MOTHER AND STEP MOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

"Well, after all, I suppose it is not very much to be wondered at! Your disconsolate widowers are always the first to take comfort. Poor dear Ann! not dead two years till September, and Edward married again. The doctors ought to be ashamed of themselves, putting it into one's head, that he was going into a decline. I am sure I couldn't rest day or night for thinking of him."

"I congratulate you on the relief this news must be to you, Fanny. Thomson says your brother is looking better than he ever did in his life; and he tells me his wife is a decided beauty."

"I cannot help thinking that he might have given us warning of his intentions earlier. It looks so awkward to know nothing of one's own brother's affairs. I talked so much about his grief that I shall get finely laughed at when he comes home with a young wife."

"You must endure with your usual patience, Fanny. I do not think he has used us particularly well; but it seems she was furious for him, and when a beauty of eighteen falls violently in love with a man of six-and-thirty, it must be allowed that it is sufficient to turn his head."

"O! you men always attach so much importance to youth. For my part, I should have thought Edward would have had too much sense to be caught by a miss in her teens; besides what can such a girl know about the management of children."

"I suppose she cannot know very much at present; but that comes by instinct. I do not think she is likely to make the worse stepmother, because she is young; and Frank is such a pretty child that the danger will be of her spoiling him."

"O, it will be well enough till she has children of her own. Poor little Frank's good looks will not do him much service then; and you may take my word for it, Wilton, that it was a bad day for the poor child when his father first saw this Helen Macdonald."

Sir Edward Irwin, the subject of the foregoing tête-á-téte, was a baronet descended from a respectable family, and possessed of very considerable estates in the North of England. He had married, early in life, a lady of a sweet and amiable temper, and, eschewing fashionable gaieties, had found his happiness in domestic enjoyment, and in literary and scientific pursuits. The premature death of his wife startled him from the even tenor of his life. It was the first sorrow that had befallen him, and he was overwhelmed by it. His wife had been so constantly his companion; she had met all his requirements with a sympathy so ready and so intelligent; that he felt as though the dearer half of his soul were taken away, and as if it were impossible for the other half to linger behind. The caresses and necessities of his son, a child of some three years old, were powerless to rouse him. He was unhappy in having nothing to force him from his sorrow. His ample means, his obsequious retainers, his anxious friends—all ministered to it. Toil, the hard but sweet necessity of the sorrowing multitude, brought no aid to him: he nursed his woe and fed it, till his bodily strength gave way. Friends interfered; doctors were consulted; his affection for his child was appealed to; and he submitted passively to be sent to Italy, that change of scene and change of climate might be tried. He went without hope—without desire of recovery. Italy or England—what mattered it to him? The world was one graveyard, with one barren mound of earth, by which his heart sat and wept. So he said, and so he thought.

He took his child with him; for, though in his saddened mood the sight of the pretty boy only served to whet his sorrow, he clung to him as all that remained of her he had lost; and watched over him with a nervous solicitude grievous to behold. The contrast between the healthy child and the sorrow-stricken father could hardly fail to strike the most careless observer; it very quickly awakened the attention of Mrs. and Miss Macdonald, who happended to occupy an adjoining palazzo in Florence, whither Sir Edward had betaken himself by the direction of his physicians. The simple story of his bereavement roused the interest of both ladies—an interest which, in the younger, quickly assumed the character of passion.

Young, beautiful, and undisciplined, Helen Macdonald revelled in wild notions of an all-consuming and imperious love. Her ardent temperament had been exaggerated by the loose morality of the unprincipled South, and she easily accepted the handsome stranger as the incarnation of an ideal, which already at eighteen she had despaired of meeting. Sir Edward's sunken eye and wan cheeks, his tall, worn person, and his rare and sorrowful smile, moved her, as the perfection of health and manly vigour might have failed to move her. What was not the love worthy which could set such a mark on the bereaved one? She sympathized with, she admired his sorrow; and to soften it, to pour balm into the wound which he loved to keep open, became the ambition—the object of her life.

Occasion is rarely wanting to those who heartily seek it. In the present instance the child naturally opened the way to the father. The little boy's heart was easily won by the smiles and caresses of the beautiful stranger, who spoke to him in the language of his mother, and folded him in her arms almost as tenderly. The name of Helen Macdonald was constantly on his lips, until it became familiar and grateful to his father's ears. Courtesy required that Sir Edward should rouse himself to show some sense of the kindness lavished on his child. The first step taken, the rest followed naturally. Secure in his grief, Sir Edward submitted to the attentions of his neighbour. Her profound admiration, her sympathy unuttered, but spoken in every look, in every gesture, were a flattery which he accepted without suspicion. The meeting with her became the event of the day, until the sweet pale image of his lost love passed from his mind like breath from the face of a mirror, and the living passionate Helen reigned supreme. One bitter struggle he endured—one sickening attempt to return to his past state of feeling; but the flesh overcame the spirit, and with a sigh, half of sorrow at his instability, half of relief, he yielded himself to the intoxicating rapture of his new passion.

Helen was so very beautiful; so tender, yet withal so jealous, so imperious, that she kindled for a time his more placid temper into a semblance of her own. She was his tyrant and his slave; but in all her moods, so full of witchery, that she left him no time for backward thought, but filled him heart and soul with her own image.

No obstacles stood in the way of their union except such imaginary difficulties as the restless fancy of Helen created. Her mother, who in many respects resembled her daughter, was still in the meridian of her beauty, and was not ill-pleased to be relieved of a child whom she could not govern, and who had become a rival, and to have her creditably established as the wife of one of the oldest baronets in England. Sir Edward, on his side, had no near relations but his sister, and he had been so little in the habit of consulting her, that it was only on the eve of his marriage that he wrote to her. And the same letter which announced to her his complete recovery and approaching marriage, informed her of his intention of bringing his wife immediately to England.

(To be continued.)

SINGULAR EFFECT OF LIGHTNING.

The Melbourne Argus says that as the clipper ship Flying Scud, Capt. W. H. Bearse, was crossing the Gulf Stream in Sept. last, on her passage from New York for Australia, she was twice struck by lightning, the first shock prostrating several men, and the second knocking down most of the hands on deck. After the second shock was over, it was discovered that it had affected the ship's compasses in a singular manner, causing them to vary five points to the eastward of their true bearing. After the lapse of five or six days, the amount of variation diminished from five to three points, and thus continued for a period of several months. The Argus says:

It would appear that the lightning struck the mizen mast and descended by the lightning rods to the channels. The wind appeared to blow the copper wire of the rod against the chains, and from thence it was conducted through the bolt into the interior of the ship, where it magnetized a large quantity of iron and steel implements which were in the after-hold.

To prove that these were the seat of attraction, Capt. Bearse placed a compass in all parts of the ship. The influence varied in different places. On the top-gallant forecastle the compass seemed to return somewhat to its proper bearing; abaft the mainmast the influence was much stronger, and in the after part it was most potent. Placed upon the cabin floor, the compass still revolved with considerable velocity. On a board placed ten feet out upon the larboard side of the ship, the compass was found to become nearly correct; by this means the true course of the ship was found.

The influence above mentioned prevailed during most of the passage, until Dec. 7, in latitude 43 deg 45 south, and longitude 110 deg. 15 min. east, when the compasses seemed to become more correct, being found to vary but 3-4 of a point to the eastward. It is also worthy of notice that in this region, several claps of thunder and lightning were observed and that these were followed by thick foggy weather which precluded the possibility of any observation for four days. When this was obtained, the ship was found to be 150 miles to the southward of her true course, in consequence of having been steered by the compass on the supposition, that it continued to have the same variation as at first. When the observation was made, it was found that the compasses had all returned to their true bearing.

Two Kinds of Riches.—"A little boy sat by his mother. He looked long at the fire and was silent, when the deep thought passed away, his eye grew bright as he spoke: "Mother, I wish I was rich."

"Why do you wish you were rich, my son?" The child said, "Because every one praises the rich, every one inquires for them. The stranger at our table yesterday asked, Who was the richest man in our village? At school there is a boy who does not learn; he takes no pains to say his lesson well. Sometimes he speaks evil words. But the children don't blame him, for they say he is a wealthy boy."

The mother thought the child in danger of believing wealth might take the place of goodness, as an excuse for indolence, or cause them to be held in honor who led unworthy lives. So she asked him, "What is it to be rich?"

He answered, "I do not know. You tell me how to become rich, that all may ask after me and praise me."

"To become rich is to get money. For this you must wait until you become a man."

The boy looked sorrowful and said, "Is there not some other way of becoming rich, that I may begin now?"

She answered, "The gain of money is not the only nor the true wealth. Fires may burn it, the floods drown it, the winds sweep it away, and moth may eat it, rust waste it, and the robber may make it his prey. Men are worried with the toil of getting it, but they leave it behind at last. They die, and carry nothing away. The soul of the richest prince of the earth goes forth, like that of the way side-beggar, without a garment. Those who possess it are always praised by men, but do they receive the praise of God?"

"Then," said the boy, "may I begin to gather this kind of riches, or must I wait till I am a man?"

The mother laid her hand upon his little head, and said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice; for He hath promised that those who seek early shall find."

And the child said, "Teach me, how I may become rich before God."

Then she looked tenderly on him and said, "Kneel down night and morning, and ask, that you may love the dear Saviour, and trust in Him. Obey his word, and strive all the days of your life to be good to all. So, though you may be poor in the world, you shall be rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven."

Casting a 'Devil out' of Church.—The *New York Tribune* presents the following graphic sketch, which it quotes from a credible authority in Marietta, Ohio:—

'A Methodist clergyman, who has been labouring in this vicinity, was, not long since, preaching to his people on the miraculous power of the apostles over the demoniac spirits of their day. As he was pursuing his theme, the audience was auddenly startled by a voice from some one in the congregation, demanding in a half-querulous, half-authoritative tone. "Why don't preachers do such things now-a-days?" In an instant every eye in the house was turned upon the individual who had the effrontry thus to invade the sacredness of their sanctuary. The preacher paused for a moment, and fixed his penetrating gaze full upon the face of the questioner. There was an interval of intense silence, broken at last by the preacher in resuming his subject. He had not proceeded far with his remarks, before he was again interrupted by the same impertinent inquiry. Again he paused for a time, and and again resumed his subject. Not content with a silent rebuke, our redoubtable questioner demanded again: "Why don't the preachers do such things now-a-days?" and curling his lips with a sneer of self-complacency, drew himself up pompously in his seat. Our reverend friend—who, by the way, is a young man of great muscular power—calmly left the desk, and walked deliberately to the pew where the interrogater sat, and fastening one hand firmly upon the collar of his coat, the other upon the waistband of his unmentionables,' lifted him up completely out of the seat, and bore him down the aisle to the entrance. Pausing for a moment there, he turned his eyes upon his audience, and in a clear full voice said: "As they cast out the devil in the form of a *distiller;*" and suiting the action to the word, out went the knight of the mash-tub, leap-frog fashion, into the street. The good pastor quietly returned to his desk, and completed his discourse. After closing the services, as he was passing out of the church, the outcast distiller with an officer of the law, escorted our clerical friend to the office of a magistrate to answer for an assault upon the person of said distiller. After hearing the case, the magistrate dismissed the clergyman; and roundly reprimanding the complainant, sued him for molesting the services of the congregation. Since that day, we believe, he has never for a moment doubted the power of Methodist preachers to cast out devils, at least within the limits of the Ohio Conference,'

GLEANINGS FROM LATE PAPERS.

Latest from California.—*New Orleans*, June 4th. The steamship Prometheus has arrived at this port, with dates from California to the 16th of May. All the gambling saloons in San Francisco had been closed. Col. Suter's claim to thirty-three square leagues of land had been confirmed by the Land Commissioner. Monetary affairs were improving slowly. In the growing crops the prospects of an abundant yield were good.

A large gang of notorious and adroit burglars, pick-pockets, &c., most of whom are escaped convicts from Botany Bay, have lately been seen travelling on the railroads between New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The gang numbers 22, including about 15 new members, not well known to the police. Several of them are said to reside in the vicinity of Brooklyn, where some of them have accumulated real estate and a large amount of personal property.

Singular.—A human body in a perfect state of petrefaction, has been dug up in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Enquirer thus speaks of it: "This extraordinary specimen of the human race is a male, about five feet seven inches in length. The hair is cut very short, and seems to have been shaved in several parts, as its formation is perfect, and apparently uninjured by time. This face is singularly formed, differing in shape and expression from any of the present age. What is more remarkable, the body is perfect in all its parts, every muscle, fibre, sinew being perfectly developed. The color is a light gray approaching that of a white man, though this may have been caused by the soil in which it has been buried, perhaps for ages."

French Economy and English Profusion.—The French budget for the current year furnishes a contrast to our own. The gross charge for the Imperial army is estimated at 340,000,000 francs or £13, 600,000. For this sum a military force of no less than 378,911 men and 90,000 horses will be kept on a war-footing for twelve months. It is, however, fair to say, that this sum does not include the whole military expenditure of the Empire. The marine and colonies require an additional 123,650,000 francs, about £5,000,000 sterling. Then again, there are pensions and allowances, annuities to the members of the Legion of Honour, and other provision, which in France, stand in the place of English half-pay, and the maintenance of the Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals. The total, however, making ample allowance for every charge, is less than £20,000,000 for France; while that for England, with something less than one-third of the French force, both in men and horses, is estimated to exceed £43,000,000 sterling.

Military Generosity.—Lord Adolphus Vane Tempest, M. P. for North Durham, who is with his regiment of Guards in the Crimea, having received a hut from his mother, the Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry, immediately on its erection, fitted up a large and roomy tent adjoining it, which he furnished with a library of standard works, several periodicals, and three daily papers, and, having a good stock of stationery, he opened it for the use of the men of his company for reading, and writing letters home. This act of generosity is highly valued by the men.

Cod Liver Oil.—It is well known that this oil has been held up by many physicians as a perfect cure for almost every disease. Prof Bedford of this city, in one of his clinical lectures, asserts, that he cannot boast of much success in using it. He has been compelled to abandon its use, as he found it to disagree with the stomachs of his patienst. He has experienced the best effects from the use of olive oil.—*N. Y. Scientific American*.

Fish.—The subject of the breeding of fish seems to be, at present, attracting considerable attention. The New Jersey Natural History Society has appointed a committee to consider the feasibility of stocking the rivers with salmon. Our own Legislature last winter appointed a committee to report at the next session upon the best means of stocking the waters of this state with fish. The Rochester *American* states, that a gentleman is now engaged in breeding fish, on the banks of the Canandaigua Lake, and although sufficient time has not elapsed to show the results, he is confident of being able to stock that beautiful sheet of water with speckled trout. The subject of stocking the rivers with salmon has also been agitated in the Eastern States.