was coming to join her."

"I thought of him when I said that. I never thought of you."

"Natural enough. Still, it comes to the same thing (doesn't it?) with the people of this house."

"I don't understand you."

"I will try and explain myself a little better. Geoffrey said your position here depended on my asking for you at the door (as he would have asked for you if he had come) in the character of your husband."

"He had no right to say that."

"No right? After what you have told me of the landlady, just think what might have happened if he had not said it! I haven't had much experience myself of these things. But--allow me to ask--wouldn't it have been a little awkward (at my age) if I had come here and inquired for you as a friend? Don't you think, in that case, the landlady might have made some additional difficulty about letting you have the rooms?"

It was beyond dispute that the landlady would have refused to let the rooms at all. It was equally plain that the deception which Arnold had practiced on the people of the inn was a deception which Anne had herself rendered necessary, in her own interests. She was not to blame; it was clearly impossible for her to have foreseen such an event as Geoffrey's departure for London. Still, she felt an uneasy sense of responsibility--a vague dread of what might happen next. She sat nervously twisting her handkerchief in her lap, and made no answer.

"Don't suppose I object to this little stratagem," Arnold went on. "I am serving my old friend, and I am helping the lady who is soon to be his wife."

Anne rose abruptly to her feet, and amazed him by a very unexpected

question.

"Mr. Brinkworth," she said, "forgive me the rudeness of something I am about to say to you. When are you going away?"

Arnold burst out laughing.

"When I am quite sure I can do nothing more to assist you," he answered.

"Pray don't think of me any longer."

"In your situation! who else am I to think of?"

Anne laid her hand earnestly on his arm, and answered:

"Blanche!"

"Blanche?" repeated Arnold, utterly at a loss to understand her.

"Yes--Blanche. She found time to tell me what had passed between you this morning before I left Windygates. I know you have made her an offer: I know you are engaged to be married to her."

Arnold was delighted to hear it. He had been merely unwilling to leave her thus far. He was absolutely determined to stay with her now.

"Don't expect me to go after that!" he said. "Come and sit down again, and let's talk about Blanche."

Anne declined impatiently, by a gesture. Arnold was too deeply interested in the new topic to take any notice of it.

"You know all about her habits and her tastes," he went on, "and what she likes, and what she dislikes. It's most important that I should talk to you about her. When we are husband and wife, Blanche is to have all her own way in every thing. That's my idea of the Whole Duty of Man--when Man is married. You are still standing? Let me give you a chair."

It was cruel--under other circumstances it would have been impossible--to disappoint him. But the vague fear of consequences which had taken possession of Anne was not to be trifled with. She had no clear conception of the risk (and it is to be added, in justice to Geoffrey, that he had no clear conception of the risk) on which Arnold had unconsciously ventured, in

undertaking his errand to the inn. Neither of them had any adequate idea (few people have) of the infamous absence of all needful warning, of all decent precaution and restraint, which makes the marriage law of Scotland a trap to catch unmarried men and women, to this day. But, while Geoffrey's mind was incapable of looking beyond the present emergency, Anne's finer intelligence told her that a country which offered such facilities for private marriage as the facilities of which she had proposed to take advantage in her own case, was not a country in which a man could act as Arnold had acted, without danger of some serious embarrassment following as the possible result. With this motive to animate her, she resolutely declined to take the offered chair, or to enter into the proposed conversation.

"Whatever we have to say about Blanche, Mr. Brinkworth, must be said at some fitter time. I beg you will leave me."

"Leave you!"

"Yes. Leave me to the solitude that is best for me, and to the sorrow that I have deserved. Thank you--and good-by."

Arnold made no attempt to disguise his disappointment and surprise.

"If I must go, I must," he said, "But why are you in such a hurry?"

"I don't want you to call me your wife again before the people of this inn."

"Is that all? What on earth are you afraid of?"

She was unable fully to realize her own apprehensions. She was doubly unable to express them in words. In her anxiety to produce some reason which might prevail on him to go, she drifted back into that very conversation about Blanche into which she had declined to enter but the moment before.

"I have reasons for being afraid," she said. "One that I can't give; and one that I can. Suppose Blanche heard of what you have done? The longer you stay here--the more people you see--the more chance there is that she might hear of it."

"And what if she did?" asked Arnold, in his own straightforward way. "Do you think she would be angry with me for making myself useful to you?"

"Yes," rejoined Anne, sharply, "if she was jealous of me."

Arnold's unlimited belief in Blanche expressed itself, without the slightest compromise, in two words:

"That's impossible!"

Anxious as she was, miserable as she was, a faint smile flitted over Anne's face.

"Sir Patrick would tell you, Mr. Brinkworth, that nothing is impossible where women are concerned." She dropped her momentary lightness of tone, and went on as earnestly as ever. "You can't put yourself in Blanche's place--I can. Once more, I beg you to go. I don't like your coming here, in this way! I don't like it at all!"

She held out her hand to take leave. At the same moment there was a loud knock at the door of the room.

Anne sank into the chair at her side, and uttered a faint cry of alarm. Arnold, perfectly impenetrable to all sense of his position, asked what there was to frighten her--and answered the knock in the two customary words:

"Come in!"

CHAPTER THE TENTH. - MR. BISHOPRIGGS.

THE knock at the door was repeated--a louder knock than before.

"Are you deaf?" shouted Arnold.

The door opened, little by little, an inch at a time. Mr. Bishopriggs appeared mysteriously, with the cloth for dinner over his arm, and with his second in command behind him, bearing "the furnishing of the table" (as it was called at Craig Fernie) on a tray.

"What the deuce were you waiting for?" asked Arnold. "I told you to come in."

"And I tauld you," answered Mr. Bishopriggs, "that I wadna come in without knocking first. Eh, man!" he went on, dismissing his second in command, and laying the cloth with his own venerable hands, "d'ye think I've lived in this hottle in blinded eegnorance of hoo young married couples pass the time when they're left to themselves? Twa knocks at the door--and an unco trouble in opening it, after that--is joost the least ye can do for them! Whar' do ye think, noo, I'll set the places for you and your leddy there?"

Anne walked away to the window, in undisguised disgust. Arnold found Mr. Bishopriggs to be quite irresistible. He answered, humoring the joke,

"One at the top and one at the bottom of the table, I suppose?"

"One at tap and one at bottom?" repeated Mr. Bishopriggs, in high disdain. "De'il a bit of it! Baith yer chairs as close together as chairs can be. Hech! hech!--haven't I caught 'em, after goodness knows hoo many preleeminary knocks at the door, dining on their husbands' knees, and steemulating a man's appetite by feeding him at the fork's end like a child? Eh!" sighed the sage of Craig Fernie, "it's a short life wi' that nuptial business, and a merry one! A mouth for yer billin' and cooin'; and a' the rest o' yer days for wondering ye were ever such a fule, and wishing it was a' to be done ower again.--Ye'll be for a bottle o' sherry wine, nae doot? and a drap toddy afterwards, to do yer digestin' on?"

Arnold nodded--and then, in obedience to a signal from Anne, joined her at the window. Mr. Bishopriggs looked after them attentively--observed that they were talking in whispers--and approved of that proceeding, as

representing another of the established customs of young married couples at inns, in the presence of third persons appointed to wait on them.

"Ay! ay!" he said, looking over his shoulder at Arnold, "gae to your deerie! gae to your deerie! and leave a' the solid business o' life to Me. Ye've Screepture warrant for it. A man maun leave fether and mother (I'm yer fether), and cleave to his wife. My certie! 'cleave' is a strong word--there's nae sort o' doot aboot it, when it comes to 'cleaving!'" He wagged his head thoughtfully, and walked to the side-table in a corner, to cut the bread.

As he took up the knife, his one wary eye detected a morsel of crumpled paper, lying lost between the table and the wall. It was the letter from Geoffrey, which Anne had flung from her, in the first indignation of reading it--and which neither she nor Arnold had thought of since.

"What's that I see yonder?" muttered Mr. Bishopriggs, under his breath. "Mair litter in the room, after I've doosted and tidied it wi' my ain hands!"

He picked up the crumpled paper, and partly opened it. "Eh! what's here? Writing on it in ink? and writing on it in pencil? Who may this belong to?" He looked round cautiously toward Arnold and Anne. They were both still talking in whispers, and both standing with their backs to him, looking out of the window. "Here it is, clean forgotten and dune with!" thought Mr. Bishopriggs. "Noo what would a fule do, if he fund this? A fule wad light his pipe wi' it, and then wonder whether he wadna ha' dune better to read it first. And what wad a wise man do, in a seemilar position?" He practically answered that question by putting the letter into his pocket. It might be worth keeping, or it might not; five minutes' private examination of it would decide the alternative, at the first convenient opportunity. "Am gaun' to breeng the dinner in!" he called out to Arnold. "And, mind ye, there's nae knocking at the door possible, when I've got the tray in baith my hands, and mairs the pity, the gout in baith my feet." With that friendly warning, Mr. Bishopriggs went his way to the regions of the kitchen.

Arnold continued his conversation with Anne in terms which showed that the question of his leaving the inn had been the question once more discussed between them while they were standing at the window.

"You see we can't help it," he said. "The waiter has gone to bring the dinner in. What will they think in the house, if I go away already, and leave 'my wife' to dine alone?"

It was so plainly necessary to keep up appearances for the present, that

there was nothing more to be said. Arnold was committing a serious imprudence--and yet, on this occasion, Arnold was right. Anne's annoyance at feeling that conclusion forced on her produced the first betrayal of impatience which she had shown yet. She left Arnold at the window, and flung herself on the sofa. "A curse seems to follow me!" she thought, bitterly. "This will end ill--and I shall be answerable for it!"

In the mean time Mr. Bishopriggs had found the dinner in the kitchen, ready, and waiting for him. Instead of at once taking the tray on which it was placed into the sitting-room, he conveyed it privately into his own pantry, and shut the door.

"Lie ye there, my freend, till the spare moment comes--and I'll look at ye again," he said, putting the letter away carefully in the dresser-drawer. "Noo aboot the dinner o' they twa turtle-doves in the parlor?" he continued, directing his attention to the dinner tray. "I maun joost see that the cook's 's dune her duty--the creatures are no' capable o' decidin' that knotty point for their ain selves." He took off one of the covers, and picked bits, here and there, out of the dish with the fork, "Eh! eh! the collops are no' that bad!" He took off another cover, and shook his head in solemn doubt. "Here's the green meat. I doot green meat's windy diet for a man at my time o' life!" He put the cover on again, and tried the next dish. "The fesh? What the de'il does the woman fry the trout for? Boil it next time, ye betch, wi' a pinch o' saut and a spunefu' o' vinegar." He drew the cork from a bottle of sherry, and decanted the wine. "The sherry wine?" he said, in tones of deep feeling, holding the decanter up to the light. "Hoo do I know but what it may be corkit? I maun taste and try. It's on my conscience, as an honest man, to taste and try." He forthwith relieved his conscience--copiously. There was a vacant space, of no inconsiderable dimensions, left in the decanter. Mr. Bishopriggs gravely filled it up from the water-bottle. "Eh! it's joost addin' ten years to the age o' the wine. The turtle-doves will be nane the waur--and I mysel' am a glass o' sherry the better. Praise Providence for a' its maircies!" Having relieved himself of that devout aspiration, he took up the tray again, and decided on letting the turtle-doves have their dinner.

The conversation in the parlor (dropped for the moment) had been renewed, in the absence of Mr. Bishopriggs. Too restless to remain long in one place, Anne had risen again from the sofa, and had rejoined Arnold at the window.

"Where do your friends at Lady Lundie's believe you to be now?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am believed," replied Arnold, "to be meeting my tenants, and taking

possession of my estate."

"How are you to get to your estate to-night?"

"By railway, I suppose. By-the-by, what excuse am I to make for going away after dinner? We are sure to have the landlady in here before long. What will she say to my going off by myself to the train, and leaving 'my wife' behind me?"

"Mr. Brinkworth! that joke--if it is a joke--is worn out!"

"I beg your pardon," said Arnold.

"You may leave your excuse to me," pursued Anne. "Do you go by the up train, or the down?"

"By the up train."

The door opened suddenly; and Mr. Bishopriggs appeared with the dinner. Anne nervously separated herself from Arnold. The one available eye of Mr. Bishopriggs followed her reproachfully, as he put the dishes on the table.

"I warned ye baith, it was a clean impossibility to knock at the door this time. Don't blame me, young madam--don't blame me!"

"Where will you sit?" asked Arnold, by way of diverting Anne's attention from the familiarities of Father Bishopriggs.

"Any where!" she answered, impatiently; snatching up a chair, and placing it at the bottom of the table.

Mr. Bishopriggs politely, but firmly, put the chair back again in its place.

"Lord's sake! what are ye doin'? It's clean contrary to a' the laws and customs o' the honey-mune, to sit as far away from your husband as that!"

He waved his persuasive napkin to one of the two chairs placed close together at the table.

Arnold interfered once more, and prevented another outbreak of impatience from Anne.

"What does it matter?" he said. "Let the man have his way."

"Get it over as soon as you can," she returned. "I can't, and won't, bear it much longer."

They took their places at the table, with Father Bishopriggs behind them, in the mixed character of major domo and guardian angel.

"Here's the trout!" he cried, taking the cover off with a flourish. "Half an hour since, he was loupin' in the water. There he lies noo, fried in the dish. An emblem o' human life for ye! When ye can spare any leisure time from yer twa selves, meditate on that."

Arnold took up the spoon, to give Anne one of the trout. Mr. Bishopriggs clapped the cover on the dish again, with a countenance expressive of devout horror.

"Is there naebody gaun' to say grace?" he asked.

"Come! come!" said Arnold. "The fish is getting cold."

Mr. Bishopriggs piously closed his available eye, and held the cover firmly on the dish. "For what ye're gaun' to receive, may ye baith be truly thankful!" He opened his available eye, and whipped the cover off again. "My conscience is easy noo. Fall to! Fall to!"

"Send him away!" said Anne. "His familiarity is beyond all endurance."

"You needn't wait," said Arnold.

"Eh! but I'm here to wait," objected Mr. Bishopriggs. "What's the use o' my gaun' away, when ye'll want me anon to change the plates for ye?" He considered for a moment (privately consulting his experience) and arrived at a satisfactory conclusion as to Arnold's motive for wanting to get rid of him. "Tak' her on yer knee," he whispered in Arnold's ear, "as soon as ye like! Feed him at the fork's end," he added to Anne, "whenever ye please! I'll think of something else, and look out at the proaspect." He winked--and went to the window.

"Come! come!" said Arnold to Anne. "There's a comic side to all this. Try and see it as I do."

Mr. Bishopriggs returned from the window, and announced the appearance of a new element of embarrassment in the situation at the inn.

"My certie!" he said, "it's weel ye cam' when ye did. It's ill getting to this hottle in a storm."

Anne started and looked round at him. "A storm coming!" she exclaimed.

"Eh! ye're well hoosed here--ye needn't mind it. There's the cloud down the valley," he added, pointing out of the window, "coming up one way, when the wind's blawing the other. The storm's brewing, my leddy, when ye see that!"

There was another knock at the door. As Arnold had predicted, the landlady made her appearance on the scene.

"I ha' just lookit in, Sir," said Mrs. Inchbare, addressing herself exclusively to Arnold, "to see ye've got what ye want."

"Oh! you are the landlady? Very nice, ma'am--very nice."

Mistress Inchbare had her own private motive for entering the room, and came to it without further preface.

"Ye'll excuse me, Sir," she proceeded. "I wasna in the way when ye cam' here, or I suld ha' made bauld to ask ye the question which I maun e'en ask noo. Am I to understand that ye hire these rooms for yersel', and this leddy here--yer wife?"

Anne raised her head to speak. Arnold pressed her hand warningly, under the table, and silenced her.

"Certainly," he said. "I take the rooms for myself, and this lady here--my wife!"

Anne made a second attempt to speak.

"This gentleman--" she began.

Arnold stopped her for the second time.

"This gentleman?" repeated Mrs. Inchbare, with a broad stare of surprise. "I'm only a puir woman, my leddy--d'ye mean yer husband here?"

Arnold's warning hand touched Anne's, for the third time. Mistress Inchbare's eyes remained fixed on her in merciless inquiry. To have given

utterance to the contradiction which trembled on her lips would have been to involve Arnold (after all that he had sacrificed for her) in the scandal which would inevitably follow--a scandal which would be talked of in the neighborhood, and which might find its way to Blanche's ears. White and cold, her eyes never moving from the table, she accepted the landlady's implied correction, and faintly repeated the words: "My husband."

Mistress Inchbare drew a breath of virtuous relief, and waited for what Anne had to say next. Arnold came considerately to the rescue, and got her out of the room.

"Never mind," he said to Anne; "I know what it is, and I'll see about it. She's always like this, ma'am, when a storm's coming," he went on, turning to the landlady. "No, thank you--I know how to manage her. Well send to you, if we want your assistance."

"At yer ain pleasure, Sir," answered Mistress Inchbare. She turned, and apologized to Anne (under protest), with a stiff courtesy. "No offense, my leddy! Ye'll remember that ye cam' here alane, and that the hottle has its ain gude name to keep up." Having once more vindicated "the hottle," she made the long-desired move to the door, and left the room.

"I'm faint!" Anne whispered. "Give me some water."

There was no water on the table. Arnold ordered it of Mr. Bishopriggs--who had remained passive in the back-ground (a model of discreet attention) as long as the mistress was in the room.

"Mr. Brinkworth!" said Anne, when they were alone, "you are acting with inexcusable rashness. That woman's question was an impertinence. Why did you answer it? Why did you force me--?"

She stopped, unable to finish the sentence. Arnold insisted on her drinking a glass of wine--and then defended himself with the patient consideration for her which he had shown from the first.

"Why didn't I have the inn door shut in your face"--he asked, good humoredly--"with a storm coming on, and without a place in which you can take refuge? No, no, Miss Silvester! I don't presume to blame you for any scruples you may feel--but scruples are sadly out of place with such a woman as that landlady. I am responsible for your safety to Geoffrey; and Geoffrey expects to find you here. Let's change the subject. The water is a long time coming. Try another glass of wine. No? Well--here is Blanche's

health" (he took some of the wine himself), "in the weakest sherry I ever drank in my life." As he set down his glass, Mr. Bishopriggs came in with the water. Arnold hailed him satirically. "Well? have you got the water? or have you used it all for the sherry?"

Mr. Bishopriggs stopped in the middle of the room, thunder-struck at the aspersion cast on the wine.

"Is that the way ye talk of the auldest bottle o' sherry wine in Scotland?" he asked, gravely. "What's the warld coming to? The new generation's a foot beyond my fathoming. The maircies o' Providence, as shown to man in the choicest veentages o' Spain, are clean thrown away on 'em."

"Have you brought the water?"

"I ha' brought the water--and mair than the water. I ha' brought ye news from ootside. There's a company o' gentlemen on horseback, joost cantering by to what they ca' the shootin' cottage, a mile from this."

"Well--and what have we got to do with it?"

"Bide a wee! There's ane o' them has drawn bridle at the hottle, and he's speerin' after the leddy that cam' here alane. The leddy's your leddy, as sure as saxpence. I doot," said Mr. Bishopriggs, walking away to the window, "that's what ye've got to do with it."

Arnold looked at Anne.

"Do you expect any body?"

"Is it Geoffrey?"

"Impossible. Geoffrey is on his way to London."

"There he is, any way," resumed Mr. Bishopriggs, at the window. "He's loupin' down from his horse. He's turning this way. Lord save us!" he exclaimed, with a start of consternation, "what do I see? That incarnate deevil, Sir Paitrick himself!"

Arnold sprang to his feet.

"Do you mean Sir Patrick Lundie?"

Anne ran to the window.

"It is Sir Patrick!" she said. "Hide yourself before he comes in!"

"Hide myself?"

"What will he think if he sees you with me?"

He was Blanche's guardian, and he believed Arnold to be at that moment visiting his new property. What he would think was not difficult to foresee. Arnold turned for help to Mr. Bishopriggs.

"Where can I go?"

Mr. Bishopriggs pointed to the bedroom door.

"Whar' can ye go? There's the nuptial chamber!"

"Impossible!"

Mr. Bishopriggs expressed the utmost extremity of human amazement by a long whistle, on one note.

"Whew! Is that the way ye talk o' the nuptial chamber already?"

"Find me some other place--I'll make it worth your while."

"Eh! there's my paintry! I trow that's some other place; and the door's at the end o' the passage."

Arnold hurried out. Mr. Bishopriggs--evidently under the impression that the case before him was a case of elopement, with Sir Patrick mixed up in it in the capacity of guardian--addressed himself, in friendly confidence, to Anne.

"My certie, mistress! it's ill wark deceivin' Sir Paitrick, if that's what ye've dune. Ye must know, I was ance a bit clerk body in his chambers at Embro--"

The voice of Mistress Inchbare, calling for the head-waiter, rose shrill and imperative from the regions of the bar. Mr. Bishopriggs disappeared. Anne remained, standing helpless by the window. It was plain by this time that the place of her retreat had been discovered at Windygates. The one doubt to

decide, now, was whether it would be wise or not to receive Sir Patrick, for the purpose of discovering whether he came as friend or enemy to the inn.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH. - SIR PATRICK.

THE doubt was practically decided before Anne had determined what to do. She was still at the window when the sitting-room door was thrown open, and Sir Patrick appeared, obsequiously shown in by Mr. Bishopriggs.

"Ye're kindly welcome, Sir Paitrick. Hech, Sirs! the sight of you is gude for sair eyne."

Sir Patrick turned and looked at Mr. Bishopriggs--as he might have looked at some troublesome insect which he had driven out of the window, and which had returned on him again.

"What, you scoundrel! have you drifted into an honest employment at last?"

Mr. Bishopriggs rubbed his hands cheerfully, and took his tone from his superior, with supple readiness,

"Ye're always in the right of it, Sir Paitrick! Wut, raal wut in that aboot the honest employment, and me drifting into it. Lord's sake, Sir, hoo well ye wear!"

Dismissing Mr. Bishopriggs by a sign, Sir Patrick advanced to Anne.

"I am committing an intrusion, madam which must, I am afraid, appear unpardonable in your eyes," he said. "May I hope you will excuse me when I have made you acquainted with my motive?"

He spoke with scrupulous politeness. His knowledge of Anne was of the slightest possible kind. Like other men, he had felt the attraction of her unaffected grace and gentleness on the few occasions when he had been in her company--and that was all. If he had belonged to the present generation he would, under the circumstances, have fallen into one of the besetting sins of England in these days--the tendency (to borrow an illustration from the stage) to "strike an attitude" in the presence of a social emergency. A man of the present period, in Sir Patrick's position, would have struck an attitude of (what is called) chivalrous respect; and would have addressed Anne in a tone of ready-made sympathy, which it was simply impossible for a stranger really to feel. Sir Patrick affected nothing of the sort. One of the besetting sins of his time was the habitual concealment of our better selves--upon the whole, a far less dangerous national error than the habitual

advertisement of our better selves, which has become the practice, public and privately, of society in this age. Sir Patrick assumed, if anything, less sympathy on this occasion than he really felt. Courteous to all women, he was as courteous as usual to Anne--and no more.

"I am quite at a loss, Sir, to know what brings you to this place. The servant here informs me that you are one of a party of gentlemen who have just passed by the inn, and who have all gone on except yourself." In those guarded terms Anne opened the interview with the unwelcome visitor, on her side.

Sir Patrick admitted the fact, without betraying the slightest embarrassment.

"The servant is quite right," he said. "I am one of the party. And I have purposely allowed them to go on to the keeper's cottage without me. Having admitted this, may I count on receiving your permission to explain the motive of my visit?"

Necessarily suspicious of him, as coming from Windygates, Anne answered in few and formal words, as coldly as before.

"Explain it, Sir Patrick, if you please, as briefly as possible."

Sir Patrick bowed. He was not in the least offended; he was even (if the confession may be made without degrading him in the public estimation) privately amused. Conscious of having honestly presented himself at the inn in Anne's interests, as well as in the interests of the ladies at Windygates, it appealed to his sense of humor to find himself kept at arm's-length by the very woman whom he had come to benefit. The temptation was strong on him to treat his errand from his own whimsical point of view. He gravely took out his watch, and noted the time to a second, before he spoke again.

"I have an event to relate in which you are interested," he said. "And I have two messages to deliver, which I hope you will not object to receive. The event I undertake to describe in one minute. The messages I promise to dispose of in two minutes more. Total duration of this intrusion on your time--three minutes."

He placed a chair for Anne, and waited until she had permitted him, by a sign, to take a second chair for himself.

"We will begin with the event," he resumed. "Your arrival at this place is no

secret at Windygates. You were seen on the foot-road to Craig Fernie by one of the female servants. And the inference naturally drawn is, that you were on your way to the inn. It may be important for you to know this; and I have taken the liberty of mentioning it accordingly." He consulted his watch. "Event related. Time, one minute."

He had excited her curiosity, to begin with. "Which of the women saw me?" she asked, impulsively.

Sir Patrick (watch in hand) declined to prolong the interview by answering any incidental inquiries which might arise in the course of it.

"Pardon me," he rejoined; "I am pledged to occupy three minutes only. I have no room for the woman. With your kind permission, I will get on to the messages next."

Anne remained silent. Sir Patrick went on.

"First message: 'Lady Lundie's compliments to her step-daughter's late governess--with whose married name she is not acquainted. Lady Lundie regrets to say that Sir Patrick, as head of the family, has threatened to return to Edinburgh, unless she consents to be guided by his advice in the course she pursues with the late governess. Lady Lundie, accordingly, foregoes her intention of calling at the Craig Fernie inn, to express her sentiments and make her inquiries in person, and commits to Sir Patrick the duty of expressing her sentiments; reserving to herself the right of making her inquiries at the next convenient opportunity. Through the medium of her brother-in-law, she begs to inform the late governess that all intercourse is at an end between them, and that she declines to act as reference in case of future emergency.'--Message textually correct. Expressive of Lady Lundie's view of your sudden departure from the house. Time, two minutes."

Anne's color rose. Anne's pride was up in arms on the spot.

"The impertinence of Lady Lundie's message is no more than I should have expected from her," she said. "I am only surprised at Sir Patrick's delivering it."

"Sir Patrick's motives will appear presently," rejoined the incorrigible old gentleman. "Second message: 'Blanche's fondest love. Is dying to be acquainted with Anne's husband, and to be informed of Anne's married name. Feels indescribable anxiety and apprehension on Anne's account.

Insists on hearing from Anne immediately. Longs, as she never longed for any thing yet, to order her pony-chaise and drive full gallop to the inn. Yields, under irresistible pressure, to t he exertion of her guardian's authority, and commits the expression of her feelings to Sir Patrick, who is a born tyrant, and doesn't in the least mind breaking other people's hearts.' Sir Patrick, speaking for himself, places his sister-in-law's view and his niece's view, side by side, before the lady whom he has now the honor of addressing, and on whose confidence he is especially careful not to intrude. Reminds the lady that his influence at Windygates, however strenuously he may exert it, is not likely to last forever. Requests her to consider whether his sister-in-law's view and his niece's view in collision, may not lead to very undesirable domestic results; and leaves her to take the course which seems best to herself under those circumstances.--Second message delivered textually. Time, three minutes. A storm coming on. A quarter of an hour's ride from here to the shooting-cottage. Madam, I wish you good-evening."

He bowed lower than ever--and, without a word more, quietly left the room.

Anne's first impulse was (excusably enough, poor soul) an impulse of resentment.

"Thank you, Sir Patrick!" she said, with a bitter look at the closing door. "The sympathy of society with a friendless woman could hardly have been expressed in a more amusing way!"

The little irritation of the moment passed off with the moment. Anne's own intelligence and good sense showed her the position in its truer light.

She recognized in Sir Patrick's abrupt departure Sir Patrick's considerate resolution to spare her from entering into any details on the subject of her position at the inn. He had given her a friendly warning; and he had delicately left her to decide for herself as to the assistance which she might render him in maintaining tranquillity at Windygates. She went at once to a side-table in the room, on which writing materials were placed, and sat down to write to Blanche.

"I can do nothing with Lady Lundie," she thought. "But I have more influence than any body else over Blanche and I can prevent the collision between them which Sir Patrick dreads."

She began the letter. "My dearest Blanche, I have seen Sir Patrick, and he has given me your message. I will set your mind at ease about me as soon as I can. But, before I say any thing else, let me entreat you, as the greatest

favor you can do to your sister and your friend, not to enter into any disputes about me with Lady Lundie, and not to commit the imprudence--the useless imprudence, my love--of coming here." She stopped--the paper swam before her eyes. "My own darling!" she thought, "who could have foreseen that I should ever shrink from the thought of seeing you?" She sighed, and dipped the pen in the ink, and went on with the letter.

The sky darkened rapidly as the evening fell. The wind swept in fainter and fainter gusts across the dreary moor. Far and wide over the face of Nature the stillness was fast falling which tells of a coming storm.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH. - ARNOLD.

MEANWHILE Arnold remained shut up in the head-waiter's pantry--chafing secretly at the position forced upon him.

He was, for the first time in his life, in hiding from another person, and that person a man. Twice--stung to it by the inevitable loss of self-respect which his situation occasioned--he had gone to the door, determined to face Sir Patrick boldly; and twice he had abandoned the idea, in mercy to Anne. It would have been impossible for him to set himself right with Blanche's guardian without betraying the unhappy woman whose secret he was bound in honor to keep. "I wish to Heaven I had never come here!" was the useless aspiration that escaped him, as he doggedly seated himself on the dresser to wait till Sir Patrick's departure set him free.

After an interval--not by any means the long interval which he had anticipated--his solitude was enlivened by the appearance of Father Bishopriggs.

"Well?" cried Arnold, jumping off the dresser, "is the coast clear?"

There were occasions when Mr. Bishopriggs became, on a sudden, unexpectedly hard of hearing, This was one of them.

"Hoo do ye find the paintry?" he asked, without paying the slightest attention to Arnold's question. "Snug and private? A Patmos in the weelderness, as ye may say!"

His one available eye, which had begun by looking at Arnold's face, dropped slowly downward, and fixed itself, in mute but eloquent expectation, on Arnold's waistcoat pocket.

"I understand!" said Arnold. "I promised to pay you for the Patmos--eh? There you are!"

Mr. Bishopriggs pocketed the money with a dreary smile and a sympathetic shake of the head. Other waiters would have returned thanks. The sage of Craig Fernie returned a few brief remarks instead. Admirable in many things, Father Bishopriggs was especially great at drawing a moral. He drew a moral on this occasion from his own gratuity.

"There I am--as ye say. Mercy presairve us! ye need the siller at every turn, when there's a woman at yer heels. It's an awfu' reflection--ye canna hae any thing to do wi' the sex they ca' the opposite sex without its being an expense to ye. There's this young leddy o' yours, I doot she'll ha' been an expense to ye from the first. When you were coortin' her, ye did it, I'll go bail, wi' the open hand. Presents and keep-sakes, flowers and jewelery, and little dogues. Sair expenses all of them!"

"Hang your reflections! Has Sir Patrick left the inn?"

The reflections of Mr. Bishopriggs declined to be disposed of in any thing approaching to a summary way. On they flowed from their parent source, as slowly and as smoothly as ever!

"Noo ye're married to her, there's her bonnets and goons and under-clothin'--her ribbons, laces, furbelows, and fallals. A sair expense again!"

"What is the expense of cutting your reflections short, Mr. Bishopriggs?"

"Thirdly, and lastly, if ye canna agree wi' her as time gaes on--if there's incompaitibeelity of temper betwixt ye--in short, if ye want a wee bit separation, hech, Sirs! ye pet yer hand in yer poaket, and come to an aimicable understandin' wi' her in that way. Or, maybe she takes ye into Court, and pets her hand in your poaket, and comes to a hoastile understandin' wi' ye there. Show me a woman--and I'll show ye a man not far off wha' has mair expenses on his back than he ever bairgained for." Arnold's patience would last no longer--he turned to the door. Mr. Bishopriggs, with equal alacrity on his side, turned to the matter in hand. "Yes, Sir! The room is e'en clear o' Sir Paitrick, and the leddy's alane, and waitin' for ye."

In a moment more Arnold was back in the sitting-room.

"Well?" he asked, anxiously. "What is it? Bad news from Lady Lundie's?"

Anne closed and directed the letter to Blanche, which she had just completed. "No," she replied. "Nothing to interest you."

"What did Sir Patrick want?"

"Only to warn me. They have found out at Windygates that I am here."

"That's awkward, isn't it?"

"Not in the least. I can manage perfectly; I have nothing to fear. Don't think of me--think of yourself."

"I am not suspected, am I?"

"Thank heaven--no. But there is no knowing what may happen if you stay here. Ring the bell at once, and ask the waiter about the trains."

Struck by the unusual obscurity of the sky at that hour of the evening, Arnold went to the window. The rain had come--and was falling heavily. The view on the moor was fast disappearing in mist and darkness.

"Pleasant weather to travel in!" he said.

"The railway!" Anne exclaimed, impatiently. "It's getting late. See about the railway!"

Arnold walked to the fire-place to ring the bell. The railway time-table hanging over it met his eye.

"Here's the information I want," he said to Anne; "if I only knew how to get at it. 'Down'--'Up'--'A. M.'--P. M.' What a cursed confusion! I believe they do it on purpose."

Anne joined him at the fire-place.

"I understand it--I'll help you. Did you say it was the up train you wanted?"

"What is the name of the station you stop at?"

Arnold told her. She followed the intricate net-work of lines and figures with her finger--suddenly stopped--looked again to make sure--and turned from the time-table with a face of blank despair. The last train for the day had gone an hour since.

In the silence which followed that discovery, a first flash of lightning passed across the window and the low roll of thunder sounded the outbreak of the storm.

"What's to be done now?" asked Arnold.

In the face of the storm, Anne answered without hesitation, "You must take

a carriage, and drive."

"Drive? They told me it was three-and-twenty miles, by railway, from the station to my place--let alone the distance from this inn to the station."

"What does the distance matter? Mr. Brinkworth, you can't possibly stay here!"

A second flash of lightning crossed the window; the roll of the thunder came nearer. Even Arnold's good temper began to be a little ruffled by Anne's determination to get rid of him. He sat down with the air of a man who had made up his mind not to leave the house.

"Do you hear that?" he asked, as the sound of the thunder died away grandly, and the hard pattering of the rain on the window became audible once more. "If I ordered horses, do you think they would let me have them, in such weather as this? And, if they did, do you suppose the horses could face it on the moor? No, no, Miss Silvester--I am sorry to be in the way, but the train has gone, and the night and the storm have come. I have no choice but to stay here!"

Anne still maintained her own view, but less resolutely than before. "After what you have told the landlady," she said, "think of the embarrassment, the cruel embarrassment of our position, if you stop at the inn till to-morrow morning!"

"Is that all?" returned Arnold.

Anne looked up at him, quickly and angrily. No! he was quite unconscious of having said any thing that could offend her. His rough masculine sense broke its way unconsciously through all the little feminine subtleties and delicacies of his companion, and looked the position practically in the face for what it was worth, and no more. "Where's the embarrassment?" he asked, pointing to the bedroom door. "There's your room, all ready for you. And here's the sofa, in this room, all ready for me. If you had seen the places I have slept in at sea--!"

She interrupted him, without ceremony. The places he had slept in, at sea, were of no earthly importance. The one question to consider, was the place he was to sleep in that night.

"If you must stay," she rejoined, "can't you get a room in some other part of the house?"

But one last mistake in dealing with her, in her present nervous condition, was left to make--and the innocent Arnold made it. "In some other part of the house?" he repeated, jestingly. "The landlady would be scandalized. Mr. Bishopriggs would never allow it!"

She rose, and stamped her foot impatiently on the floor. "Don't joke!" she exclaimed. "This is no laughing matter." She paced the room excitedly. "I don't like it! I don't like it!"

Arnold looked after her, with a stare of boyish wonder.

"What puts you out so?" he asked. "Is it the storm?"

She threw herself on the sofa again. "Yes," she said, shortly. "It's the storm."

Arnold's inexhaustible good-nature was at once roused to activity again.

"Shall we have the candles," he suggested, "and shut the weather out?" She turned irritably on the sofa, without replying. "I'll promise to go away the first thing in the morning!" he went on. "Do try and take it easy--and don't be angry with me. Come! come! you wouldn't turn a dog out, Miss Silvester, on such a night as this!"

He was irresistible. The most sensitive woman breathing could not have accused him of failing toward her in any single essential of consideration and respect. He wanted tact, poor fellow--but who could expect him to have learned that always superficial (and sometimes dangerous) accomplishment, in the life he had led at sea? At the sight of his honest, pleading face, Anne recovered possession of her gentler and sweeter self. She made her excuses for her irritability with a grace that enchanted him. "We'll have a pleasant evening of it yet!" cried Arnold, in his hearty way--and rang the bell.

The bell was hung outside the door of that Patmos in the wilderness--otherwise known as the head-waiter's pantry. Mr. Bishopriggs (employing his brief leisure in the seclusion of his own apartment) had just mixed a glass of the hot and comforting liquor called "toddy" in the language of North Britain, and was just lifting it to his lips, when the summons from Arnold invited him to leave his grog.

"Haud yer screechin' tongue!" cried Mr. Bishopriggs, addressing the bell through the door. "Ye're waur than a woman when ye aince begin!"

The bell--like the woman--went on again. Mr. Bishopriggs, equally pertinacious, went on with his toddy.

"Ay! ay! ye may e'en ring yer heart out--but ye won't part a Scotchman from his glass. It's maybe the end of their dinner they'll be wantin'. Sir Paitrick cam' in at the fair beginning of it, and spoilt the collops, like the dour deevil he is!" The bell rang for the third time. "Ay! ay! ring awa'! I doot yon young gentleman's little better than a belly-god--there's a scandalous haste to comfort the carnal part o' him in a' this ringin'! He knows naething o' wine," added Mr. Bishopriggs, on whose mind Arnold's discovery of the watered sherry still dwelt unpleasantly.

The lightning quickened, and lit the sitting-room horribly with its lurid glare; the thunder rolled nearer and nearer over the black gulf of the moor. Arnold had just raised his hand to ring for the fourth time, when the inevitable knock was heard at the door. It was useless to say "come in." The immutable laws of Bishopriggs had decided that a second knock was necessary. Storm or no storm, the second knock came--and then, and not till then, the sage appeared, with the dish of untasted "collops" in his hand.

"Candles!" said Arnold.

Mr. Bishopriggs set the "collops" (in the language of England, minced meat) upon the table, lit the candles on the mantle-piece, faced about with the fire of recent toddy flaming in his nose, and waited for further orders, before he went back to his second glass. Anne declined to return to the dinner. Arnold ordered Mr. Bishopriggs to close the shutters, and sat down to dine by himself.

"It looks greasy, and smells greasy," he said to Anne, turning over the collops with a spoon. "I won't be ten minutes dining. Will you have some tea?"

Anne declined again.

Arnold tried her once more. "What shall we do to get through the evening?"

"Do what you like," she answered, resignedly.

Arnold's mind was suddenly illuminated by an idea.

"I have got it!" he exclaimed. "We'll kill the time as our cabin-passengers used to kill it at sea." He looked over his shoulder at Mr. Bishopriggs. "Waiter! bring a pack of cards."

"What's that ye're wantin'?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"A pack of cards," repeated Arnold.

"Cairds?" echoed Mr. Bishopriggs. "A pack o' cairds? The deevil's allegories in the deevil's own colors--red and black! I wunna execute yer order. For yer ain saul's sake, I wunna do it. Ha' ye lived to your time o' life, and are ye no' awakened yet to the awfu' seenfulness o' gamblin' wi' the cairds?"

"Just as you please," returned Arnold. "You will find me awakened--when I go away--to the awful folly of feeing a waiter."

"Does that mean that ye're bent on the cairds?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, suddenly betraying signs of worldly anxiety in his look and manner.

"Yes--that means I am bent on the cards."

"I tak' up my testimony against 'em--but I'm no' telling ye that I canna lay my hand on 'em if I like. What do they say in my country? 'Him that will to Coupar, maun to Coupar.' And what do they say in your country? 'Needs must when the deevil drives.'" With that excellent reason for turning his back on his own principles, Mr. Bishopriggs shuffled out of the room to fetch the cards.

The dresser-drawer in the pantry contained a choice selection of miscellaneous objects--a pack of cards being among them. In searching for the cards, the wary hand of the head-waiter came in contact with a morsel of crumpled-up paper. He drew it out, and recognized the letter which he had picked up in the sitting-room some hours since.

"Ay! ay! I'll do weel, I trow, to look at this while my mind's runnin' on it," said Mr. Bishopriggs. "The cairds may e'en find their way to the parlor by other hands than mine."

He forthwith sent the cards to Arnold by his second in command, closed the pantry door, and carefully smoothed out the crumpled sheet of paper on which the two letters were written. This done, he trimmed his candle, and began with the letter in ink, which occupied the first three pages of the sheet

of note-paper.

It ran thus:

"WINDYGATES HOUSE, August 12, 1868.

"GEOFFREY DELAMAYN,--I have waited in the hope that you would ride over from your brother's place, and see me--and I have waited in vain. Your conduct to me is cruelty itself; I will bear it no longer. Consider! in your own interests, consider--before you drive the miserable woman who has trusted you to despair. You have promised me marriage by all that is sacred. I claim your promise. I insist on nothing less than to be what you vowed I should be--what I have waited all this weary time to be--what I am, in the sight of Heaven, your wedded wife. Lady Lundie gives a lawn-party here on the 14th. I know you have been asked. I expect you to accept her invitation. If I don't see you, I won't answer for what may happen. My mind is made up to endure this suspense no longer. Oh, Geoffrey, remember the past! Be faithful--be just--to your loving wife,

"ANNE SILVESTER."

Mr. Bishopriggs paused. His commentary on the correspondence, so far, was simple enough. "Hot words (in ink) from the leddy to the gentleman!" He ran his eye over the second letter, on the fourth page of the paper, and added, cynically, "A trifle caulder (in pencil) from the gentleman to the leddy! The way o' the warld, Sirs! From the time o' Adam downwards, the way o' the warld!"

The second letter ran thus:

"DEAR ANNE,--Just called to London to my father. They have telegraphed him in a bad way. Stop where you are, and I will write you. Trust the bearer. Upon my soul, I'll keep my promise. Your loving husband that is to be,

"GEOFFREY DELAMAYN."

WINDYGATES HOUSE, Augt. 14, 4 P. M.

"In a mortal hurry. Train starts at 4.30."

There it ended!

"Who are the pairties in the parlor? Is ane o' them 'Silvester?' and t'other 'Delamayn?'" pondered Mr. Bishopriggs, slowly folding the letter up again in its original form. "Hech, Sirs! what, being intairpreted, may a' this mean?"

He mixed himself a second glass of toddy, as an aid to reflection, and sat sipping the liquor, and twisting and turning the letter in his gouty fingers. It was not easy to see his way to the true connection between the lady and gentleman in the parlor and the two letters now in his own possession. They might be themselves the writers of the letters, or they might be only friends of the writers. Who was to decide?

In the first case, the lady's object would appear to have been as good as gained; for the two had certainly asserted themselves to be man and wife, in his own presence, and in the presence of the landlady. In the second case, the correspondence so carelessly thrown aside might, for all a stranger knew to the contrary, prove to be of some importance in the future. Acting on this latter view, Mr. Bishopriggs--whose past experience as "a bit clerk body," in Sir Patrick's chambers, had made a man of business of him--produced his pen and ink, and indorsed the letter with a brief dated statement of the circumstances under which he had found it. "I'll do weel to keep the Doecument," he thought to himself. "Wha knows but there'll be a reward offered for it ane o' these days? Eh! eh! there may be the warth o' a fi' pun' note in this, to a puir lad like me!"

With that comforting reflection, he drew out a battered tin cash-box from the inner recesses of the drawer, and locked up the stolen correspondence to bide its time.

The storm rose higher and higher as the evening advanced.

In the sitting-room, the state of affairs, perpetually changing, now presented itself under another new aspect.

Arnold had finished his dinner, and had sent it away. He had next drawn a

side-table up to the sofa on which Anne lay--had shuffled the pack of cards--and was now using all his powers of persuasion to induce her to try one game at Ecarte with him, by way of diverting her attention from the tumult of the storm. In sheer weariness, she gave up contesting the matter; and, raising herself languidly on the sofa, said she would try to play. "Nothing can make matters worse than they are," she thought, despairingly, as Arnold dealt the cards for her. "Nothing can justify my inflicting my own wretchedness on this kind-hearted boy!"

Two worse players never probably sat down to a game. Anne's attention perpetually wandered; and Anne's companion was, in all human probability, the most incapable card-player in Europe.

Anne turned up the trump--the nine of Diamonds. Arnold looked at his hand--and "proposed." Anne declined to change the cards. Arnold announced, with undiminished good-humor, that he saw his way clearly, now, to losing the game, and then played his first card--the Queen of Trumps!

Anne took it with the King, and forgot to declare the King. She played the ten of Trumps.

Arnold unexpectedly discovered the eight of Trumps in his hand. "What a pity!" he said, as he played it. "Hullo! you haven't marked the King! I'll do it for you. That's two--no, three--to you. I said I should lose the game. Couldn't be expected to do any thing (could I?) with such a hand as mine. I've lost every thing now I've lost my trumps. You to play."

Anne looked at her hand. At the same moment the lightning flashed into the room through the ill-closed shutters; the roar of the thunder burst over the house, and shook it to its foundation. The screaming of some hysterical female tourist, and the barking of a dog, rose shrill from the upper floor of the inn. Anne's nerves could support it no longer. She flung her cards on the table, and sprang to her feet.

"I can play no more," she said. "Forgive me--I am quite unequal to it. My head burns! my heart stifles me!"

She began to pace the room again. Aggravated by the effect of the storm on her nerves, her first vague distrust of the false position into which she and Arnold had allowed themselves to drift had strengthened, by this time, into a downright horror of their situation which was not to be endured. Nothing could justify such a risk as the risk they were now running! They had dined

together like married people--and there they were, at that moment, shut in together, and passing the evening like man and wife!

"Oh, Mr. Brinkworth!" she pleaded. "Think--for Blanche's sake, think--is there no way out of this?"

Arnold was quietly collecting the scattered cards.

"Blanche, again?" he said, with the most exasperating composure. "I wonder how she feels, in this storm?"

In Anne's excited state, the reply almost maddened her. She turned from Arnold, and hurried to the door.

"I don't care!" she cried, wildly. "I won't let this deception go on. I'll do what I ought to have done before. Come what may of it, I'll tell the landlady the truth!"

She had opened the door, and was on the point of stepping into the passage--when she stopped, and started violently. Was it possible, in that dreadful weather, that she had actually heard the sound of carriage wheels on the strip of paved road outside the inn?

Yes! others had heard the sound too. The hobbling figure of Mr. Bishopriggs passed her in the passage, making for the house door. The hard voice of the landlady rang through the inn, ejaculating astonishment in broad Scotch. Anne closed the sitting-room door again, and turned to Arnold--who had risen, in surprise, to his feet.

"Travelers!" she exclaimed. "At this time!"

"And in this weather!" added Arnold.

"Can it be Geoffrey?" she asked--going back to the old vain delusion that he might yet feel for her, and return.

Arnold shook his head. "Not Geoffrey. Whoever else it may be--not Geoffrey!"

Mrs. Inchbare suddenly entered the room--with her cap-ribb ons flying, her eyes staring, and her bones looking harder than ever.

"Eh, mistress!" she said to Anne. "Wha do ye think has driven here to see ye, from Windygates Hoose, and been owertaken in the storm?"

Anne was speechless. Arnold put the question: "Who is it?"

"Wha is't?" repeated Mrs. Inchbare. "It's joost the bonny young leddy--Miss Blanche hersel'."

An irrepressible cry of horror burst from Anne. The landlady set it down to the lightning, which flashed into the room again at the same moment.

"Eh, mistress! ye'll find Miss Blanche a bit baulder than to skirl at a flash o' lightning, that gait! Here she is, the bonny birdie!" exclaimed Mrs. Inchbare, deferentially backing out into the passage again.

Blanche's voice reached them, calling for Anne.

Anne caught Arnold by the hand and wrung it hard. "Go!" she whispered. The next instant she was at the mantle-piece, and had blown out both the candles.

Another flash of lightning came through the darkness, and showed Blanche's figure standing at the door.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH. - BLANCHE.

MRS. INCHBARE was the first person who acted in the emergency. She called for lights; and sternly rebuked the house-maid, who brought them, for not having closed the house door. "Ye feckless ne'er-do-weel!" cried the landlady; "the wind's blawn the candles oot."

The woman declared (with perfect truth) that the door had been closed. An awkward dispute might have ensued if Blanche had not diverted Mrs. Inchbare's attention to herself. The appearance of the lights disclosed her, wet through with her arms round Anne's neck. Mrs. Inchbare digressed at once to the pressing question of changing the young lady's clothes, and gave Anne the opportunity of looking round her, unobserved. Arnold had made his escape before the candles had been brought in.

In the mean time Blanche's attention was absorbed in her own dripping skirts.

"Good gracious! I'm absolutely distilling rain from every part of me. And I'm making you, Anne, as wet as I am! Lend me some dry things. You can't? Mrs. Inchbare, what does your experience suggest? Which had I better do? Go to bed while my clothes are being dried? or borrow from your wardrobe--though you are a head and shoulders taller than I am?"

Mrs. Inchbare instantly bustled out to fetch the choicest garments that her wardrobe could produce. The moment the door had closed on her Blanche looked round the room in her turn.

The rights of affection having been already asserted, the claims of curiosity naturally pressed for satisfaction next.

"Somebody passed me in the dark," she whispered. "Was it your husband? I'm dying to be introduced to him. And, oh my dear! what is your married name?"

Anne answered, coldly, "Wait a little. I can't speak about it yet."

"Are you ill?" asked Blanche.

"I am a little nervous."

"Has any thing unpleasant happened between you and my uncle? You have seen him, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Did he give you my message?"

"He gave me your message.--Blanche! you promised him to stay at Windygates. Why, in the name of heaven, did you come here to-night?"

"If you were half as fond of me as I am of you," returned Blanche, "you wouldn't ask that. I tried hard to keep my promise, but I couldn't do it. It was all very well, while my uncle was laying down the law--with Lady Lundie in a rage, and the dogs barking, and the doors banging, and all that. The excitement kept me up. But when my uncle had gone, and the dreadful gray, quiet, rainy evening came, and it had all calmed down again, there was no bearing it. The house--without you--was like a tomb. If I had had Arnold with me I might have done very well. But I was all by myself. Think of that! Not a soul to speak to! There wasn't a horrible thing that could possibly happen to you that I didn't fancy was going to happen. I went into your empty room and looked at your things. That settled it, my darling! I rushed down stairs--carried away, positively carried away, by an Impulse beyond human resistance. How could I help it? I ask any reasonable person how could I help it? I ran to the stables and found Jacob. Impulse--all impulse! I said, 'Get the pony-chaise--I must have a drive--I don't care if it rains--you come with me.' All in a breath, and all impulse! Jacob behaved like an angel. He said, 'All right, miss.' I am perfectly certain Jacob would die for me if I asked him. He is drinking hot grog at this moment, to prevent him from catching cold, by my express orders. He had the pony-chaise out in two minutes; and off we went. Lady Lundie, my dear, prostrate in her own room--too much sal volatile. I hate her. The rain got worse. I didn't mind it. Jacob didn't mind it. The pony didn't mind it. They had both caught my impulse--especially the pony. It didn't come on to thunder till some time afterward; and then we were nearer Craig Fernie than Windygates--to say nothing of your being at one place and not at the other. The lightning was quite awful on the moor. If I had had one of the horses, he would have been frightened. The pony shook his darling little head, and dashed through it. He is to have beer. A mash with beer in it--by my express orders. When he has done we'll borrow a lantern, and go into the stable, and kiss him. In the mean time, my dear, here I am--wet through in a thunderstorm, which doesn't in the least matter--and determined to satisfy my own mind about you, which matters a great deal, and must and shall be done before I rest to-night!"

She turned Anne, by main force, as she spoke, toward the light of the candles.

Her tone changed the moment she looked at Anne's face.

"I knew it!" she said. "You would never have kept the most interesting event in your life a secret from me--you would never have written me such a cold formal letter as the letter you left in your room--if there had not been something wrong. I said so at the time. I know it now! Why has your husband forced you to leave Windygates at a moment's notice? Why does he slip out of the room in the dark, as if he was afraid of being seen? Anne! Anne! what has come to you? Why do you receive me in this way?"

At that critical moment Mrs. Inchbare reappeared, with the choicest selection of wearing apparel which her wardrobe could furnish. Anne hailed the welcome interruption. She took the candles, and led the way into the bedroom immediately.

"Change your wet clothes first," she said. "We can talk after that."

The bedroom door had hardly been closed a minute before there was a tap at it. Signing to Mrs. Inchbare not to interrupt the services she was rendering to Blanche, Anne passed quickly into the sitting-room, and closed the door behind her. To her infinite relief, she only found herself face to face with the discreet Mr. Bishopriggs.

"What do you want?" she asked.

The eye of Mr. Bishopriggs announced, by a wink, that his mission was of a confidential nature. The hand of Mr. Bishopriggs wavered; the breath of Mr. Bishopriggs exhaled a spirituous fume. He slowly produced a slip of paper, with some lines of writing on it.

"From ye ken who," he explained, jocosely. "A bit love-letter, I trow, from him that's dear to ye. Eh! he's an awfu' reprobate is him that's dear to ye. Miss, in the bedchamber there, will nae doot be the one he's jilted for you? I see it all--ye can't blind Me--I ha' been a frail person my ain self, in my time. Hech! he's safe and sound, is the reprobate. I ha' lookit after a' his little creature-comforts--I'm joost a fether to him, as well as a fether to you. Trust Bishopriggs--when puir human nature wants a bit pat on the back, trust Bishopriggs."

While the sage was speaking these comfortable words, Anne was reading the

lines traced on the paper. They were signed by Arnold; and they ran thus:

"I am in the smoking-room of the inn. It rests with you to say whether I must stop there. I don't believe Blanche would be jealous. If I knew how to explain my being at the inn without betraying the confidence which you and Geoffrey have placed in me, I wouldn't be away from her another moment. It does grate on me so! At the same time, I don't want to make your position harder than it is. Think of yourself first. I leave it in your hands. You have only to say, Wait, by the bearer--and I shall understand that I am to stay where I am till I hear from you again."

Anne looked up from the message.

"Ask him to wait," she said; "and I will send word to him again."

"Wi' mony loves and kisses," suggested Mr. Bishopriggs, as a necessary supplement to the message. "Eh! it comes as easy as A. B. C. to a man o' my experience. Ye can ha' nae better gae-between than yer puir servant to command, Sawmuel Bishopriggs. I understand ye baith pairfeckly." He laid his forefinger along his flaming nose, and withdrew.

Without allowing herself to hesitate for an instant, Anne opened the bedroom door--with the resolution of relieving Arnold from the new sacrifice imposed on him by owning the truth.

"Is that you?" asked Blanche.

At the sound of her voice, Anne started back guiltily. "I'll be with you in a moment," she answered, and closed the door again between them.

No! it was not to be done. Something in Blanche's trivial question--or something, perhaps, in the sight of Blanche's face--roused the warning instinct in Anne, which silenced her on the very brink of the disclosure. At the last moment the iron chain of circumstances made itself felt, binding her without mercy to the hateful, the degrading deceit. Could she own the truth, about Geoffrey and herself, to Blanche? and, without owning it, could she explain and justify Arnold's conduct in joining her privately at Craig Fernie? A shameful confession made to an innocent girl; a risk of fatally shaking Arnold's place in Blanche's estimation; a scandal at the inn, in the disgrace of which the others would be involved with herself--this was the price at which she must speak, if she followed her first impulse, and said, in so many words, "Arnold is here."

It was not to be thought of. Cost what it might in present wretchedness--end how it might, if the deception was discovered in the future--Blanche must be kept in ignorance of the truth, Arnold must be kept in hiding until she had gone.

Anne opened the door for the second time, and went in.

The business of the toilet was standing still. Blanche was in confidential communication with Mrs. Inchbare. At the moment when Anne entered the room she was eagerly questioning the landlady about her friend's "invisible husband"--she was just saying, "Do tell me! what is he like?"

The capacity for accurate observation is a capacity so uncommon, and is so seldom associated, even where it does exist, with the equally rare gift of accurately describing the thing or the person observed, that Anne's dread of the consequences if Mrs. Inchbare was allowed time to comply with Blanches request, was, in all probability, a dread misplaced. Right or wrong, however, the alarm that she felt hurried her into taking measures for dismissing the landlady on the spot. "We mustn't keep you from your occupations any longer," she said to Mrs. Inchbare. "I will give Miss Lundie all the help she needs."

Barred from advancing in one direction, Blanche's curiosity turned back, and tried in another. She boldly addressed herself to Anne.

"I must know something about him," she said. "Is he shy before strangers? I heard you whispering with him on the other side of the door. Are you jealous, Anne? Are you afraid I shall fascinate him in this dress?"

Blanche, in Mrs. Inchbare's best gown--an ancient and high-waisted silk garment, of the hue called "bottle-green," pinned up in front, and trailing far behind her--with a short, orange-colored shawl over her shoulders, and a towel tied turban fashion round her head, to dry her wet hair, looked at once the strangest and the prettiest human anomaly that ever was seen. "For heaven's sake," she said, gayly, "don't tell your husband I am in Mrs. Inchbare's clothes! I want to appear suddenly, without a word to warn him of what a figure I am! I should have nothing left to wish for in this world," she added, "if Arnold could only see me now!"

Looking in the glass, she noticed Anne's face reflected behind her, and started at the sight of it.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Your face frightens me."

It was useless to prolong the pain of the inevitable misunderstanding between them. The one course to take was to silence all further inquiries then and there. Strongly as she felt this, Anne's inbred loyalty to Blanche still shrank from deceiving her to her face. "I might write it," she thought. "I can't say it, with Arnold Brinkworth in the same house with her!" Write it? As she reconsidered the word, a sudden idea struck her. She opened the bedroom door, and led the way back into the sitting-room.

"Gone again!" exclaimed Blanche, looking uneasily round the empty room. "Anne! there's something so strange in all this, that I neither can, nor will, put up with your silence any longer. It's not just, it's not kind, to shut me out of your confidence, after we have lived together like sisters all our lives!"

Anne sighed bitterly, and kissed her on the forehead. "You shall know all I can tell you--all I dare tell you," she said, gently. "Don't reproach me. It hurts me more than you think."

She turned away to the side table, and came back with a letter in her hand. "Read that," she said, and handed it to Blanche.

Blanche saw her own name, on the address, in the handwriting of Anne.

"What does this mean?" she asked.

"I wrote to you, after Sir Patrick had left me," Anne replied. "I meant you to have received my letter to-morrow, in time to prevent any little imprudence into which your anxiety might hurry you. All that I can say to you is said there. Spare me the distress of speaking. Read it, Blanche."

Blanche still held the letter, unopened.

"A letter from you to me! when we are both together, and both alone in the same room! It's worse than formal, Anne! It's as if there was a quarrel between us. Why should it distress you to speak to me?"

Anne's eyes dropped to the ground. She pointed to the letter for the second time.

Blanche broke the seal.

She passed rapidly over the opening sentences, and devoted all her attention to the second paragraph.

"And now, my love, you will expect me to atone for the surprise and distress that I have caused you, by explaining what my situation really is, and by telling you all my plans for the future. Dearest Blanche! don't think me untrue to the affection we bear toward each other--don't think there is any change in my heart toward you--believe only that I am a very unhappy woman, and that I am in a position which forces me, against my own will, to be silent about myself. Silent even to you, the sister of my love--the one person in the world who is dearest to me! A time may come when I shall be able to open my heart to you. Oh, what good it will do me! what a relief it will be! For the present, I must be silent. For the present, we must be parted. God knows what it costs me to write this. I think of the dear old days that are gone; I remember how I promised your mother to be a sister to you, when her kind eyes looked at me, for the last time--your mother, who was an angel from heaven to mine! All this comes back on me now, and breaks my heart. But it must be! my own Blanche, for the present, it must be! I will write often--I will think of you, my darling, night and day, till a happier future unites us again. God bless you, my dear one! And God help me!"

Blanche silently crossed the room to the sofa on which Anne was sitting, and stood there for a moment, looking at her. She sat down, and laid her head on Anne's shoulder. Sorrowfully and quietly, she put the letter into her bosom--and took Anne's hand, and kissed it.

"All my questions are answered, dear. I will wait your time."

It was simply, sweetly, generously said.

Anne burst into tears.

* * * * *

The rain still fell, but the storm was dying away.

Blanche left the sofa, and, going to the window, opened the shutters to look out at the night. She suddenly came back to Anne.

"I see lights," she said--"the lights of a carriage coming up out of the darkness of the moor. They are sending after me, from Windygates. Go into t he bedroom. It's just possible Lady Lundie may have come for me herself."

The ordinary relations of the two toward each other were completely reversed. Anne was like a child in Blanche's hands. She rose, and withdrew.

Left alone, Blanche took the letter out of her bosom, and read it again, in the interval of waiting for the carriage.

The second reading confirmed her in a resolution which she had privately taken, while she had been sitting by Anne on the sofa--a resolution destined to lead to far more serious results in the future than any previsions of hers could anticipate. Sir Patrick was the one person she knew on whose discretion and experience she could implicitly rely. She determined, in Anne's own interests, to take her uncle into her confidence, and to tell him all that had happened at the inn "I'll first make him forgive me," thought Blanche. "And then I'll see if he thinks as I do, when I tell him about Anne."

The carriage drew up at the door; and Mrs. Inchbare showed in--not Lady Lundie, but Lady Lundie's maid.

The woman's account of what had happened at Windygates was simple enough. Lady Lundie had, as a matter of course, placed the right interpretation on Blanche's abrupt departure in the pony-chaise, and had ordered the carriage, with the firm determination of following her step-daughter herself. But the agitations and anxieties of the day had proved too much for her. She had been seized by one of the attacks of giddiness to which she was always subject after excessive mental irritation; and, eager as she was (on more accounts than one) to go to the inn herself, she had been compelled, in Sir Patrick's absence, to commit the pursuit of Blanche to her own maid, in whose age and good sense she could place every confidence. The woman seeing the state of the weather--had thoughtfully brought a box with her, containing a change of wearing apparel. In offering it to Blanche, she added, with all due respect, that she had full powers from her mistress to go on, if necessary, to the shooting-cottage, and to place the matter in Sir Patrick's hands. This said, she left it to her young lady to decide for herself, whether she would return to Windygates, under present circumstances, or not.

Blanche took the box from the woman's hands, and joined Anne in the bedroom, to dress herself for the drive home.

"I am going back to a good scolding," she said. "But a scolding is no novelty in my experience of Lady Lundie. I'm not uneasy about that, Anne--I'm uneasy about you. Can I be sure of one thing--do you stay here for the present?"

The worst that could happen at the inn had happened. Nothing was to be

gained now--and every thing might be lost--by leaving the place at which Geoffrey had promised to write to her. Anne answered that she proposed remaining at the inn for the present.

"You promise to write to me?"

"Yes."

"If there is any thing I can do for you--?"

"There is nothing, my love."

"There may be. If you want to see me, we can meet at Windygates without being discovered. Come at luncheon-time--go around by the shrubbery--and step in at the library window. You know as well as I do there is nobody in the library at that hour. Don't say it's impossible--you don't know what may happen. I shall wait ten minutes every day on the chance of seeing you. That's settled--and it's settled that you write. Before I go, darling, is there any thing else we can think of for the future?"

At those words Anne suddenly shook off the depression that weighed on her. She caught Blanche in her arms, she held Blanche to her bosom with a fierce energy. "Will you always be to me, in the future, what you are now?" she asked, abruptly. "Or is the time coming when you will hate me?" She prevented any reply by a kiss--and pushed Blanche toward the door. "We have had a happy time together in the years that are gone," she said, with a farewell wave of her hand. "Thank God for that! And never mind the rest."

She threw open the bedroom door, and called to the maid, in the sitting-room. "Miss Lundie is waiting for you." Blanche pressed her hand, and left her.

Anne waited a while in the bedroom, listening to the sound made by the departure of the carriage from the inn door. Little by little, the tramp of the horses and the noise of the rolling wheels lessened and lessened. When the last faint sounds were lost in silence she stood for a moment thinking--then, rousing on a sudden, hurried into the sitting-room, and rang the bell.

"I shall go mad," she said to herself, "if I stay here alone."

Even Mr. Bishopriggs felt the necessity of being silent when he stood face to face with her on answering the bell.

"I want to speak to him. Send him here instantly."

Mr. Bishopriggs understood her, and withdrew.

Arnold came in.

"Has she gone?" were the first words he said.

"She has gone. She won't suspect you when you see her again. I have told her nothing. Don't ask me for my reasons!"

"I have no wish to ask you."

"Be angry with me, if you like!"

"I have no wish to be angry with you."

He spoke and looked like an altered man. Quietly seating himself at the table, he rested his head on his hand--and so remained silent. Anne was taken completely by surprise. She drew near, and looked at him curiously. Let a woman's mood be what it may, it is certain to feel the influence of any change for which she is unprepared in the manner of a man--when that man interests her. The cause of this is not to be found in the variableness of her humor. It is far more probably to be traced to the noble abnegation of Self, which is one of the grandest--and to the credit of woman be it said--one of the commonest virtues of the sex. Little by little, the sweet feminine charm of Anne's face came softly and sadly back. The inbred nobility of the woman's nature answered the call which the man had unconsciously made on it. She touched Arnold on the shoulder.

"This has been hard on you," she said. "And I am to blame for it. Try and forgive me, Mr. Brinkworth. I am sincerely sorry. I wish with all my heart I could comfort you!"

"Thank you, Miss Silvester. It was not a very pleasant feeling, to be hiding from Blanche as if I was afraid of her--and it's set me thinking, I suppose, for the first time in my life. Never mind. It's all over now. Can I do any thing for you?"

"What do you propose doing to-night?"

"What I have proposed doing all along--my duty by Geoffrey. I have promised him to see you through your difficulties here, and to provide for your safety

till he comes back. I can only make sure of doing that by keeping up appearances, and staying in the sitting-room to-night. When we next meet it will be under pleasanter circumstances, I hope. I shall always be glad to think that I was of some service to you. In the mean time I shall be most likely away to-morrow morning before you are up."

Anne held out her hand to take leave. Nothing could undo what had been done. The time for warning and remonstrance had passed away.

"You have not befriended an ungrateful woman," she said. "The day may yet come, Mr. Brinkworth, when I shall prove it."

"I hope not, Miss Silvester. Good-by, and good luck!"

She withdrew into her own room. Arnold locked the sitting-room door, and stretched himself on the sofa for the night.

* * * * *

The morning was bright, the air was delicious after the storm.

Arnold had gone, as he had promised, before Anne was out of her room. It was understood at the inn that important business had unexpectedly called him south. Mr. Bishopriggs had been presented with a handsome gratuity; and Mrs. Inchbare had been informed that the rooms were taken for a week certain.

In every quarter but one the march of events had now, to all appearance, fallen back into a quiet course. Arnold was on his way to his estate; Blanche was safe at Windygates; Anne's residence at the inn was assured for a week to come. The one present doubt was the doubt which hung over Geoffrey's movements. The one event still involved in darkness turned on the question of life or death waiting for solution in London--otherwise, the question of Lord Holchester's health. Taken by itself, the alternative, either way, was plain enough. If my lord lived--Geoffrey would be free to come back, and marry her privately in Scotland. If my lord died--Geoffrey would be free to send for her, and marry her publicly in London. But could Geoffrey be relied on?

Anne went out on to the terrace-ground in front of the inn. The cool morning breeze blew steadily. Towering white clouds sailed in grand procession over the heavens, now obscuring, and now revealing the sun. Yellow light and purple shadow chased each other over the broad brown surface of the moor-

-even as hope and fear chased each other over Anne's mind, brooding on what might come to her with the coming time.

She turned away, weary of questioning the impenetrable future, and went back to the inn.

Crossing the hall she looked at the clock. It was past the hour when the train from Perthshire was due in London. Geoffrey and his brother were, at that moment, on their way to Lord Holchester's house.