

"Poor thing! poor thing! you are in sore trouble!"

A sudden movement, which shook the couch violently, made me open my eyes at these words, and I saw that the shock had been occasioned by Mr. Meredith, who, starting abruptly from his station at my feet, was now imperiously motioning the women from the room.

They went without a word, for his manner and eye forbade remonstrance, and we were alone. Then, after a moment's pause, advancing and kneeling beside me, where the woman had knelt an instant before, he took my icy hand, and laying his head upon it, hid both in my dress.

Faint and weary, this cramped position soon became painful, and with a feeble effort I strove to release myself; but resisting the action gently, he whispered hoarsely—

"Let me hold it—have patience—have mercy!"

A little time, and rising slowly, his countenance so changed, that it seemed as if an age of sorrow had passed over it, he said with lips that might have been freshly hewn in marble, they were so white and rigid—

"Be comforted, Isabel! The struggle is over. I cannot persist. Your suffering has conquered me. Only get well, show that my cruelty has not destroyed you, and I swear—no, you will not trust my oaths, remembering that in doing this, I am breaking all to which I have bound my soul before—but I promise sacredly, that if, when restored to health, you still refuse my hand, you shall be free. Oh, do not smile, do not thank me; I cannot bear it; hereafter, perhaps, I may be calmer, less wretched; but now—"

He turned away, evidently unable to finish the sentence—reached the door, stayed there an instant, as if to hear what I, struggling to rise upon my arm, endeavoured to say—then, as if unable to conquer the impulse, strode fiercely back, threw himself again beside the sofa, took me in his arms, and in an instant, without the utterance of a word, sprang up and left the room.

The rest of that day is a blank.

I only know that, oppressed with feelings I was too weak to realise, penetrated with a vague sense of relief from some excessive dread, the nature of which I could not thoroughly comprehend, I lay in a sort of dream, with half-closed eyes, attended by little Lucy, who moved about the room like a shadow.

The next morning, somewhat invigorated by a night's untroubled sleep, I woke to a tolerably clear perception of all that had passed. The first pleasurable sensation I experienced upon awakening was caused by the novel sight of my windows thrown widely open, and the fresh morning breeze blowing inwards to the room, bearing on its wings all the sweet scents of summer. For a moment I seemed to be again at Ellerslie, and lay, as I had been used to do there, sleepily drinking in the balmy flower-breaths; but little by little the illusion passed, and awaking fully, I remembered all.

Then rising hastily, and accepting without demur the well-chosen attire which had been designed for so very different an occasion, and which I felt it would now be most ungracious to refuse, I dressed quickly, and full of dread lest this day should not keep the promise of its predecessor, and anything should cause Mr. Meredith to repent his promise, I waited eagerly for the appearance of Lucy or the housekeeper.

Nor was my patience taxed long, for a quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when the elder servant entered, and presenting a letter, informed me that breakfast was waiting.

"I ought to have given you this last night," she said, as I took the note; "but you seemed so weak and faint, that I thought it best to keep it till this morning. I do not think the delay is of any consequence; at least, I hope not."

And with one or two civil inquiries after my health, she withdrew.

The letter was from Mr. Meredith, and ran thus: "After a most painful struggle I have resolved to see you no more. Were I to do so, to indulge the passionate craving which possesses my soul, I fear that I might not have courage to keep the pledge which the sight of your grief and suffering wrung from me. We have met therefore, for the last time, unless, as I dare not hope, your heart relents, and you authorise my return; then, even from the ends of the earth your message would reach me, and my whole life should pass in blessing, and striving to repay your mercy. But this I dare not, I do not hope. I see, now that it is too late, the cruelty of my conduct, and that it is impossible you can forgive it. We part, then, and these words, the voice

of extremest penitence and agony, are the last you will ever have from me. Should they contain aught which offends you, be generous and pitiful, and pardon it, considering what torture I, who write, am suffering, and grant this last request. If, as I grieve to think, the sojourn in my house should hereafter be construed to your injury, or mortal man cast a slur on your name for the wrong I have done, and you have endured, let me know it, and, *living or dead*, I will right you. This is no idle promise or boast. The day may come when I may be called upon to redeem it; and upon the earth or beneath it, I, or my messenger, will answer to the challenge. And now, farewell. May God and His angels bless and guard you, and help you to remember me with pardon, as well as that, if those to whom you go, and whom you prefer to me, should prove unworthy of your confidence and love, and in this changing world you should need help or service, I, though I may never see or speak with you again, will render it. For believe me now, that the love I have felt for you, which has made me do what nothing upon earth has ever had power to do before—give up my resolution—I shall never feel for any one again. Your memory will have no rival in my heart. Again, and again, farewell."

Oh! what a strange thing is a woman's heart. Here was a letter confirming the liberty I had pined for, assuring me of future freedom from his persecution, who had been one of my bitterest foes, the persistence in whose suit had probably so involved my stepfather in embarrassment of all kinds, as to drive him to the fearful step which had exiled me from Ellerslie—who had endangered, if not for ever destroyed, my good name, by keeping me thus a close prisoner in his house; and yet I wept over it bitterly, as if, instead of a boon and a happiness, it had brought new and added misery and grief.

Of all things on earth, scarcely anything is more touching than the self-abasement of an untamed, haughty soul, when, awakened to a sense of its errors, it confesses them in an agony of humiliation and shame; and I, who had seen and heard this man in the height of his arrogance and defiance, could not help but weep over the sorrow which had wrung his heart so sorely.

Sadly, then, I waited in my room, forgetting the summons I had received to descend, until the servant, anxious, perhaps, to see the effect which had been produced by the letter she had delivered, came back to remind me of the meal which was waiting; and finding I asked no questions, but passed her slowly to go down, she said—

"I hope it doesn't signify, my not giving you that note yesterday, ma'am?"

"No! not at all."

"That's well! Mr. Meredith seemed very low when he went off last night. I never was so took to in my life; and we looking for a wedding and all! Well, I'm sure I hope he'll get safely to his journey's end; for, for all he was a little strange, and hot-tempered sometimes, he was a noble-spirited gentleman."

In spite of my dislike to gossiping, and resolution not to ask questions, I could not refrain from saying—

"Has Mr. Meredith left London?"

"Yes, of course! didn't you know? He's gone to Italy. Everything was packed for the voyage last week, so there was nothing to wait for; better, perhaps, if that there had been; he'd have had a chance, then, to change his mind, for there's nothing surer in this world than 'hasty acting, makes long repenting.'"

"I fear it does."

"I'm certain it does. But, I hope you'll think better of the matter, and send him a bit of a note or a message; there's one in the house as won't let the grass grow under his feet to take it; and master promised to stay one day and night at Southampton, for the chance."

"Did Mr. Meredith say so?"

"Well, not those words exactly; but we all knew what he meant, when he said as there might possibly be something to send after him, and he would wait four-and-twenty-hours on board the yacht in Southampton Water, before he sailed, in case it should be so; so if you'd like to—"

"No, no; thank you! I've nothing to send."

"Well, it won't be too late after breakfast, if you should wish it; and you'll be ill again, if you go so long without food; you mustn't forget, you ate nothing all day yesterday, and not much ever since you've been here. Ah, dear! dear! this has been a sad, bad business; broken his heart that never owned a master before, and well nigh killed you, too! I've seen a many grievous sights in my time, but never such a day as yesterday. And this was to be

the wedding; and everything got ready so beautiful, fit for a Royal Queen! Well, well!" and sighing mournfully, she opened the door through which she saw I was desirous to pass; saying, as she did so—

"I hope you'll take a fresh thought, when you consider it all over, and suffer me to send a kind word to Mr. Meredith."

"Not from me! I have nothing to say."

"Then p'raps you'll please to order where the trunks is to go!" said she, in an indignant voice; "for I suppose you won't choose to stay here."

"What trunks?"

"Why those as is packed with your dresses and things, as was to go to Italy."

"I've nothing to do with them; they are not mine."

"So I told Mr. Meredith; but he said as they was, and that they was to be sent to where you ordered; as well as the piano, and anything else you chose to name. Oh, he has the heart of a king, poor man! that he has!"

"He is very liberal, certainly; but, as I have repeatedly said before, I cannot accept any presents. The dress I have on now, which has been exchanged for my own, I will keep; but nothing else. And now, if you please, let the subject rest; I am desirous to return to my friends."

And thus abruptly the conversation ended, for notwithstanding her sympathy of the day before, and present civility, I was anxious to dismiss a person, whose feelings were so evidently enlisted on the other side, and whose companionship, therefore, could not but be painful. Besides, had it even been otherwise, I was in no mood for needless talking, but longed beyond anything to be alone and silent; at liberty to realise the strange change, which so few hours had worked in my fate.

(To be continued.)

ENGLISH WATERING-PLACES.

RAMSGATE.

RAMSGATE, with Londoners especially, is one of the most popular watering-places on the south coast. It is accessible from the metropolis by a pleasant trip down the Thames, or by a rapid run per rail, and affords capital accommodation and excellent sea-bathing.

Within the last few years Ramsgate has outgrown its old boundaries, and is in all respects considerably improved. New streets, squares, and crescents have risen up beneath the potent wand of builders and contractors, and hotels, replete with the elegances of social life, have taken the place of little country inns; the influx of visitors during the season crowds every hotel, inn, lodging-house, and apartments in the town and neighbourhood. The older portions of the town, irregularly built, with narrow streets and mean-looking houses, occupied chiefly by the tradespeople, lie in a flat opening towards the sea, by a narrow gulley between two very steep cliffs; stone steps afford an easy ascent to these cliffs, which are covered with modern houses, chiefly devoted to visitors.

In Harbour-street is the Town Hall, built in 1839; beneath this is held the market. The Assembly rooms face the sea—very gay and fashionable in the season; opposite to the Market-house is the principal public library and town bank. The old church was built 1785-1791; there are three other churches, all of recent, or of comparatively recent, erection. Besides these, there are places of worship for Wesleyan Methodists, Independents, Baptists, and Unitarians, and a Jews' synagogue.

The harbour is one of the most striking features of the town, and one of the most magnificent works in the kingdom. Previous to its erection it was intended to form a harbour at Deal, but during the prevalence of a great storm (1748), a number of vessels escaped shipwreck by taking refuge in the unfrequented port of Ramsgate. The natural advantages afforded by this place were brought under the notice of Parliament, a bill was introduced for the formation of a harbour, and under the superintendence, successively, of Smeaton and Rennie, the works were at length completed (1787). Two immense bulwarks were thrown out. The east pier extends in a curvilinear direction, upwards of 300 yards into the sea, its total length, including its angles, amounting to 2,000 feet; that of the west pier being about 1,500 feet. The width of the entrance is 240 feet, and the area of the harbour about 48 acres. The piers are constructed of Portland and Purbeck stone; they are guarded by a strong parapet towards the sea, and are 26 feet in width. After £200,000 had been spent in these works, it was found that the whole fabric was endangered by



RAMSGATE, ISLE OF THANET.

the encroachments of the sea, the deposition of sand and mud within the harbour being so great as to threaten ruin to the entire project. Smeaton recommended the formation of an artificial current; this was supplied by a reservoir at the head of the harbour, which, filling it by sluices, insured the flow of a strong stream. This suggestion was adopted, the obstructions were effectually swept away, and in the course of three years the success of the experiment was placed beyond doubt. Dry docks and store-houses have been erected; a wet dock has also been formed for the repair of vessels. At the head of the west pier is a light-house, and at the head of the east pier is a small fort and an obelisk erected in honour of the visit of George IV. in 1821.

The sands are the chief attraction of Ramsgate. There is a delightful promenade on the pier and on the west cliff; but the sands are the great place of resort. There the visitors collect; and there all sorts of itinerant showmen gather, and transform the quiet beach into a gay and animated scene. There are Ethiopian serenaders, with vociferous lungs and noisy instruments; there a German brass band wailing "Il Balen," or "The Last Rose of Summer;" there is Punch screaming to drum and pandean pipe; there are jugglers and acrobats, there are organ grinders, and white mice, and performing monkeys, whose humours make the heart-ache by the thought of the cruel discipline they have undergone; there are donkeys strongly indisposed to move, and urged on by irritated drivers; there are all the amusements of the race-course, with gipsy women to tell your fortune, and bearded smugglers to sell you bargains; and all this by the sea-side, with hundreds of visitors in captivating hats and charming *deshabille*, flirting parasols, reading novels, working at crochet, chatting with each other, or playing with the children, who are gathering sea-shells, or are digging holes in the beach, and raising miniature fortifications. Bathing is greatly patronised, as indeed it should be, with such smooth sand and clear water as Ramsgate can show. The fishermen's boat, the crowded quay, the shipping in the harbour, the arrival of the London steamer, the departure of the pleasure boat, exercise a cheer-

ful and exhilarating influence; if you court solitude, you must quit the sands, but there are many shady, pleasant nooks, whither you may retire and watch the bustling scene from afar—here the abode of the hermit, there the *mare magnum* of the world.

Ramsgate—from *Ruin*, a headland, and *gate*, a stair*—was a small fishing-town in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It subsequently engaged in an extensive commerce with the Baltic, but did not disdain to profit by the wrecks which frequently happened on the coast. When it was proposed to erect a harbour, the lord of the manor petitioned against it, as a large source of his income was derived from the wrecks, and the indignant Commons immediately passed the bill. Ramsgate is a member of the Cinque Port of Sandwich, and is governed by a deputy appointed by the mayor of that borough. Judicial affairs are, however, regulated by a local magistracy. The Custom House was removed hither from Sandwich by order of George IV.

The population in 1801 was 5,746; by the last census (1851) it was 17,828, and has considerably increased since that date; but the fluctuating character of the population of watering places renders it difficult to determine the average number of inhabitants with precision. In our next number we shall give some account of an adjoining favourite place of resort—Margate.

CAPTAIN BRAND;

Or, *The Pirate Schooner.*

A TALE OF THE SEA.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAUNCHED INTO ETERNITY.

HALF a mile, perhaps, inland from the sheds where the sailors lived, and beneath the steep face of the ridge-like crag which split the island in two parts, stood a low chapel, built of loose stones nicely fitted together and roofed with tiles. A rough iron cross was fastened over the doorless entrance, and at the

* Gate signifies a passage or stair between cliffs to the sea.

other end was a rough stone balustrade, with a rude painting of the Nativity over the altar, on which stood four or five tall brass candlesticks and a lighted taper.

Within the chapel kneeled a dozen or more of the Centipede's crew, the coarse and sodden faces and uncombed locks, from their night's debauch, in striking contrast to the place and the apparent devoutness of manner in which they conducted themselves while the rites of the Church were going on. Before the altar stood Padre Ricardo, bending his knee and chanting forth from his deep lungs the services of the Church. In a few minutes the unholy hands and lips which performed the solemn ceremony ceased word and gesture; and with a sonorous benediction, the sailors rose from their knees and again staggered back to the sheds, to slumber through the day. When all had gone, the padre clasped his book, tucked it into his bosom, and with a genuflexion the sacrilegious wretch turned and left the chapel.

Pursuing the winding path which led to his new habitation for a certain distance, he then turned to the left, and carefully picking his way through the sharp cactuses and Spanish bayonets along the face of the crag, he stopped at a yawning fissure which gaped open in the rock. Here, too, the same wiry vegetation had crept; and it was with great difficulty, and many an invocation, that the padre succeeded in passing into the dark, ragged mouth of the cavern.

"By the ashes of San Lorenzo!" he muttered, "there are serpents and venomous insects in this pit of purgatory. Oh, misericordia! what has pierced my leg? Why should my son drag me through this hole? Ah, blessed Saint Barnabas! a slimy reptile has crossed my instep!"

Feeling with his outspread paws in his fright, as he gradually made his way into the dripping chasm, getting narrower and lower as he proceeded, he at last, after stumbling prayerfully along for about a hundred and fifty yards, came to a loose pile of stones. Here opened another low, narrow fissure on the left; and, in some doubt, he was about to enter, but the noise he made by stepping on a stone was answered by the hissing warn of a serpent, and