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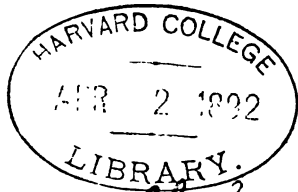
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EXTRA SUMMER NUMBER FOR 1888,

EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1888,

AND

THE ALMANACK FOR 1889,

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

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No. 1023, NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER VI.

LANCE, thinking afterwards over his walk back to the Castle in company with Miss Shore, was driven to admit that never before in his life had he spent so silent a quarter of an hour, in solitary company with a handsome young woman.

Lance had something of a reputation for his conversational powers, but now they appeared suddenly and unaccountably to have failed him. Except in the briefest thanks for assistance over stiles or rough pathway, or monosyllabic acquiescence in his remarks about the beauty of the night, he did not hear Miss Shore's voice.

Once or twice, as they walked along the dim lanes, in and out among the tree shadows, he found himself looking at her wonderingly, trying to define, not alone her personality, but what special quality it was in that personality which seemed to attract and repulse him at one and the same moment.

In that bewitching, bewildering half-gloom of the summer's night, she looked, in her long, clinging grey garments, scarcely less shadowy than the shadows among which they walked. In the smooth paths of the Castle gardens her steps became slow and gliding, and he fell a little behind her in his walk, asking himself if it were a real living woman he was following, or merely a bloodless shadow which would by-and-by disappear into the mist and vapour out of which it had emerged.

Inside the hall-door, they parted with a brief "Good night."

"Who was she? what was she? whence had she come? whither was she going?" Lance wondered, gazing dreamily after the tall, slight figure as it glided noiselessly up the broad oak staircase.

Lady Judith's falsetto, in gradual approach from the farther end of the hall, brought him back to commonplace earth once more.

Lady Judith's voice sounded near and nearer. This habit of speaking as she came along was a peculiarity of Lady Judith's. She was invariably heard before she was seen.

She had her night-lamp in her hand, and, as usual, a fine flow of words in her mouth. Madge had gone to bed with a bad headache, and she herself—well, had been a little startled: as she was sitting alone in the drawing-room something had happened which had set her shivering.

Lance's face said, "Fancy! Aunt Judy shivering!"

"If it had happened to any one else," the lady went on serenely, "I should have said that it was a dream; but you know, Lance, I never by any chance indulge in an after-dinner nap."

"No one would ever dare accuse you of such a thing," said Lance, with a double meaning.

"Quite so. I admit that sometimes—sometimes, though rarely—I close my eyes to rest my head; for, what with my farm and Sir Peter, and one thing and another, my brains do get tired at times. Well, I was sitting as you left me, in a dark corner of the drawing-room—with my eyes shut, perhaps, I'm not sure—when I seemed to hear a rustling at the further end of the room, and, looking up, I saw a tall, grey figure glide, yes—glide is the word—across the room from the door to the open

w, where it seemed to disappear. wasn't it uncanny?"

all and grey?" said Lance. "Don't can little and grey? And didn't it back again so soon as it had gone out, then go out again by another door?" if to verify the impromptu sketch

Lance had given of him, the study opened at this moment and Sir Peter orth.

My legs ache with sitting still so long. I've been dictating letters ever since dinner and yet my table's covered; and my head is still hard at work!" he said wearily, as he opened the door which was opposite the study door, in order that he might have a free line of march.

An sudden thought struck Lance:

"Sir Peter, can you give me three minutes?" he asked, "I want to speak to

Sir Peter was delighted.

"I know, I know," he said, rubbing his forehead gleefully and shutting the door behind him on Lady Judith's portly figure coming up the staircase. "My dear boy, I know exactly what you're going to tell me. You've asked Madge. You've asked her again, and she has said 'Yes,' and you want to be married at once! It would be a capital thing to make one thing of my birthday party and your wedding festivities in one month, eh? My dear boy, I'm delighted! A quarter of an hour's time will settle——"

"I wish to goodness you'd let me talk," interrupted Lance brusquely. "I haven't asked Madge, and I haven't the slightest intention of doing so—that is, I mean," he was correcting himself, "I know if I could ask her just now I should simply say 'No' for my pains. Now, will you tell me what I have to say?"

It was as evident that he had quite forgotten his pleasant meditation over his cigar in the earlier part of the conversation.

Sir Peter looked towards the corner of the room where Mr. Stubbs sat at a table

illuminated by lamplight, with his back to the wall. "Is it anything private—strictly private?"

"I had quite overlooked the secret. But then he was just the sort of man to be overlooked—one of the kind who meet every day, and whom we may see a dozen times over, and then come away, and some of us will assert that he's tall, and some that he's short; a third that he's dark, and a fourth that he's dark; while, as

a matter of fact, he is most likely none of these things and could best be described by a series of negatives.

"No, not exactly private," answered Lance, leading the way, however, to the other end of the room, and speaking in a low voice. "But I know you delight in doing a kind action, and I was going to make a suggestion to you."

Sir Peter was all eager attention at once.

"I hope it covers a wide area," he said, describing a semicircle in the air with his arms. "I dislike wasting time and strength over microscopic schemes."

"I don't think my suggestion can be dignified by the name of 'scheme,' microscopic or otherwise," said Lance. "It's about Miss Shore."

Then he hesitated.

Sir Peter was most willing to help him along. "Fine young woman—very," he ejaculated. "Good figure, well dressed. Foreign mother, I suppose—must be. Shore is a Sussex name, isn't it?"

"I was thinking," Lance went on, "that it might be kind to ask her to prolong her stay here for a day or two; she seems very desolate and friendless!"

"Eh? what, desolate and friendless?"

And Sir Peter's eye wandered to the writing-table, where a locked drawer held his cheque-book. "Did she tell you so? I didn't hear her say so as we came along, and I think I heard all your conversation."

Of necessity he must have done so, seeing that during the drive home he had leaned forward with folded arms on the box seat, which Lance and Miss Shore occupied, for the express purpose of so doing.

Lance felt discretion was needed. "I can't say that she told me so, but I inferred as much from—from the fact of her travelling alone, and from the very melancholy look on her face. You may have noticed it."

"Ah, yes, now you speak of it I did notice that she had a peculiarly sad expression of countenance. I'm sure I shall be delighted. Ask her to stay as long as she feels inclined."

"The invitation would come better from the ladies of the family," suggested Lance.

"Ah, yes, of course. Well, you ask Lady Judith to invite her to stay on a bit."

"No; you ask Lady Judith," said Lance. "The suggestion would come better from you."

Sir Peter rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Eh? No; I don't think it would. Between

you and me, Lance, Lady Judith and I don't hit it off altogether as I could wish sometimes. I don't like to say it, but I don't think she would be at all likely to give Miss Shore a welcome, if she looked upon her as a possible protégée of mine."

Lance began a vigorous demur to this: "Now Uncle Peter——"

Uncle Peter gave a little jump. "I've got an idea—capital idea! You ask Madge to invite Miss Shore to stay on a day or two, and we'll tell Lady Judith when it's done."

"Ah, capital!" echoed Lance. "You ask Madge, and it's settled at once."

"No, you ask Madge. The suggestion will come better from you, my dear boy."

Lance's face changed. "No, I don't think it would. Between you and me, Uncle Peter, Madge and I don't hit it off altogether as I could wish sometimes. I don't like to say it, but I don't think she would be at all likely to give Miss Shore a welcome if she looked upon her as a possible protégée of mine."

"Eh, what! Don't hit it off, you two?" cried Sir Peter. "Don't believe a word of it. You squabble, do you say? Nonsense; what you call squabbling is coquetry on her part, nothing more. Don't get such an idea as that into your head for a moment. Women are born flirts—born coquettees. I ought to know, I have had twenty-five years' experience of married life."

How far Lady Judith had helped him in his experience of feminine coquetry it would be impossible to say. One might as well at any period of her life have attempted a flirtation with the Marble Arch in Hyde Park, or the old Cuddaw Fell itself, as with her.

Lance backed out of the study before this tirade.

He did not notice that Mr. Stubbs, half-turning his head as he sat, watched him out of the room with a curious look in his narrow eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

As a rule, the moral temperature of a household can be more easily taken at the morning than at the evening meal. At the dinner-hour conventionalities are treated with greater respect, and idiosyncrasy is swamped.

Breakfast at the Castle on the morning after Miss Shore's arrival was a typical meal.

Sir Peter ate it walking from room to room.

Lady Judith ate it talking of her farm and her dairy.

Madge ate it reading her letters.

Lance was accustomed to get through breakfast at a fairly brisk pace and then be off to the stables or kennels. On this particular morning, however, he deviated from his usual custom for he ate next to nothing, and then sat still with his empty plate before him watching the door.

It was an odd, jerky sort of breakfast. Food seemed eaten, as it were, in parentheses. Exercise on Sir Peter's part, conversation on Lady Judith's, letter-reading on Madge's, and anything you please on Lance's part, seemed to be the real object of their assembling at nine o'clock in the morning.

Lady Judith was in high spirits over a new patent incubator which she had just introduced into use at her home farm. She could talk of nothing else, and imagined that every one at table was addressing enquiries to her respecting it—which enquiries she answered appropriately or otherwise, as the case might be.

For instance, when Madge asked how a new maid engaged a day or two previously was doing her work she got for reply:

"Works magnificently—in an altogether superior fashion. I shall recommend the thing all over the county."

And when Lance chanced to make a remark upon the extraordinary heat of the previous day, the lady broke in with:

"It hatched over ninety chickens yesterday, and no less than one hundred and ten the day before."

The door of the breakfast-room immediately faced the study on the other side of the hall. Both these doors were set wide open; and Sir Peter, oscillating like a pendulum between the two rooms, would be one moment eating a morsel of chicken in the one, and the next dictating a line to Mr. Stubbs, already seated in the study at his writing-table.

"I hardly know which way to turn, my hands are so full," he said to Madge, literally in passing.

To have heard him speak one might have thought at the very least that he was a Cabinet Minister, with the responsibility on his shoulders of keeping even the balance of Europe.

Madge, looking furtively at Lance as she got through her correspondence, seemed to read, "Is she coming?" written on his face. "I sent my maid to call Miss Shore," she said coldly, answering, as she imagined,

spoken thoughts. "But she tells me I could get no answer to her knocking; so I suppose the young lady is tired with her journey."

She had spoken out all her thoughts I could have added: "Really, I have no objection in the matter beyond the wish that the young lady should save the maid from Lower Upton."

She dawdled about the morning and fast rooms for half-an-hour or so, and disappeared into the gun-room. Sir had eyes and ears only for his correspondence. Lady Judith went trailing through the cornfields, fan in one hand and white umbrella in the other, down to the room.

Madge, feeling that the responsibility of Shore's movements rested on her shoulders, despatched her maid once more with orders to rap louder than ever at the door, and not to come away till she had obtained an assurance that she was heard. When, however, the maid came back with the same report as before—that, in the space of twenty minutes of rapping at the door, not a sound was to be heard, she made her inhospitable wish give way to a kindlier impulse. It might be as she thought, if she herself went up to the young lady's room, in case illness or accident had befallen her.

Accordingly, she made her way to the quarters, and delivered a series of raps on the closed door.

At the same time, never a sound broke the silence within.

When Madge thought it was high time she turned the handle and ascertained for herself the condition of affairs on the other side of the door.

It made as much noise as she could in rapping. There was Miss Shore lying on the bed, dressed in her grey cloth travelling dress of overnight. Her hat was on the floor beside the bed, as if it had been carelessly tossed off; her grey cloak was thrown as if at random, over the face of the dressing-glass.

Was it at random? This was the question Madge asked herself; for there also the cheval glass pushed into a corner of the room, with its face turned to the wall.

With an odd feeling of apprehension, she approached the bed and looked down into the sleeper's face.

Her head was thrown back on the pillow, and she gazed at the white, slender pillar of a throat from a side view. Her face was dead white;

the bandeau of black hair, which fitted the head like a crown, had slanted forward, overlapping the eyebrows; her lips showed scarcely so coral-red as they had in the sunlight on the lawn; her breathing was low and regular, and there was nothing to give Madge the impression that the sleep was an unnatural one.

Nothing except a glass standing on a little table beside the bed, which might—so Madge conjectured—have been hastily drained and set down before the sleeper had thrown herself back on her pillows.

Madge debated for a moment in her own mind what she should do. Ought she to endeavour to rouse the young lady? Or was she in a condition that required medical aid?

She made the round of the room. She drew up the blind, letting the morning sun fall full on the sleeper's face. It transformed the dull black hair into the glossy black of a raven's wing, marked out line by line every blue vein in all its delicate tracery on cheek and eyelid; but never so much as a fluttering breath showed that the girl was conscious of any disturbing influence.

Then Madge thought it would be as well to take counsel on the matter; so to the gun-room accordingly she went, taking it for granted that she would find Lance there.

He was just coming out of the room as she reached it. They took a turn or two in the outside gallery while she detailed to him the state of affairs.

Lance looked disturbed and distressed, she thought; but, for all that, he treated the matter lightly.

"Depend upon it, she's worn out with travelling. Didn't she say that she had had two days of it?" he said. "Don't you remember once how I slept right off for sixteen hours after a heavy day's tramp? Leave her to have her sleep out; she'll wake right enough later on in the day."

"What about the glass beside the bed?" queried Madge suspiciously.

"Oh, I shouldn't think any more of that, if I were you; don't say a word about it to Sir Peter, or he'll be sending off for a dozen doctors, and as many nurses. Take my word for it, there's nothing to fuss over."

They walked up and down the long gallery for a minute or two in silence.

"What do you think about the looking-glasses being hidden and turned to the wall?" presently Madge asked.

Lance laughed.

"Accident—pure accident. The thing was in her way; she pushed it in a corner; she wanted to get rid of her cloak, and by chance threw it over the other. You've made a mountain out of a mole-hill."

"Have I? I'm not so sure of that," answered Madge slowly. "Being what she is"—here she eyed Lance narrowly—"it is difficult to understand her not wishing to look at herself in the glass. Now, if she were as ugly as I am, the thing could easily enough be understood."

With the first part of her sentence Lance seemed to be entirely in accord; the latter part he ignored.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "as you say, being what she is, it is difficult to understand that she could have the slightest objection to be confronted with her own face in a mirror."

Then, as if to end a discussion which was distasteful to him, he made a slight excuse, and went back to his guns once more.

Madge, suddenly recollecting that she had on the previous day left her work-basket in a little sitting-room off the gallery, turned the handle of the door, to discover, to her amazement, Mr. Stubbs just within the room, "not a yard from the key-hole," as she said to herself indignantly. He was in a standing posture, as if he had retreated before the opening door.

Madge's face showed her astonishment.

"I came here to find Lady Judith," he said, a little hurriedly. "I suppose she is down at the home farm?"

Then, without waiting for a reply, he slipped past her out of the room.

The impression left on Madge's mind was that Mr. Stubbs had been an intentional listener to her conversation with Lance.

A FEW FLOWERS—WILD AND CULTIVATED.

IN an old game of Forfeits, the forfeited person had to run through the alphabet, from A to Z, in search of initials of the epithets most applicable to the object of his affections: thus, "I love my love with an A, because she is amiable; with a B, because she is beautiful; with a C, because she is charming;" and so on, to the end.

Amateur, and perhaps professional horti-

culturists entertain fondness for their gardens from an equal diversity of motives. The grand seigneur loves his garden with an S, because it is a show; the busy man with a P and an R, because it is his pleasure-ground and his resting-place; the botanist with a C, because it contains a choice collection. The present writer likes his garden with an L, when it is a lesson; does not hate it with a P, though it is sometimes a puzzle; but is greatly attached to it by an R and an S, since it is always a reminder and a souvenir.

To explain. A dear friend gives you a plant you have wished for. You keep and cultivate the fern or the flower at first for its own intrinsic merits. But the friend passes away. You then cherish the plant all the more affectionately, in memory of pleasant hours and kindly acts, now floating away further and further in the past, on the ever-flowing stream of time. All who have attained old age, and not a few who still are young, will perfectly understand and sympathise with such a case.

Or again: In the Hautes Pyrénées, you are crossing, by the mountain road, the ridge which separates the valley of Bagnères-de-Bigorre from that of Bagnères-de-Luchon. As you mount, your eye is caught by a bright pink something waving aloft. You alight, and reach the tempting object. On the flower-stem you are delighted to find ripe seeds, which you gather.

Sown in your garden at home, they vegetate, thrive, and eventually blossom. They are only the Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*), a hardy perennial which will make itself at home in almost any open situation, and the leaves of which are entire and rounded near the ground, and curiously cut, slashed, or divided higher up. But the sight of it, when you take your walks, will bring before your mental vision the long ascent beside a brawling stream; the moss-grown fir trees, with their tops entangled in scraps of cloudy mist; the bare, open upland covered with stunted grass, and the rich descent into the valley of Luchon.

And thus the sight of a plant in your garden will recall a scene, a landscape, an event. While travelling or excursioning, the unexpected appearance of some attractive flower by the way is an incentive to take it and establish it at home, which sometimes succeeds, but more frequently fails.

Out on the ramble, say in the north of France, it is such a pleasure to behold a

lovely plant enjoying itself in the pure air and bright sunshine of its native region—to find, for instance, a Bee Ophrys displaying its spike of insect-like blooms above the short crisp grass fringing the border of a wood. You hesitate to touch it, lest the outspread wings should enable the blossom to fly away beyond your grasp. Nevertheless, if carefully removed, with a good lump of turf and mould around its roots, it will bear transplantation into well-drained chalky soil, and remind you next summer of the spot where you found it.

More than one of these terrestrial orchids has its leaves handsomely mottled with dark brown or black spots. The earliest, bearing a spike of crimson-purple flowers, which last a considerable time, grows either under trees or in the open where the soil retains a certain amount of moisture. In the woods, and on their outskirts, and on uncultivated chalky slopes, a succession of charming ground-orchids may be found nearly all summer long, each in its own proper habitat, but not all equally easy to cultivate.

All were included by the older botanists in the genus *Orchis*. More recently, those whose flowers are without a spur—comprising the insect-bearing species, *apifera*, *aranifera*, *myodes*, and others—have been separated into the genus *Ophrys*. But all have double fleshy tuberculous roots, which must be left intact if their removal is to succeed.

On entering this forest in early spring, you will find the ground carpeted with the smaller periwinkle, *Vinca minor*, whose pretty blue flowers have one defect, namely, that by candle-light they are not pretty at all, but look insipidly dull, of a slaty grey, which renders them ineligible for evening bouquets. Oxlips and cowslips are there in plenty, but they seem to have driven out their near relative, the primrose, for which you may search in vain. The moss beneath the trees will be almost hidden by the wood-anemone's starry blossoms, white, tinged outside, when they begin to go off, with slight streaks of rosy purple. Their colour, indeed, normally white, is apt to be somewhat variable.

So thoroughly do its creeping roots permeate the soil—and a very small bit will grow and spread—that you can hardly transfer any plant from the forest in the best and safest way, that is with earth and moss attached to its roots, without bringing with it a wood-anemone. You

will not be aware of its presence at the time; but the following spring it will start up, and display its simple flowers.

Another delicate and pleasing spring flower, often introduced from the woods in exactly the same way, is the wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), which equally deserves a benevolent tolerance. Its fragile blossoms are white, slightly washed with lilac; its shamrock-like leaves are as acid as sorrel, and might be used in cookery or salads, and, indeed, have been so employed.

There exists a miniature pure white double variety of the wood-anemone, a perfect gem, flowering a little later than the parent species, which everybody does not possess, although it is readily propagated by division of the root. When obtained—and it is a thing to have—it is often lost by the digging over flower-beds so ruthlessly performed by working or jobbing gardeners when “cleaning up” in autumn or winter.

Many charming and interesting plants which naturally take their season of rest and disappear underground during several months of the year are thus buried beyond recovery and destroyed. The way to save them is either to mark their place with permanent stakes, or, better, to devote to them a flower-bed or border which is never, at any time, allowed to be dug, but only to be kept clean, weeded, and slightly stirred on its surface with a hand-fork so small as to disturb or eradicate nothing without its being perceived.

French children who employ their Thursday's holiday by rambling in the woods bring back, in spring, bouquets of cowslips for their own enjoyment, and bunches of young shoots of *Asperula odorata*, which they offer as gifts to persons who they think will give them a sou or two in return.

These bunches are intended to be placed in drawers containing linen, for the same purpose as we put bunches of lavender. Their perfume—resembling that of new-made hay—is given out more freely after the sprigs have begun to droop and fade.

The plant, unobtrusive, sends up slender, angular stems, round which the oblong leaves are arranged in circles, verticillated like a ruff, whence, no doubt, its name of Woodruff, sometimes however written Woodroof. Its tufts of small flowers are white and sweet-smelling. It will content itself with a place in any shady corner, or under trees; and, as sixpence will purchase a plant, which is perennial—should you

have no opportunity of finding it wild—it may fairly claim your hospitality, if only for the esteem in which our German cousins hold it as the soul and spirit of their much-loved May-drink.

May-drink is limited to the season when the shoots of the woodruff are fresh and tender—say from the middle of April till the middle of June, according to climate and situation. For earlier use, plants may be forced in a hotbed; but their perfume will be inferior to that of those grown naturally.

For those who know it not, here is the formula for preparing this delicious beverage:

Put into a silver tankard—or into a large glass jug with a well-fitting cover—a small bunch of woodruff, a few lumps of sugar, and two or three slices of lemon or orange, or both. Then fill up with common, weak, white wine; the poorest and thinnest Rhine wine—provided it be not sour—is the proper thing to use. If not to be had, Sauterne, Vin de Grave, or other French white wine, should be substituted; but these should be diluted with water if a hearty draught is to be indulged in. In moderation it is a most strengthening drink for convalescents. Half red Rhine wine and half white may be employed.

Cider, with a glass of sherry or madeira in it, makes not a bad imitation.

Let all steep, in a very cool place, a few hours, or even all night, with the cover down, and serve with the things floating in it.

Sip this some sunny afternoon in a garden overlooking the fast-flowing Rhine, in company with those you love, while a good band is playing one of Lanner's waltzes, and then, if you like, discuss the question whether life is worth living.

While taking a month's inexpensive pleasure in early summer at Port Vendres, a small sea-side town on the French Mediterranean coast, not far from the Spanish frontier, a native fruit-seller brought us big handfuls of superb wild, pure white, singularly-shaped flowers, together with the bulbs from which their flower-stems started. The spot where they grew was not divulged—for fear, perhaps, that we might go and gather them ourselves. They were noble specimens of *Pancreatium maritimum*, called by Mrs. Loudon "the sea-daffodil"—a flattering compliment to our daffodil, which, however, when wild and single, is not to be despised.

Afterwards, travelling eastwards and

skirting the coast, we saw the *pancreatium* flourishing under most extraordinary conditions. There it was, bravely rearing its snow-white head of flowers, not defying, but enjoying, the blazing sun without flagging or fading, and rooted in pure sand so hot at the time that we were not sorry to withdraw the hand when plunged in it. The blue Mediterranean, outspread close by, suggested an idea of possible coolness; but the sea-breeze was so faint that it hardly ruffled the mirage which flickered over the heated sand.

No wonder, then, that, though easy to keep alive in a greenhouse, or even at the foot of a sheltered south wall, the sea-daffodil is by no means easy to bloom in captivity. To indulge its own particular tastes, you must almost bake it and nearly starve it. If inclined to try it, you may plant it rather deep in a good-sized pot containing three parts of sea sand and one of light soil. The excellent "Bon Jardinier" tells you not to disturb the bulbs oftener than once in four or five years.

Should you succeed in taming this wild beauty, you will be well rewarded for your pains.

Accidental acquaintanceships, like the foregoing, with plants in their native home, often give instructive lessons as to the surest method of cultivating them.

In the course of a pedestrian trudge along the now famous and fashionable Riviera, I was confronted by a tall black rock, with a smooth perpendicular face which was absorbing the full rays of a noontide sun. The rock in itself was nothing wonderful thereabouts. But what did look wonderful was a narrow bright-green ribbon stretching down it from top to bottom. What could it be?

A nearer approach explained the riddle. A slight fissure ran through the surface of the rock. Along the fissure there trickled a thread of water, supplied by some source or drainage above. This tiny water-course was followed throughout by a continuous growth of maidenhair fern (*Adiantum Capillus-Veneris*), the delicate fronds of which were put into high relief by the dark background outspread behind them.

What a suggestive hint for the inexperienced cultivator! Previously, in Cornwall, I had been presented, as a rarity, with a plant of this same fern, found on the rocky wall of a seaside cave. Naturally, I supposed that it liked obscurity and did not much care for drink. Now, I found that, like

the date-palm, it thrives admirably with its foot in the water and its head in the fire.

Few lovers of plants could resist the temptation to detach a specimen. By wrapping it in wet rag all day while travelling, and plunging its root in water all night, I brought it home safely and planted it under the conditions indicated, where it prospered, increased, and multiplied. In the Oriental Pyrenees, I have since found this maidenhair growing among the stones surrounding a hot spring as it issued from the ground.

THE BISHOP'S MISTAKE.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

DULBOROUGH, a pretty country town in Blankshire, bears the unenviable reputation of being the dullest of all dull English country towns. Once, years ago, when Quakers were Quakers indeed, it was a great stronghold of the sect, and to this fact is probably owing the puritanical element which so long lingered, and, to a certain extent, still lingers in the town. For, although the Quakers in their broad-brimmed hats and square-toed shoes are dead and gone, and the pretty old ladies in their coal-scuttle bonnets and dainty white or lilac shawls no longer throng the streets on "quarterly meeting" days, and exchange greetings in their quaint phraseology, though their degenerate descendants are presented at Court and ride after the hounds in pink, still the old Quaker influence is by no means extinct, and to it may be attributed the dearth of amusements, the formality and stiffness, and the lack of geniality which are characteristic of the town and people.

Once, indeed, some years ago, when a great wave of commercial prosperity swept over the North of England, when fortunes were made and lost so rapidly that the small tradesman of yesterday was the millionaire of to-day and the beggar of to-morrow, there seemed a prospect of a better state of things arising for Dulborough.

Ironstone was discovered in the adjacent hills; companies were formed; works were built; great blast furnaces and rows of workmen's cottages sprang up as if by magic; and Dulborough, from a quiet town, scarcely larger than a good-sized village, seemed likely to be metamorphosed into a large manufacturing town. But this

period of commercial prosperity was very brief and spasmodic. The "good times" soon passed, the depression in trade—and especially in that branch of trade which most closely affected the town—commenced and continued, and Dulborough, as if exhausted by its spasmodic effort, sank back into its old drowsy state again. Now the blast furnaces stand grim, and black and silent amidst the rows of deserted cottages, the crash of the great hammers is heard no more, and the sky is no more reddened by the lurid glow of the furnaces and nothing of the former prosperity of the town remains but sad memories.

Now, in a place where amusements are so scanty as in Dulborough—where there is no theatre or music-hall, and where the people are split up into innumerable little cliques; where the rungs of the social ladder are so numerous and so closely put together, that it is difficult and indeed almost impossible for a stranger to discern the divisions—it is not surprising that trivial events acquire a fictitious importance and it may be easily understood what an excitement an important event such as the resignation of the Vicar of the parish church would occasion in Dulborough, and how many and varied would be the speculations which would arise as to his successor, and the probable changes that would follow the appointment.

The old Vicar was a very shy and unsociable man. He was esteemed, but little liked or indeed known personally by his congregation. His wife, who might have been a connecting link between priest and people, was unfortunately an invalid, and could take very little part in the work of the parish. Lately, she had been worse, and the doctors had recommended her to try a warmer climate; and as the Vicar was a man of large private means, he had resigned his living, and intended, as soon as his successor was appointed by the Bishop, to reside in the South of England.

Now, the Bishop of that diocese was the most pious and learned, and also the most liberal-minded of all the Bishops on the bench. He had written a theological work, which, for depth of knowledge and profundity of learning, exceeded every other book written before or since, which had gained the wonder and admiration of all his brother Bishops, and had caused him to be regarded as the brightest light and ornament of the Church. He was blameless, vigilant, given to hospitality, and, indeed, possessed all the qualities which are

necessary to one desiring the office of a Bishop. All but one. He was not only unmarried; but he was credited, whether justly or unjustly, with holding very strong opinions in favour of the celibacy of the clergy. It was whispered, but this was principally among discontented curates, with large families and ridiculously disproportionate incomes, that preferment was more commonly bestowed upon young unmarried men than upon those who, their quivers being full to overflowing, stood in most need of it.

In person, the Bishop was small and insignificant, with a plain, clever face, and short-sighted eyes, whose naturally kind expression was hidden behind a pair of blue spectacles, which midnight study and constant poring over musty tomes had rendered prematurely necessary. He was much esteemed and loved in his diocese, for though childless himself, he took a fatherly interest in all his younger clergy, and won from them in return an almost reverential affection and devotion.

It had been long whispered in Dulborough that the Bishop was anxious to see a younger and more active man at Saint Peter's. Some time previously he had offered the Vicar a country living, and had been much disappointed when it was refused. Consequently, no one was surprised when it became known that the Rev. Maurice Chetwynd, a protégé and distant connection of the Bishop's, had been appointed to the living.

All sorts of rumours were rife, and the liveliest excitement prevailed in Dulborough respecting the new Vicar. He was known to be young, handsome, and unmarried; and when the news spread abroad that he intended to bring with him, as his coadjutors, two curates also young and unmarried, then indeed did the hearts of all the marriageable spinsters in Dulborough beat high with hope and expectation.

Autumn was waning when Maurice Chetwynd first came to Dulborough. For the last five years his work had lain in a crowded parish in a great manufacturing town, and the change from the narrow, squalid streets, and the pale, haggard people who herded there, to the pretty country town, with its wide streets, and well-dressed, prosperous-looking inhabitants, was indeed strange and delightful to him.

The Vicarage was a pretty, old-fashioned house, with a tennis ground, and a large

garden, where the finest flowers and the earliest fruit in the neighbourhood grew. This garden had been the old Vicar's great delight and pride. It was kept in perfect order; not a weed dared to show its face; and the tennis ground was a marvel of beauty and verdure.

Truly the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places, Maurice Chetwynd thought, as on that October afternoon he drove up the garden and saw the sun shining on the grey stone house, and the sheltered, trim garden gay still with autumn flowers, and on the purple blossoms of a clematis which hung over the porch, and waved to and fro in the evening breeze.

Sarah, one of the late Vicar's servants, who had remained behind as the new Vicar's housekeeper, stood waiting to receive him in the hall, and took him into a small room, which had formerly been used as a study, and where she had arranged the furniture which Chetwynd had sent from his old lodgings.

"I put the things you sent in here, sir; they looked lost-like in the dining-room," she explained. "I suppose you will be getting new furniture for it and the other rooms?"

"All in good time. I am a bachelor, you know, Sarah," Maurice laughed good-humouredly. "Anything is good enough for me. As long as I have a chair to sit upon, and a table to eat and write at, and a bed to sleep on, I am content. And the room looks very nice," he added complacently.

Sarah inwardly groaned in spirit. She groaned still more during the next few months over the changed aspect of the Vicarage, when the two curates arrived and the long dining-room—only used in the late Vicar's time for his state dinner-parties—was turned into a kind of club-room, where the working men of the parish, in company with the Vicar or one of his curates, might smoke, or read, or play billiards during the winter evenings. The mud which those working men deposited on the mats and in the hall, their loud voices and laughter, the odour of the strong tobacco they smoked, used to drive Sarah—who had been used, in the old Vicar's time, to better things—almost desperate sometimes. She was often tempted to resign her post, but she had grown to feel a motherly affection for the pleasant, cheery young Vicar, and could not find it in her heart to abandon him to the tender mercies of a strange housekeeper.

It was not long before the congregation of the parish church, which in the old Vicar's time had sadly fallen off, improved rapidly, and, as it increased, the congregations at the other churches — of which there were five — diminished. The churchwardens looked blue, and sighed over the scanty offertories, and the clergymen, all of whom were Benedicts with large families, made sarcastic comments on the advantages possessed by young unmarried men over their married brethren. Only Theo Farquhar, the Doctor's pretty daughter, held herself aloof and declined to join the admiring throng of ladies who flocked to the week-day services, and worked in the district, and frequented the Dorcas meetings which the Vicar, who combined the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, held once a fortnight at the Vicarage, and of which Sarah, the housekeeper, strongly disapproved.

"Poor lad" — the Vicar was nearly thirty — "he's young an' foolish. He'll know better by-an'-by! Wait till he gets a nice wife," she used to say sometimes when her patience had been more than commonly exercised. "She'll soon knock the nonsense out of him!"

But though, in Sarah's opinion, a nice wife was the one thing needed to make her Vicar perfect, she showed herself by no means anxious to welcome in that capacity any one of the ladies who attended the Dorcas meetings. She saw that the tea with which they were regaled was hot and strong, that the bread-and-butter and tea-cakes were of the choicest description; but she was very grim and taciturn in her manner towards the fair workers, and openly expressed her opinion that it was not so much for love of the work as for love of the Vicar, that they flocked so eagerly on every alternate Thursday to the Vicarage.

"Why don't you come to the Dorcas meetings, Theo?" Amy Russell, who was one of the most energetic of the workers, said one afternoon to Theo Farquhar, the Doctor's daughter. "You have no idea how nice they are or how much we enjoy them. So different from what they used to be in poor Mrs. Tenby's time. The Vicar is so genial and pleasant, and takes so much interest in the work."

"Indeed! Does he sew too?"

Theo asked the question in her most innocent voice, and she drooped her long lashes so demurely over her brown eyes

that Miss Russell failed to see the gleam of mischief that shone there.

"Of course not! Don't be so absurd. He comes in occasionally, always while we are having tea, and talks to us, and it is so delightful!"

"I dare say." Theo shrugged her shoulders. "We are indeed highly favoured in our spiritual guides just now. Three unmarried men, all young and passably good-looking! Is there another parish in the diocese so blessed, I wonder!"

"You needn't scoff, Theo. And as for being unmarried, we all know that Mr. Chetwynd does not intend to marry. He does not approve of married clergymen."

"Of course he does not. He is a protégé of the Bishop's, and we all know what his opinions are on that subject, and what Mr. Chetwynd's must be, brought up at the feet of such a Gamaliel," Theo answered demurely. "Still, while there's life there's hope, you know, and he may change his mind some day."

"I am afraid there is not much chance of that," Amy said sadly, "but I wish you would come, Theo. Do; just for once!"

Theo shook her head, and pointed to a basket filled up with stockings and un-mended garments.

"I have far too much work of my own to do, Amy. I have no time to spare for such trifolities as you describe. Besides, I don't believe," she went on audaciously, "that half of you do any work worth mentioning. You, my dear, in common with a good many people, suffer from a lack of occupation, and you gladly hail Dorcas meetings and week-day services as a slight distraction from the ennui inseparable from such a state of things. Now, if you had a house and an invalid mother to look after, and four boys to make and mend for, you would not find a sewing party so much of a treat as you appear to do. I have too many home duties to take any part in parish work, and so I told Mr. Chetwynd."

"You know Mr. Chetwynd then, Theo? I never heard you mention that before," Amy said in a surprised voice.

"Oh, yes, I know him" — the pretty pink colour deepened in Theo's cheeks as she spoke — "he comes here sometimes to see — mother; and I give him the benefit of my advice and opinion occasionally. Dollie and he are great friends; aren't you, Doll?"

Dollie was sitting on the low window-seat, half in and half out of the window;

that is to say, her head and body were within the room, but her long, black legs dangled outside the window. She was a pale child of eight or nine, with great, dreamy, grey eyes and a pretty, sensitive mouth. An odd child, wise beyond her years, fonder of books than of playthings, and with quaint, old-fashioned ways and sayings which often startled Theo, and made her feel half afraid of, and half anxious for the child.

Very pretty and pleasant the Doctor's garden looked that April afternoon. The sun was shining on the red-brick house, on the beds of bright spring flowers, on the tender greens and browns of the beeches and elms which shaded the tennis ground, and which were now just breaking into leaf. It shone on the twins who were playing with a big dog on the grass, and fall on the long mane of fleecy golden hair which hung down Dollie's back. She looked up dreamily as her sister spoke.

"He likes Theo better than me," she said in her quiet voice. "He talks to me, but he looks all the time at Theo! I suppose that is," Dollie went on meditatively, "because he thinks she is pretty."

Amy Russell stared and laughed. Theo's cheeks flamed up suddenly and her busy fingers trembled. She gave a forced laugh.

"You silly child! How do you know what Mr. Chetwynd thinks?" she said. "He didn't tell you, I suppose?"

"Yes, he did," and Dollie nodded her yellow head quaintly. "I asked him why he stared so hard at you when you were not looking at him, and he laughed and got red—oh, as red as you are now, Theo—and he said—oh, in such a queer voice—that it was because your face was so sweet and tranquil that it rested him to look at you; that he thought the damsel in the House Beautiful, who led Christian to the chamber called 'Peace,' must have been something like you, and that when once he entered here all his troubles and worries slipped away from him, just as Christian's burden slipped from his back when he reached the cross."

Theo's blushes grew still more intense; she pulled her needle so sharply through the stocking she was mending that the worsted snapped suddenly.

"It was very rude of you to ask him such a question," she said, with a crushing air of dignity which was quite thrown away on Dollie. "The idea of asking any gentleman whether he thought I was—

pretty! I thought you had more sense, Dollie!"

But Dollie declined to be snubbed.

"But I didn't ask him that, Theo. What I wanted to know was why he was always staring at you; there was nothing rude in that," she retorted placidly.

Theo deemed it best not to pursue the subject. She laughed and changed the conversation; but her cheeks were still burning painfully, and her heart was beating with a strange sensation of surprise and pleasure.

Could it be true? Was she really a comfort to him? she wondered. Was it really a rest to him after his hard day's work, to come in and spend a quiet half-hour in the pleasant drawing-room, to chat with her mother and herself, or—as happened quite as often—to sit in silence and lean back in his chair, and listen while she played his favourite nocturns or symphonies to him? Was it this that his constant visits to the Red House—as Dr. Farquhar's house was called—and which took place always once and sometimes two or three times a week, meant? There was very little formality or ceremony at the Red House, and during the last few weeks they had all grown so accustomed to the Vicar's visits, that they had almost ceased to consider him a visitor. Mrs. Farquhar would look up and smile when he entered the room, and hold out a white hand to him with a pleasant word of welcome. Dollie—who was not very strong just then, and was having a long holiday—would lift her dreamy eyes from her book and give him a nod and smile, and Theo would bring him a cup of tea and then go back to her work, or her music, or whatever she was doing when he entered the room, and leave him to talk or be silent as he liked best.

No one but Chetwynd himself knew how he had grown to look forward to those quiet half-hours, or how sweet and strange this glimpse of home life and domestic happiness was to him. He had never known it before; his father and mother had died when he was quite a child; all his life up the time of his ordination had been spent at school, or college, or with his godfather the Bishop, who was not a Bishop then but only a country Rector. Home in the true sense of the word he had never known until now; now for the first time he began to understand the true meaning of the word. He had known very few women, none intimately. He was nearly thirty, but he had never felt even a

passing fancy for any girl, and the sweet, foolish rapture of a young man's love dream was quite unknown to him. Until now he had fully shared the Bishop's opinion that a clergyman, unfettered by domestic ties and anxieties, was better able to devote himself to his work and to tread in the footsteps of the Apostles, than one whose interests must necessarily be divided between private and public duties. He had the greatest reverence and love for his godfather; he desired nothing so much as to imitate him and to be in every respect like him, and until now he had been firmly convinced that the celibate life which the Bishop had chosen, and secretly, Chetwynd knew, longed for his clergy to choose, was the noblest and the best. But now, for the first time, a doubt of this assailed him, and longings for a home, for love of wife and children, and for all the sacred pleasures of domestic life rent his heart. As day by day he went to the Red House, as day by day he recognised the perfect happiness and rest which were to be found there, and there only, and knew that it was Theo's presence that wrought the charm, that made the quiet drawing-room a very haven of peace to him, the solitary life which he had planned out for himself grew more and more distasteful, the future with which he had been so well content, and of which he had so often talked with his godfather, unutterably dreary and empty; for it was a future in which Theo had no part, where a wife's help and sympathy, and children's love, were all unknown. It was Dollie's innocent question that first opened his eyes to the true state of his feelings. He left the Red House, and went home and shut himself up in his study, feeling bewildered and excited, and as if he had arrived at a turning-point in his life. It seemed to him as if he had suddenly come to where his path divided into two, and that the moment when he should make his choice had arrived. And he stood and looked first at one and then at the other; and there stood at one a radiant, white-robed figure, with smiling eyes and outstretched hand, which pointed down a pleasant path where love's roses were blooming and love's voices filled the air with sweetness; and at the other a dark figure with a grave, sorrowful face, and shoulders bowed beneath the weight of a heavy burden—a burden borne for others—and she pointed down a gloomy path, and bade him follow her.

He looked and hesitated long. Long and fierce was the struggle that raged in his heart. Love—this strange, new passion, whose very existence he had doubted before—drew him one way with almost resistless force; gratitude, duty—the gratitude he owed to the man who had been more than a father to him—another. How could he bear to disappoint his benefactor's hopes, to run contrary to his wishes? How could he confess that the scheme of life which they had mapped out together had grown hateful to him; that the future of which they had so often spoken with such deep earnestness, which was to be devoted to the service of the Church they both loved so well, in which self and self-seeking had no part, was impossible to him now; that he, having put his hand to the plough, was already looking back, proving himself unfit for his high calling?

No, he could not do it, he told himself. It was impossible. He must flee from temptation before an honourable retreat became impossible. There was no harm done as yet, he had no reason to think that Theo cared for him; now, if he suffered, at all events he suffered alone. He went no more to the Red House; the chair which they had been wont to call his remained empty now; no longer did Theo listen for the well-known ring at the door; the pleasant, frank face, which she secretly admired so much, was seen no more in the pretty drawing-room. They all wondered over the sudden cessation of his visits. Gentle Mrs. Farquhar, who never thought ill of any one, attributed the reason to pressure of work and lack of time, and openly hoped that the Vicar was not overworking himself. Dollie grumbled, and wondered why he did not come, and suggested it was because he had grown tired of them; Theo kept her thoughts on the subject to herself. It was her private opinion that Amy Russell, who was one of the greatest gossips in the place, had retailed Dollie's question and the Vicar's answer; that in consequence, some gossip concerning his frequent visits to the Red House had arisen and reached his ears, and that he thought it best to discontinue these visits. The idea that he considered the precaution necessary was intensely galling to Theo; he need not have been afraid, she told herself; she was not so susceptible as all that! So, though she missed him sorely, she put a bold front upon it, was as merry and bright and

played tennis as gaily as ever; and if sometimes, when she was alone, the longing in her heart for the pleasant companionship, which had come into her life with the spring-time and vanished from it almost before the spring flowers were faded, grew almost intolerably painful, no one but herself knew of it, or guessed what an aching heart a merry smile can hide.

She met Chetwynd occasionally in the town, sometimes when she was alone, sometimes in the company of others; if the latter, he would generally stop and shake hands and ask after Mrs. Farquhar, but if the former, would pass her with merely a bow and smile. The truth was—little as Theo guessed it—that he could not trust himself to be alone with her; eager words rose to his lips, which must at any cost be crushed back and remain for ever unspoken. The cold dignity of her manner, so unlike the sweet, gracious manner which had won his love; the wondering glance which now and then he fancied he read in her brown eyes, told him quite as plainly as any words could have done that she was disappointed in him, and seemed to ask silently for the explanation he longed to, and yet dared not, give her. Perhaps, some day, he told himself, when some worthier man than himself had won her love and she was a happy wife, he might tell her, and, since love was denied to him, ask for the friendship which—poor substitute though it was—would, after all, be better than nothing!

OLD RICHMOND.

THERE is no time of the year when Richmond is without its charm; but in the first soft prime of summer time the scene is surely at its best: before the trees have become languid, and are powdered with London dust—while the first freshness is there, and the soft, almost dangerous, beauty. To float gently up with the tide, where the eye rests upon the white arches of the bridge, gleaming against the leafy hill and terraced groves—here is the epicurean paradise; here the lotus-eater's abode, where we may forget the cares and duties of the outer world. Hereabouts lies the Castle of Indolence, in its soft, unbroken calm.

Perhaps, when we take to terra firma and visit the main streets of the little town, we shall find the spell of quietude broken into many fragments; for the

people who live in Richmond and resort there are not of a torpid, drowsy nature by any means. Here we have George Street, leading from the railway station, and Hill Street at right angles to it, with smart shops of all kinds, but especially pastrycooks', with a specialty for those charming little cheesecakes called Maids of Honour. Then there are carriages and horses, a throng of well-dressed people shopping and gossiping—the Lass of Richmond Hill is there in full force. Anon, a four-horse coach rolls along with twanging horn, and whirls round the sharp corner towards the bridge. Now, why should there be this sharp elbow in the road? The way to the river is straight on down a narrow lane called Water Lane, where are brewery walls and humble cottages, and the steam of vats and coppers. And during all the long centuries that had elapsed since here was first a human dwelling-place, up to about a hundred years ago, this lane was the way to the ferry, and where the head of the bridge is now was Ferry Hill, where the rude flat-bottomed boat would be waiting for passengers, with old Charon ready to demand his toll.

There exists a charming mezzotint, dated 1776, which shows the present Richmond Bridge in the course of leisurely construction, the white balustrade half completed, men in tall hats at work upon the unfinished arches. The ferryboat is still at work carrying over its load of passengers in sacques and wide-skirted coats.

But if the inhabitants of Richmond could have had their way, the bridge would have been lower down the river, and built in a direct line with George Street and Water Lane, thus opening up the town to the river, and forming a thoroughfare much more broad and convenient from a commercial point of view. But Mr. Wyndham's plan prevailed with the county authorities; and, as nothing could beat the picturesqueness of the bridge in its present site, with the wooded ait affording contrast and sweet shadows and reflections on the silvery tide, we may be thankful for once that the popular cause did not prevail.

The great majority of those who visit Richmond make their way either to the bridge or the hill, and leave unseen the quaintest and most characteristic part of the old town. There is the famous finger-post at the crossways, now combined with ornamental street lamps, but which is in

itself a pleasant reminder of Richmond's rural estate, and one arm points conspicuously to "The Green." It is not far to seek, this pleasant green, surrounded on two sides at least by quaint old-fashioned houses. Thirty years ago the green was in rapid progress of being ruined by atrocious modern villas; but happily a change of taste has arrested the process, and the pleasant colour of old times is carefully preserved, and such new buildings as are inevitable harmonise sufficiently well with their surroundings. The old theatre is gone—that old Richmond Theatre which had seen Garrick in his prime, George Colman the Younger, and Edmund Kean, and which witnessed the first *début* of Helen Faucit. But "Maid of Honour Row" is still standing, all so formal and prim, with gates and railings of the handsome twisted ironwork of other days, when sedan-chairs and link-boys, and the King's heavy gilded coaches, often stopped the way.

Then there is the old palace in the corner, with an ancient gateway still standing, above which are the sculptured arms of the Tudors, all with the true cachet of antiquity. This is the wardrobe-gate of the old palace, and within there is a quaint three-cornered green with buildings of the last century round about—like St. James's Palace in their formal Georgian aspect—and here and there parts of older buildings, restored and adapted to modern uses.

But the green has its history in connection with the palace; the green where the boys are now playing cricket, and where the old apple-woman stands with her basket under the trees, while people saunter in and out of the handsome pleasant free library.

Fancy the palace standing there in its full dimensions—the palace of Henry the Fifth—with halls and chapel, buttery and wardrobe, its grand gateway, where stand the men-at-arms, with corselets and steel caps. We are in Henry the Seventh's time, and the King, humouring the chivalric aspirations of his courtiers—which he was far from sharing—has proclaimed a grand tournament, or, as Holinshed has it, a "great and valiant justing, the which endured by the space of the moneth sometime within the said palace, and sometime without upon the greene before the gate of the said palace."

Upon the green, in the course of this tournament, was fought a fatal combat, graced by the presence of the King and the lords and ladies of the court; but

fought as furiously and savagely as any of the combats "à outrance" of more ancient times. The dispute that originated the duel began, no doubt, in the jealousy entertained by the English Knights and Nobles of the Welsh adherents of the King, who flocked to the Court of their Royal countryman, eager for honours and employment.

A favourite usher of the King's was one Hugh Vaughan, to whom Garter had allotted arms which an English Knight, Sir James Parker, denounced as an infringement of his own. The King supported his henchman, and the matter, being one of honour, was referred to the ordeal of battle. The lists were set in due order, the trumpets rang out their challenges, and, with lances couched, the two combatants rode fiercely at each other over Richmond Green. At the first course the English Knight was borne to the earth, his brain pierced by the Welshman's lance.

The result of the fight is ascribed by Holinshed to casualty or mischance; but the chronicler wrote when the hand of the Tudor was still heavy on the land.

But old Stowe is more explicit, and writes that the cause of the Knight's death "was thought to be long of a false helmet, which, by force of the cronacle"—whatever that may be—"fayled, and so he was stricken into the mouth that his tongue was borne into the hinder part of the head, and so he died incontinently."

Anyhow, the Knight was slain in fair fight, and none molested the stout Welshman for his deed. Some years after we meet Hugh in high feather, attending upon the King when he received Prince Philip of Spain, who was entertained at Richmond Palace, and he is described in the Paston Letters as "Sir Hew Wagham, upon a bay horse, trapped with cremysyn velvet full of gyllt bells, a gown of black velvet and a cheyn of gold, bawdryk wys"—along baldrick-fashion across the chest, "worth five hundred pownd."

Another tournament was held on Richmond Green soon after the accession of Henry the Eighth, when the young and handsome monarch himself took part in the chivalric encounters. But after that the green figures no more in history, although, doubtless, it has had its full share of revels, feasts, and merry-makings, from time to time.

Then we may cross the old palace yard and reach a quaint lane which leads down to

the riverside, where once stood the chief frontage of the old palace; and here, seated by the old garden wall which encloses the site of the earliest of all the palaces that successively existed here, a garden where yews and formal walks may have lasted since the days of Elizabeth, with the river flowing in front—the one unchanged element in the scene—we may recall some of the events connected with the famous old palace.

Ages ago, here was the manor-house of Shene, a manor that seems to have been in royal hands before the Conquest, a manor that included the whole of the peninsula, with its rich meadows and pastures, which is now occupied by Kew Gardens and the old deer park. East Shene still remains, a hamlet on the other side of the isthmus.

Behind the fertile isthmus were wide commons and heaths, affording excellent hunting grounds. Altogether, it was a right Royal manor, although alienated soon after the Conquest, and only resumed as a Royal demesne in the days of Edward the First. And from that date it became a favourite residence of the Plantagenet Kings. Here, in lonely state, died great King Edward, the third of the name.

And here came his successor, Richard, in the flush of all his splendid fortunes. Here at Shene were spent Richard's happiest years, in the society of his young Queen, Anne of Bohemia. When she died there, after twelve years of happy married life, Richard, we are told, cursed Shene, or held it as accursed, and commanded the palace to be demolished. And this was done so that the place lay waste till the end of the following reign. But Henry the Fifth built a new palace there, not heeding the curse, or perhaps thinking to evade it by occupying a site at a short distance from the old one. But there was certainly nothing in the fate of Henry, his early death and unachieved work, or in the unhappy, troubled existence of his successor, to encourage people to meddle with suchlike things as curses. The palace of Henry the Fifth existed till the reign of Henry the Seventh, when in 1498 occurred a great fire, which practically destroyed the palace. The King, fond of the site, at once set to work to rebuild it. In 1499 we find the King dating his letters, "Ex castello nostro de Shena," but in the following year the style is changed, and it is now Richmond.

In this change of name perhaps the King was influenced a little by some

superstitious feeling that the curse of unhappy Richard still clung to the earlier name; about the new palace there should be no unlucky memories. And perhaps the beautiful position of the Yorkshire Richmond—from whose once proud castle he took his title—with its hill and sweet vale, and bright flashing river, seemed here reproduced in tamer but more luxuriant beauties. Anyhow, Richmond was the name selected, and Richmond the place has been called ever since. Yet the old name still survives in legal documents; and should you be passing the old Greyhound Inn in the High Street, you may see, perhaps, some notice affixed by the doorway, addressed to the tenants of the manor of Richmond, otherwise West Shene, and calling upon them to do their customary suit and service to the lord thereof—that is, to our most religious and gracious Queen, who holds the manor as heir to the Plantagenets and succeeding monarchs.

An old print represents the Richmond Palace of Henry the Seventh's building as a curious composite edifice, crowned with numerous towers and pinnacles—rather Moresque than Gothic. Henry the Eighth frequented the place, and Queen Elizabeth came here to die. Her grandfather, Henry the Seventh, had also died here—in the gloom and neglect that marked the last moments of monarchs. And Elizabeth, worn and weary with the weight of her seventy years of brilliant but lonely existence, was soothed in her last moments by the murmur of the river speeding past, and the quiet seclusion of all around. The end was daily expected, and the future seemed full of gloomy uncertainty. And Stowe relates how, "in the month of March, the Queen lodging at Richmond, and lying dangerously sicke, strait watches were kept in the Citie of London, with warding at the gates. Lanthornes, with lights hanged out to burne all the night."

The Stuarts used the palace at times, and Charles the First settled it upon his Queen, Henrietta Maria, and we hear of a masque performed there before their Majesties, written by Lord Buckhurst and Sackville, afterwards Lord Dorset. When a survey was taken of the place during the Commonwealth, there existed a spacious hall with a turret, or clock-case; privy lodgings with fourteen turrets; a round tower, chapel, porticoes, and covered galleries; with, in the language of advertisements, the usual offices. But during this

time the building fell out of repair and was partly pulled down, and when the Restoration brought the palace once more into the possession of the Crown, it was no longer a fit residence for Royalty. And in 1720, we find the palace altogether decayed and parcelled out among various tenants, and several of the old riverside houses occupy portions of its grounds, and are built of its materials.

When the Hanoverian dynasty came to the throne, Richmond became again a favourite Royal residence. George the Second built himself a lodge in the little park lower down the river, near the site of the present observatory, where Queen Caroline amused herself by erecting a number of fantastic buildings, hermitages, grottoes, and so-called caves; assisted by her protégé and domestic chaplain, the Wiltshire poet, originally a humble farm labourer, who had rhymed himself into the Royal favour. But when the grounds were laid out in the new taste by Capability Brown, he destroyed all these gimcracks.

And marred with impious hand each sweet design
Of Stephen Duck and good Queen Caroline.

But the parks and gardens belonging to the old palace, including the little park and the old deer park, were practically united with the grounds of the more favoured palace of Kew in 1785, when a public thoroughfare, called Love Lane, which led from the north end of Richmond to Kew, was finally suppressed, and Royal privacy thus secured.

As this brings Richmond Palace into connection with the popular Kew Gardens, the history of the latter may be here succinctly stated.

The gardens were originally those of Kew House, in private hands till 1730, when Frederick, Prince of Wales—unlucky Fred—purchased a long lease of them; and the grounds—two hundred and seventy acres or so—were then laid out under the direction of Kent, a famous landscape gardener of the period. Prince Fred died at Kew House, and his widow, the Princess Augusta, took up the task of improvement, and, under the influence of the faithful but unpopular Earl of Bute, began the introduction and cultivation of foreign plants.

George the Third, son of Fred and Augusta, purchased the home of his youth, and forthwith pulled down the house and built another, which his son George as dutifully demolished. And the house now known as Kew Palace, the grounds of which cut off a corner of the Public

Gardens by the river, was an acquisition of good Queen Charlotte, who there died. And the house had, in earlier times, belonged to Hugh Portman, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth.

Queen Charlotte had taken great interest in the gardens, and, in an age of discovery, when travellers and explorers were constantly bringing home new species and varieties of plants, the collections of Kew were greatly extended and enriched. But, after the Queen's death, the gardens were somewhat neglected, till, in 1840, they were assigned for public uses. A large tract of ground, however, between the gardens and the river, mostly the ancient demesne of old Richmond Palace, is still in exclusively Royal occupation.

Perhaps we have lingered too long about the grassy meadows by the river, and Richmond Hill now invites us, with its terrace and the lovely view therefrom, which is the crown and perfection of Richmond's beauties; the river shining in graceful curve, the meadows, woods, and lovely islets—a scene often described, but the charm of which can hardly be conveyed by words, its sweetness and withal its sadness.

Enchanting vale! beyond what'er the Muse
Has of Achaia or Hesperia sung.

But poet Thomson does not touch the right chord, nor, with all deference, does Walter Scott in his somewhat laboured description, when he brings Jeanie Deans upon the scene in "The Heart of Midlothian:" "A huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves, was tenanted by numberless flocks and herds, which seemed to wander unrestrained and unbounded through the rich pastures. The Thames here turreted with villas, and there garlanded with forests, moved on slowly and placidly, like the mighty monarch of the scene, to whom all its other beauties were but accessories, and bore on his bosom a hundred barks and skiffs, whose white sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole."

Since he wrote, some of the pastoral charm of the scene has diminished, and the whole has become more urban; but there is now the additional attraction of the gardens formerly belonging to the Duke of Buccleuch, which are now open to the public.

Where the quiet old hostelry once stood is now a huge building, like some Dutch chateau swollen to portentous size. The

old front of the Star and Garter was destroyed by fire in 1870. It harmonised with the plain, stiff gateway of the park, whose piers bear the initials of George and Charlotte. The park is a fine one, perhaps hardly sufficiently appreciated by Londoners for a walk from Roshampton Gate to Richmond Gate, through well-timbered glades, where deer are browsing in herds, and where wild birds nest in security, and carol finely in the early days of summer. The official title of the place is the New Park, and, like the New Forest, it owes its existence to a stretch of despotic authority. The park was enclosed by Charles the First, who expropriated a number of small proprietors and copyholders with small regard to their rights, while the cost of the whole made his more prudent councillors stand aghast. The Pen Ponds, which occupy the centre of the park, and afford capital skating in severe winters, are supposed to have been originally gravel pits. But in a plan of 1754 the ponds are termed the Canal, and there is a boat-house, while they are evidently regarded as ornamental appendages of the adjacent old and new lodges. The latter, or White Lodge, is represented by Scott as the residence of Queen Caroline, when she had her memorable interview with Jeanie Deans.

Then there is Pembroke Lodge, which has had many distinguished occupants; and behind the lodge is a knoll known as Harry's Mount, from which, according to tradition, King Harry watched for the flash of the signal-gun from the Tower, which should announce that the head of fair Ann Boleyn had fallen in the dust. A little to the north-east of Harry's Mount, according to the plan of 1754, is Oliver's Mount, which another tradition affirms to have been occupied by Cromwell on the occasion of some battle or skirmish in the neighbourhood. There is still plenty of wild game in the coverts; but the wild turkeys have disappeared of which, as late as George the Second's time, there was a considerable flock. The King was fond of the chase of these wild turkeys, and the mode thereof was to chase the birds into trees with dogs, and then, when treed, to shoot them down. A strange scene it must have been when the peppery but valiant little monarch in wig and cocked hat took the field against the turkeys. And almost as strange it must have been to have met the Ranger of the period, "Bob" Walpole, the son of the great

statesman, red-faced, and perhaps a little tipsy, but sticking close to his hounds—his pack of merry little beagles, as they raced their quarry about the park.

Any one who enters or leaves the park by Shene Gate, may notice a fine old ash tree to the eastward of the path, which must have stood there for some centuries. It was formerly the object of a curious but cruel observance in the way of popular superstition. It is called the shrew ash, and the way was, when any member of a family was ill, to secure a shrew mouse, and boring a hole in the tree, to immure the poor little victim therein. When the mouse died, the invalid would recover. A gate on the opposite side of the park bears the name of Robin Hood's Gate, but it is doubtful whether that famous outlaw ever ventured so far south. But that there have been outlaws and deerstealers about the place in old times is likely enough. And one may wander up and down in Richmond Park for a long while without exploring every nook and corner; for the park walls embrace a circuit of nine miles or so. There are times, indeed, when the harts are belling in the woodland glades, and it may be rather dangerous to approach them; and there was a scare not long ago of an attack of rabies among the deer. But that seems to have passed over; and with the summer, and the full beauty of the woodlands, there can be no sweeter, pleasanter resort than the shades of Richmond Park.

PEN AND INK VILLAGE SKETCHES.

ON THE ROAD.

A HIGHLAND village, differing in no respect from twenty other Highland villages, save in the exceptionally beautiful scenery surrounding it; a wild panorama of loch and scarp, and hill and river meeting the eye at every turn, perfect of its kind.

The same adjective cannot be applied to the architecture characterising its buildings. The old picturesque brown lichen and moss-covered thatched cottages—dear to an artist's eye—have been improved off the face of the earth; and hideous bay-windowed villas—all of one type—crowned with an unsightly tower, are dotted down on every knoll, with a delightful disregard to any rule of beauty, with no advantage of situation as to shade from trees or suitability of aspect.

Generally, a triangular piece of ground surrounded by a bare stone wall, unmistakably marks the boundary of the small demesne, and one has not to be told that the rustic owners of these desirable properties are their own ornamental gardeners.

An eye to the main chance sees more beauty in a small vegetable plot which will yield turnips, carrots, and potatoes, than in the sweet, old-fashioned wallflower, stock, southern-wood, "lads'-love," cowslips, and lupins of an ideal cottage garden.

Everything in our village is subservient to the letting season; land, flowers, produce of every kind is cultivated with an eye to the best market, spoiling all free untrammelled taste, ruining the rusticity of the neighbourhood, teaching the people to drive hard bargains, and turning what was a peaceful valley into a gay autumn resort, where, during the short harvest, the silly sheep who have wandered thither are quickly and closely shorn.

The place under its winter garb is unrecognisable as the same locality. For eight long months the deserted villas look still more hideous, with all their blinds drawn, and the leafless cabbage-stocks making the dreary little gardens look like miniature cemeteries; a pall of gloom and desolation settles on the place.

The aborigines must occupy their time somehow, but, to me, the principal duty of man, and woman too, in these parts, appears to be gossip. They calculate the gains of the past season and speculate on the possibilities of the next, and, on the whole, lead a rather vegetable life.

Biography of any kind is always interesting, and they have their tragedies and comedies, their loves and their losses, their laughter and their tears, as well as other people. And an outsider like myself, but lately come to live among them, finds his only employment in the dreary winter in studying the idiosyncrasies of the place. In sickness and sorrow they are kind to each other, and appreciative of a stranger's sympathy and interest. To strangers they are courteous, in spite of the "dour" independent Scotch manner, which loudly proclaims that they are as good as you!

Walking about is the sole amusement, if you do not possess the wherewithal to drive; and it is not very often in these lovely, lonely, woodland by-paths that one comes across anything worth record in the shape of adventure, but now and again

unusual sights greet the eye such a happened to us lately.

It was a clear, bright October evening the air was keen with a touch of frost which seemed to mark more distinctly than usual the blue outline of the rocky ridge of mountain bounding the horizon, against a saffron sky.

The woods were a glory of russet and gold, and rich, red brown, contrasting with the deep velvety green of pine and spruce firs. Here and there in a deep pool in the rapidly-flowing river gleamed the reflection of the sunset sky; and over all brooded an exquisite stillness, eloquent in its very silence, of the Sabbath evening; broken only by the sounds from some distant farmyard striking clear and sharp on the keen "snell" air. Such was the scene we contemplated with admiring eyes as we returned late one afternoon from Sunday-school.

We had crossed by the ferry-boat, and as we walked up the tangled lane which led from the river to the high-road, our curiosity was aroused by the number of people we met bending their steps in the direction from which we had come.

A number of people, comparatively speaking, considering how few stragglers we generally encounter; groups of two and three every here and there, evidently hurrying on to one common point of view. We stopped a couple and asked if anything unusual had occurred; an accident, or something of that nature.

"No," was the reply; "a member of the little Baptist chapel in the village is to be baptized in the river immediately."

Never having witnessed a ceremony of the kind, we retraced our steps and joined the little community now assembled on the banks of the Tummel. It was a quaint yet most impressive scene, with a singular weird beauty of its own. The exquisite landscape of loch, and tree, and river; the glorious golden evening mellowing into the dusky twilight—that tender hour of gloaming, "when the kye come hame"—the vivid autumn tints.

The clear twang of far-off voices in the frosty stillness; the low, soft murmur of the gently flowing river; the hushed assemblage round the minister, whose voice rose and fell in the accents of earnest prayer; the candidate for baptism, an old and slightly deformed man standing in the midst, thus publicly making his profession of repentance for a past misused life, and belief in his Lord and Saviour—all went to form

a picture not to be soon effaced from the memory of an onlooker. Who, even among those who did not share the same creed, would not have been impressed by a scene like this ?

A few verses were sung, a simple address given, and the minister, taking the man's hand, walked with him into the water and there immersed him. The short and touching rite was over ; he had been received into the Church, had given evidence of his desire to lead a new life, and declared his wish to be admitted into the fellowship and communion of his co-worshippers ; and the next necessary, but slightly incongruous step was, his wife, who was waiting with a change of dry clothes over her arm, hurrying him into the wood near by to perform his toilet ! Whether the clergyman did the same I don't know, and how they both managed to escape taking cold that sharp evening remains a mystery.

Since this took place, the same community have built a new chapel in the village, where a suitable font or "tank" rather, is placed wherein to celebrate adult baptisms.

It may be that outdoor baptisms are more common than I suppose them to be ; this was the first I had heard of, and most people to whom I have spoken of it have expressed their astonishment at its being celebrated outside.

Tinkers abound in the locality of our village, as in most parts of the Central Highlands of Scotland. I do not know if there is an equivalent word for the Scotch "tinker" in England. I know that the genus himself is to be frequently met with there. He is not a gipsy, though his mode of life and habit of going about mending chairs, making brooms, selling tin dishes, somewhat resemble those of his superior gipsy brother. Nor is he a tramp—he indeed is much more to be dreaded, for he is a waif from great cities, out of work, and a much more dangerous character, prone to prey on his fellow-man, and fonder of begging, or perhaps stealing, than of work.

The tinkers go about the country in large families or groups of families, with always the inevitable baby or babies slung in an old ragged shawl on a woman's back. Some of them travel in caravans which they draw up at the outskirts of a village, or in the glade of a wood by the roadside. One of those itinerant families had pitched its camp some two miles from the village in the lovely valley of Strath Tummel, whence

an earnest request came one summer night about ten o'clock, for the doctor to go out and see a child who was seriously ill. It was an evening of intense heat. The young moon lay languidly in a misty haze, which there was no breeze to dispel ; the outline of the blue hills was blurred with a thin, grey mist ; the air was stifling and heavy, and when the doctor went into the stuffy caravan—where father, mother, and nine children were huddled together—he could scarcely breathe. He was shown the sick child ; but his quick eye taking a casual survey of the other occupants of the miserable van, he saw that in another corner lay one who was in far greater need of his skill. Turning to the man he said :

"You sent for me to see the child, whom a few simple remedies will put to rights ; but can't you see yourself that your wife there is very, very ill ?"

"She's been like that for mony a day," said the man. "There's naething the metter wi' her by ordinar. She's aye scant o' breath."

"Nothing the matter !" exclaimed the young fellow. "I am not at all sure, judging by her appearance, that she will live to see the morning."

Had he foreseen the consequences of his hasty dictum, he might have kept it to himself ; for the man, overwhelmed by the prospect of such a sudden calamity, gave way to the unrestrained grief of his kind, in cries and howls piteous to hear.

The eldest of the nine children—herself only thirteen—wrung her small hands crying :

"What'll I due wi' feyther an' the bairns ?"

The poor mother, little upwards of thirty years of age, lay gasping for breath in a corner of the van, the hectic flush on her wan cheek showing even in the pale moonlight.

The doctor comforted them as best he could, saying he would ride rapidly back to the village and return at once with food for the almost starving children and some restoratives for the woman. In a short time he drove back laden with soup and broken viands of all sorts, from the kind-hearted wife of the village hotel keeper ; but finding the poor woman's struggles to breathe even greater than before, he lifted her out of the caravan and laid her gently on the mossy turf by the roadside to die.

A dead stillness took the air, rendering to distant sounds a nearness and vividness

quite preternatural. The whistle of a bird, returning late to its nest, struck with a shrill note almost painfully on the ear; the swish and gurgle of the river over its pebbly bed, the fall of a cone from a fir tree, the sound of a rabbit scuttling through the ferny dell, broke on the oppressive stillness like a startling dream.

One by one, overhead, the stars pierced the hot, hazy sky, looked timidly down, as it seemed, on the dying woman, and then shrank back beneath the cloudy veil which hid the blue. It looked as if all nature, awed and hushed, held its breath expectant of the coming of that "shadow feared of man."

The still night air seemed for a moment to soothe the sufferer's fevered panting as the young man held her in his arms and tried to hush her constant wailing over the fact of her dying, where she could not get a priest to administer the last services of her religion. Himself of a manly, religious type, he sought at this last supreme moment to instil some faith and hope into the ignorant woman's breast, and as the tender dawn stole faint and grey over the sleeping tree-tops, and the glad sun kissed the drooping branches of the pale birch trees, from under the shadow of the beechen glade, and from the supporting arm of this her last earthly friend, the soul of the poor wandering tinker went forth.

And again into the fresh morning air burst out the wailing mourning for the dead, a trace of the Oriental blood which perhaps coursed in their veins.

Next day as we walked through the village we met a cart on which was a rude deal coffin covered with a tartan shawl, and behind it walked the tinker and his little girl. They had some three miles to go to the churchyard from the valley where their van was pitched, and alas! they had, on their return, to pass the public-house, and some of our party lingering in the neighbourhood saw the mourner meet some friends, go in, and by-and-by emerge to pursue his unsteady way home to his little orphan family.

Shall we dare to cast a stone at him? Perchance his heart was hot and heavy within him; the joys and solaces of his life were few and far between, and not of too refined a nature; the accursed drink afforded a few minutes' oblivion of trouble, one glass and then another, the boundary was passed, and the deed was done.

The following day, unthinking of the sad tragedy enacted in our midst, we walked

with some visitors along the lovely Tummel Glen, and, coming to an open glade, we saw the caravan, some half-clad children playing about, and the sick infant lying quite naked on a filthy mat, covered by a rag, right in the fierce rays of an almost tropical sun. The face was pinched and blue with that woeful, painful, patient look of suffering so often seen in the faces of the poor, but doubly melancholy to see in the face of a child.

The girl of thirteen—now mother and elder sister in one—was busy inside the caravan, and as, on enquiry, we found they had been feeding the sick child on all and sundry of the good things sent by sympathetic villagers, it was little wonder he had become much worse. We suggested his being removed out of the sun's hot rays into the shadow of the van, which was done; and we went on our way ruminating on a mode of life which seemed to us so uncomfortable, so sad and hapless, but which, I dare say, to them has some compensating advantages.

In fact, these advantages presented themselves to us shortly after in very enticing guise, when Dr. Gordon Stables, in his land yacht, the "Wanderer," pitched for a night on the outskirts of our village and attracted considerable notice; but the nicely-painted exterior of his caravan, its lace and silk window-blinds, its neat and trim appointments, his tidy manservant and handsome dog presented a rather different picture to the home life of our tinker friends.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER X. ROCHE'S BONBONS.

DR. CHANTER, the old musician, was in the habit of talking to Paul Romaine as if he were still a boy, and his pupil.

"So you are going to France with Mrs. Percival?" he said to him. "Come back again soon, and bring the Captain back with you. He's spending too much of his leave in foreign parts—flirting with that pretty, conceited cousin of his—a married woman too. I don't approve of her."

"What do you know of Madame de Montmirail, Dr. Chanter?" said Paul.

"I know she is not musical," said the organist; "and I hear what people say."

"Let them say," said Paul, half to himself; he could not enter into an argument in defence of Celia.

Their engagement was a very old story now, and it had been publicly known in Woolsborough for such a short time, that Dr. Chanter, wrapped up in his art, had almost forgotten it.

Mrs. Percival's spirits improved, and she began to think that her first visit to La Tour Blanche might be rather amusing, after all. She had a letter from Celia, expressing pleasure at her coming; and this seemed to set her mind at ease, though it was not more satisfying than Celia's letters generally.

As to Paul, he had plans of his own for the employment of his time after leaving Mrs. Percival at Tours. He did not mean to go back at once to England; he had seen enough of that French west country to feel its charm, and he liked the notion of September days spent among old châteaux with their legends and stories, or ruined abbeys, lonely and half-forgotten among silent woods and marshy ways. Joanne's "Guide to the Loire," which he studied rather too hard to please Mrs. Percival, told him of many strange and picturesque places with a pathetic interest of their own, from the contrast of past splendour and present desolation. He might be drawn on into Brittany—he did not know; but there one comes upon the broad track of English tourists; and he felt more inclined to linger a little east of all that, in Anjou, Touraine, Maine.

They travelled down from Paris early in the day, leaving the main line at Tours, where Paul saw Mrs. Percival off by an afternoon train to Saint-Bernard. He then went to his old hotel, where he was remembered, and received with smiles. A funny little boy belonging to the house, with a long pinafore and a dark downy head, welcomed him with a joy that touched Paul's heart. The day had been tiring, hot, and dusty; he was lonely. Though of course he could not have gone on with Mrs. Percival to La Tour Blanche, and would have refused any invitation of the kind, it was impossible not to feel a little left out. That Mrs. Percival, for whom all his old affection had come back, and Celia, his old love, and Achille de Montmirail, with whom he had been so friendly—that these people should be together now, as of old, and that at this moment an impassable gulf should lie between him and them—the

thought made Paul sad. He let Christophe, the little French boy, come up into his room, and listened to his confidences. Paul's French was not great, but he and Christophe understood each other.

It was an old promise that Christophe was to go to England some day, when his mother could spare him. This promise Paul was not allowed to forget; he had, in fact, to make it over and over again, for the child, as he grew older, grew more eager and curious. Then it was very sad; but since monsieur was there before, nobody, not one single person, had given Christophe any bonbons.

The end of this was that Paul strolled out into the pretty white streets of Tours, taking the little boy with him. His hand was seized, and he was pulled along. Fate, one must imagine, had taken up her abode in the small frame of that child. He was quite clever enough to know where to go for bonbons, especially when he was leading a rich and generous Englishman. The shadows were lengthening in the street; but Tours was still bathed in clear, hot, serene, almost Eastern sunshine, as the strange pair hurried along, Christophe much stared at by other little boys, some of whom turned and followed. He, or Fate in his person, dragged Paul as far as Roche's shop—absolutely in at the door. Then, looking round, he began to smile; then stuffed his little hands deep in his pockets, and gazed at Paul. It was more polite and more politic, he thought, to leave the Englishman to his own devices now.

There were other people in the shop, and the two smiling shopwomen were much engaged in attending on two of them, who were at the further counter with their backs to Paul, choosing a variety of wonderful bonbons. At the first moment, Paul did not particularly notice these people; his eyes were more attracted by a girl who was standing in the middle of the shop, looking with dark, soft, wistful eyes straight out of the door. Roche's dainties were nothing at all to her, it seemed. The face was very young: soft, round, delicate, dark, or rather tinted like cream. The pretty features were not made for sadness, but she looked sad; the red lips ought to have been smiling, but they were set a little sternly, as if to keep back tears. There she stood and waited, her hands folded over the handle of her parasol. There was nothing theatrical about her; nothing even dreamy or self-occupied. She

glanced at Paul when he came in, and then at little Christophe; then her head turned very slightly towards the people for whom she was waiting; then her eyes travelled out of the door again, but just caught a second and more curious glance from Paul on the way. Though he did not know who she was, it flashed across him that he had seen her before.

"Was it long ago?" he asked himself; "was it in his travels? Where, when, could it have been? And how could the charm of a face so lovely and so interesting have faded from his memory?"

Immediately on these thoughts—driving them away for the moment—came the voice of the man at the other side of the shop. He was standing, leaning over a lady who sat at the counter.

"You can't resist that big one!" he said in English.

"And why should I? Do I ever resist anything that's good?" she answered laughing; and the voice, one need hardly say, seized Paul even more than the girl's face; for it was Celia's voice—sweet, high-pitched, deliberate as of old.

That large, handsomely-dressed woman playing with the bonbons was Celia, and the man beside her was, of course, Vincent Percival. Paul's first instinct was to rush out of the shop; but at that moment Madame de Montmirail turned round.

"Antoinette, why don't you come here?" she began; and then her eyes fell on Paul, and she stopped short. She touched Vincent's arm, to make him look round too; the girl turned towards her, and in an instant Paul found himself the centre of all these eyes—startled, unfriendly, indifferent. There was no escape for him: he walked up to Celia, who was holding out her hand.

"Now, was it not very clever of me to know you again?" she exclaimed. "I don't believe you would ever have known me!"

"Yes, I should have known you anywhere," said Paul; and then he carelessly shook hands with Vincent, who stared at him for a moment, and turned away.

"What has brought you here? Did you come down with Aunt Flo? Where is she? At the hotel? We came in to meet her," said Celia, calmly. "Gone on to Saint-Bernard! but why? How tiresome! Did not she get my note?"

"I heard nothing of it."

"I wrote to the Deux Frères. I said we should be in Tours to-day, and would

join her at the station in the evening. Vincent, do you hear! Your mother did not get my note."

"How was that? You wrote to her pet hotel, didn't you?" said Vincent, lounging back.

"Of course. She never goes anywhere else in Paris. She said she meant to stay in Paris last night. Were you with her? Didn't she go to the Deux Frères?" said Celia to Paul.

Paul felt himself colouring a little, and hardly able to meet the cool question of her blue eyes. The associations of the Deux Frères for him were still so keen, so painful, that he had objected when Mrs. Percival proposed going there, and had suggested another hotel nearer the station. She had given in amiably, with a suspicion of what his thoughts might be. It was bad enough to be in Paris at all, where those last weeks, nearly five years ago, had been spent with Celia.

"No," said Paul quietly, mentioning their hotel. She evidently had forgotten everything.

"Imagine," she said, "Aunt Flo trusting herself to anybody but dear old M. Dupont. But the tiresome part of the business is that there will be nobody to meet her at Saint-Bernard. Well, it can't be helped. Are you fond of bonbons? Do you know that this is one of the best shops in the world?"

"The things look uncommonly good," said Paul. He glanced round, but his eyes soon came back to her again.

She amazed him; he felt more thoroughly critical than ever in his life before. She was very handsome, of course; but she had entirely, irretrievably lost her charm. Was it that he knew better, or that she was utterly changed? He did not know. Hard, heartless, material, self-indulgent she repelled Paul now, as he stood looking at her in Roche's shop, as much as she had attracted him in the old days. This Celia No, Celia was dead. She had died long ago. Or had she never lived at all? She used to say sometimes that she cared for nothing but the present; that the past was gone, and the future might never come; what was the use of tormenting one's self about them? Paul had never liked to hear her say that, though the present had charms enough for him then. But now he saw that it was simply the expression of the woman's natural character; and he looked at her curiously, sadly, as we look at our lost

ideals, wondering at our own extraordinary blindness. After all, experiences like Paul's have given the world half its poetry.

"Let me introduce you to my step-daughter, Mademoiselle de Montmirail," said the Marquise, coming forward smilingly. "Antoinette, you have heard your father speak of Mr. Romaine."

Paul and Antoinette made low bows to each other. The girl's sad, proud look relaxed a little, and she smiled.

"Yes indeed," she said.

"Wait a minute for me. I must finish my shopping, and then we will all go and dine together at the hotel—shall we?" said Celia, pleasantly.

As she moved back to the counter, Vincent, who had been looking on rather discontentedly, moved back to her side; and Paul, standing near Antoinette, asked her a few questions about her father, which she answered, he thought, sadly.

He could not understand the girl's look; it was naturally such a happy face, he was sure, and now there was a look in her eyes which he could almost have called fright, if it had not been contradicted by the proud, fearless lines of her high-bred profile. But it was plain that she felt safe in talking to him, looking up into the dark, friendly face with an almost childish confidence.

As Paul talked to her, he remembered suddenly that the Marquis in his letter had mentioned something of a marriage for this girl.

"She hates it, and they are driving her into it," he said to himself. "Of course—she wants to get rid of her; no doubt she is in the way."

And as these thoughts flashed through his brain he read whole tragedies in Antoinette's sweet eyes.

Presently they all left the shop together, Paul submitting to his fate and walking on first with Madame de Montmirail. She smiled on him with a cool graciousness which astonished him less every minute; he felt that very soon he should be able to meet her quite successfully on her own ground.

And little Christophe was left behind, forgotten. He had watched Paul and his acquaintances with a face that lengthened every moment, and now, finding himself forsaken—no bonbons for him, after all his hopes and exertions—he followed the party out of the shop, trying in vain to choke down sobs of bitter disappointment.

But Antoinette noticed him; she had

seen him come into the shop hand-in-hand with Paul Romaine. Her hand was on his shoulder, and with a few little comforting words she found out the state of the case. Then she actually lingered behind her companions to buy him a lovely box full of bonbons, so that he ran away home happy; perhaps moralising that French ladies were more amiable than English gentlemen after all.

When Antoinette came to the shop-door after committing this indiscretion, she found Vincent waiting for her, looking very cross.

"I am afraid you must condescend to walk with me as far as the hotel," he said. "Madame la Marquise is better employed than in thinking about us."

"Oh! I did not know I had been so long," said Antoinette, a little dismayed that she could not see Celia.

"Is it a habit of yours, buying Roche's bonbons for every little boy in the street? One way of being popular."

Antoinette did not explain what she had done. She could be haughty enough when she chose, and she hardly spoke as she walked with her unpleasant escort to the hotel.

They all dined together at the hotel, as Celia proposed, in rather a hurried fashion; and in spite of her unpromising materials, she succeeded in making it a pleasant party. She looked and smiled Vincent out of his sullenness; she talked a great deal of nonsense to Paul, who could not marvel at her sufficiently, but found it easy, following her lead, to talk and laugh with her, though he rather despised himself all the time for being where he was.

The most silent person of the party was Antoinette; but French girls are not expected to talk much. Paul caught himself watching her, and feeling a little anxiety about her good opinion; he wondered whether she, as a child, had known of his engagement to Celia.

Immediately after dinner, in the warm, shady courtyard of the hotel, with Christophe peeping through a doorway, still rather grieved that his friend had forgotten him, but looking forward to triumph when the other people were gone, Vincent Percival suggested that it was nearly time to go to the station. He spoke to his cousin in the old autocratic manner which used to enrage Paul at River Gate. Surely Celia knew better now than to like such a fellow, Paul thought, looking from one to the other of them. Why did she let him go

about with her? And then Paul said to himself that Celia and her ways were unaccountable. Safe in her present position, perhaps, from all danger of scrapes, she felt free to treat her old lovers as she pleased; and her manner to Vincent was that of extreme intimacy, the intimacy that admits of quarrels. Paul thought that if Celia had been his wife, he would not have cared to have a fellow like Vincent always dangling after her, a fellow who evidently had the privilege, and made use of it, of saying anything he pleased.

She snubbed him a little sometimes, however.

"The station—oh, no hurry," she said; and then she turned her back upon him, and looked Paul straight in the face. "You are coming with us," she said.

It was the manner of a woman entirely accustomed to have her own way. Why she wanted him, Paul could not conceive; but he knew Celia well enough to be sure that she was in earnest. He could not help glancing at Vincent, whose face was a study of scowling surprise, and this made him half inclined to accept the invitation. But then, Madame de Montmirail must not imagine that she still had any power over him. He was not going to be among the captives led at her chariot-wheel. He was capable, with his larger experience, of judging his old love very hardly now. She struck him at that moment as a woman who only kept within the bounds of propriety because it suited her. He could not have given any exact reason for such an impression as this; but it was there.

"Thank you; that is quite impossible. I have made a lot of plans——" he was beginning, when suddenly his eyes met Antoinette's, and he was startled into silence by her look of intense disappointment.

No change in his face betrayed that he had seen it, as he listened with the necessary politeness to Madame de Montmirail.

"I won't hear anything about your plans; you had no business to make any, when you were coming down here. M. de Montmirail was very much vexed, when he met you here a few months ago, that you would not come to us then; you were in such a hurry to go back to England. Now you must come. It won't be dull;

there is a shooting-party to-morrow, begin with, and I know you will appreciate that more than Vincent does. Now you see what is your duty! Achille will be terribly disappointed if we leave you here. Won't he, Antoinette? He always talks of you as a model Englishman."

Paul laughed, and bowed.

"Do come, monsieur; my father will be so very glad to see you!" said Antoinette.

Her own troubles seemed to be forgotten for the moment, and her face had its own young, sweet, happy look. Paul dared not fancy that she was expressing her own wish, as well as her father's. Something of the old feeling of days gone by came back to him—days before he had discovered the falseness of human nature. He afterwards told himself that Madame de Montmirail, very naturally and rightly, disliked her two companions in their manner to each other. That, of course, was the reason why she wished to add him to the party. Well—Mr. Percival, he knew, would be glad—he believed that the Marquis would not be sorry to see him. So Celia had her own way once again, and triumphed serenely though, if she had only known, it was Antoinette's way, not hers.

"What on earth did you ask him for?" grumbled Vincent at the station, when Paul was getting his ticket.

"I couldn't help it, could I? I thought it would please Aunt Flo."

"Don't tell me that."

"I never for a moment thought he would come."

"Not if you asked him? Only too glad of the chance. What did he sneak down here for? My mother could have travelled perfectly well alone. It will be quite grin enough for you to have to amuse her without that dear boy into the bargain."

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PRICE TWOPENCE

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY JUDITH spent nearly the whole of that day at her farm; the first half in the dairy, inspecting the working of a new butter-making machine; the second half in the meadows under the trees, among the shorthorns and "black Welsh."

Sir Peter grew tired of his letter-writing as soon as the morning meal offered him no excuse for incessant perambulations, so he ceased dictating, got into the saddle and rode over the hills to see how the new wing of the parish schools, in which he took a great interest, was progressing; half-way there he suddenly recollected the existence of Miss Shore as a visitor in the house, galloped back at a tremendous pace, set all the bells ringing and every servant he could seize upon running backwards and forwards with inquiries as to where she was, what she had been doing all the morning, and whether she had got over the fatigue of the previous day.

The replies of the servants were necessarily unsatisfactory, and Sir Peter, catching a glimpse of a pink skirt among the laurels in a shady nook, had Madge suggested to his mind as a more likely source of information.

Madge was stitching in leisurely fashion at a group of yellow marguerites on a brown plush ground. Lance was leaning over the back of her chair, with Roy, a great tawny mastiff, stretched on the ground at his feet with his nose on his master's boot.

Madge had been a little startled to hear

Lance's voice over her shoulder, suddenly asking the somewhat eccentric question:

"Madge, if you had had the choice given you, under what planet would you have chosen to be born?"

"Planet—planet!" echoed Madge. "Oh, what planet is supposed to give women beauty and powers of fascination? It must be Venus. Under Venus, of course."

"Yes, it must be Venus," decided Lance. "Well, what are the other planets supposed to do or to give? And what's the name of the one that shows now every night over the Cuddaw Fell?"

Madge laughed outright. "Are you going in for astrology or astronomy—which? Upon my word, I've not the remotest notion what planets are in the ascendant—is that the phrase?—at the present moment."

"Madge," said Sir Peter's voice just then, a little jerkily from want of breath, "can you tell me where Miss Shore is, and whether she is feeling rested, and if she would like letters or telegrams sent away to her friends up in the North or down in the South, wherever they are?"

"She was sound asleep when I came out of the house. I haven't the least idea what her wishes or plans are," answered Madge.

"Asleep! asleep! At this time of day? Impossible! My dear, she must be ill. We'd better send some one to fetch Broughton—"

"Oh, let her alone, Uncle Peter," interposed Lance. "The poor girl's evidently tired out with a long journey. I dare say she'll wake up right enough a little later on, and tell us what she wants to do or have done."

Lance's words were verified.

Madge's maid, sent up about tea-time,

came down saying that Miss Shore had answered her rapping with the intimation that she would come downstairs in the cool of the evening, and the request that yesterday's newspaper might be brought to her.

"Yesterday's newspaper!" repeated Madge. "You had better go to Mr. Stubbs for that; he'll be more likely to have taken possession of one than any one else in the house."

Then, in her own mind, she indulged in free comment on the extraordinary fashion in which this young lady—an utter stranger to them all—had seen fit to conduct herself since she had come into the house. No apology had she offered for her inattention to household hours; no request had she made for means to continue her journey.

"Really," Madge decided, "her beauty may be a matter of dispute; but, as to her breeding, there can be but one opinion."

Madge was not disposed to modify her opinion, when, later on in the day, as she pinned a bouquet of crimson roses in her dress preparatory to descending to dinner, she caught a glimpse through her muslin window-blind of a picture—a garden idyll it might have been called—which made her flush scarlet, though not with pleasure.

Such a pretty picture too! A young lady, in pale grey robes, leaning back in a wicker garden-chair; a young man, hat in hand, in the act of presenting her with some flowers.

Madge stood for three minutes watching them. Evidently the lady declined the flowers, for the young man tossed them on one side with a disappointed air.

"Would you like any others?" Madge could fancy he asked, for the young lady shook her head, with a slight movement of her hand as if flowers were distasteful to her.

Then the dinner-bell clanged, and the two turned their faces towards the house.

In the summer it was the custom of Sir Peter and his family to dine in the large inner hall of the Castle, instead of in the dining-room. This hall was palatial in its dimensions, oak-panelled and oak-ceiled. It was hung on one side with ancestral portraits; on the other, Gothic windows looked out into the garden. A wide mantelpiece divided the ancestral portraits right and left. Over this mantelpiece was a long, low mirror, which reflected the pretty picture of waving trees and summer sky that the Gothic windows framed.

As Madge entered by one door, she could hear the footsteps of Lance and Miss Shore crossing the vestibule to enter by another. Lance's voice, too, caught her quick ear in a remark as to the gloominess of the house compared with the outside summer brightness. She heard the words:

"Dismal old hall! Talk about eighteen centuries looking down upon you, it's nothing to compare with eight-and-twenty Critchets looking down on you as you eat your food."

The last word brought him and his companion into the room.

Lady Judith was on the point of taking her seat at table. She was not in the best of tempers. Sir Peter, overhearing Lance's talk, chanced to remark that, "however gloomy the hall might be, it was nevertheless a pleasant refuge from mid-day sun—the coolest room in the house, in fact." Lady Judith catching the word "refuge," and nothing more, not un-naturally concluded that another scheme of charity was in progress of development, and immediately became voluble and prophetic on the matter.

With a formal bow she waved Miss Shore to her seat at table. "Refuges, indeed! As if there were not enough and to spare throughout the kingdom!" she declaimed. "Two at Carstairs to my certain knowledge, and a good work-house with accommodation for fifty men and as many women within three miles outside the town." And again she waved Miss Shore to her seat.

But Miss Shore did not take it. She stood motionless, her head turned from the table, her hand resting on the back of her chair. Madge could see that this was a necessity to her, for she trembled so violently that she needed to support herself with extraneous aid.

"I cannot eat to-night," she said, turning a white face towards Sir Peter. "I will go up to my room."

Madge flashed a glance first to Lance, then to the looking-glass opposite which Miss Shore's chair had been placed.

"Can you eat seated on this side of the table?" she asked, rising and offering her own place.

Miss Shore, with a brief word of thanks, accepted Madge's chair.

"She is ashamed to look herself in the face for some reason or other," was Madge's uncharitable mental comment on the little episode.

CHAPTER IX.

NATURE is a strict economist in her work, she does not squander her resources. She gives to the "viewless winds" and invisible thunders the blasts of trumpets and crash of artillery; but when she paints the "awful rose of dawn" or the golden glories of sunset, heaven's echoes are mute, and the great cloud pageant issues forth, troops across the sky, and vanishes, without so much as a muffled whisper.

Madge never saw the sun sink behind the Cuddaws, without some such thought as this in her mind.

As she stood on the terrace that evening after dinner, watching the stormily splendid clouds which, gathering low on the horizon, were slowly quenching the limpid tints of the after-glow, it seemed to her that those sumptuous reds and purples should have come with the crackle of field-pieces and the roar of battle; and that those tender, translucent greens and yellows should have died into the grey with the sounds of softly retreating harps and viols.

Dinner had been a short meal that night, and would have been shorter still could the wishes of three, out of the five seated at table, have been consulted. Miss Shore ate next to nothing, spoke never a word unless pointedly addressed, and then her replies were all but monosyllabic. Lady Judith eyed her keenly at intervals during the long discourse for which the word "refuge" served as text. Sir Peter eyed her benevolently, asked after her health, then, without giving her time to answer, asked if she would like telegram or letter sent to her friends anywhere to assure them of her safety, and hoped that she wouldn't feel herself bound to continue her journey on the following day unless she felt disposed so to do.

To all this, Miss Shore replied with a manifest effort: "Let me stay one day more. I won't ask for another—one day more, only that."

The request was put in eccentric fashion, even conceding to the speaker a certain indulgence for her unfamiliarity with the English tongue. This was scarcely the way in which an unexpected guest might be supposed to crave permission to extend a stay in a hospitable house. A criminal at a bar of justice pleading that his sentence might be deferred for another twenty-four hours, might have done so in much such a voice, with much such a look on his face as Miss Shore had on hers.

Even Sir Peter became dimly conscious that his kindly commonplaces had somehow touched a deep chord, for he stumbled and stammered over his courteous consent to her request.

As for Madge, looking up she caught Lance's eyes fixed on Miss Shore's white face with so intensely interested a look that the words of kindly courtesy she was about to utter died unspoken on her lips.

It was the recollection of that look which sent her out by herself on to the terrace, to watch the sunset glories instead of the less fascinating spectacle of Lady Judith fanning herself to sleep in her arm-chair.

As for Miss Shore, no sooner did the meal come to an end than she went straight up the stairs to her own room once more.

Presently Lance joined Madge on the terrace.

"There's a storm brewing overhead," he said, by way of beginning conversation.

"Is there?" answered Madge, by way of ending it; for the cloud of undefined annoyance caused by Lance's irrational sympathy for an utter stranger had scarcely passed away.

But, nevertheless, they might soon have drifted into cheerful talk if Sir Peter's short, quick footsteps had not at that moment been heard, followed at an interval by his blithe, cricket-like voice.

"Don't let me disturb you, young people," he chirruped. "This is the time for saying sweet things—blushes are not so conspicuous, eh, Madge?"

"So far," said Madge sententiously, "we've said nothing, beyond a remark as to the possibility of a storm coming on."

"Eh, nothing! Why, Lance, you sly fellow, what has become of all those grand speeches you were so busy concocting at dinner-time, that you hadn't a word to say to anybody?"

"Madge knows all the sweet things I think of her; there is no need for me to say them," answered Lance, in light complimentary fashion.

"Ah, yes—yes. Very neatly put, 'pon my word. Now, Madge, you must say something equally sweet by way of acknowledgement."

"Lance knows exactly what I think of the sweet things he thinks of me; there is no need for me to say it," answered Madge solemnly.

And her thought, as she said this, was: "If he would but let us alone! If an

attack of gout would but keep him prisoner for a week, everything might come right."

But Sir Peter's persistently optimistic view of the "situation" showed that gout was yet a long way off.

"Ah! that's right, that's right," he said, more blithely than ever. "Where young people so thoroughly understand each other as Lance and you do, long-winded speeches are unnecessary."

And he tripped away lightly once more, no doubt with the sound of wedding-bells in his ears.

"He'll come back again in another minute," said Lance, looking over his shoulder after Sir Peter's retreating figure. "Come for a row, Madge; there's something I particularly want to say to you to-night."

But, though Madge acquiesced, and, fetching a light shawl, was ready in a moment, Lance evidently found his something hard to say, for they wound along the garden paths in an almost unbroken silence.

The heat seemed to increase upon them as they descended the slope under the over-arching boughs. Flower-scents hung heavily in the air. The whirring of gnats and flies was almost intolerable.

Lance, with a visible effort, made a remark which seemed to be suggested by nothing and to lead nowhere. It was:

"Madge, do you know that you've a fine reputation for benevolence and Christian charity? I had no idea till the other day, when I was dining at the Brabazons', what a lot people think of you."

It scarcely seemed possible that Madge could know by intuition whither Lance's remark was likely to lead, yet she answered coldly:

"Really, I don't care two straws what people think of me. Please talk about something interesting." She laid marked emphasis on the word "people." "If he has anything nice to say to me, he may as well say it on his own account," was her supplementary thought.

Lance read that thought easily enough, and the desire to tease her immediately became irresistible.

"Oh, of course not; why should you care even one straw? 'People' say pleasant things of you one minute, and disagreeable things the next. That's the way of the world."

"They have no right to say disagreeable things," she answered sharply. "Not that

it matters much—I never listen to gossip, and don't wish to know what any one says of me, whether agreeable or disagreeable."

"Of course not. Envy is at the root of nine out of every ten of the spiteful things women say of each other."

"Women! What women have been running me down?"

"Don't get excited, Madge. It's a tribute to one's breeding to be disparaged by the crowd."

"Disparaged! Who has been disparaging me? Lance, I insist on knowing what was said of me at the Brabazons' the other night!"

Lance laughed outright.

"Ah, now we've got back to the point where we diverged. I was going to tell you what was said of you at the Brabazons' the other night, and you wouldn't listen—here we are at the edge of the stream. Well, Lottie Brabazon said that you were the Lady Bountiful of the county, and put every one else to shame with your generosity to the poor."

With his last word Lance stooped to unmoor the boat.

Here the larches gave place to willows and osiers, and the expanse of running water somewhat cooled the hot air. The clouds hung ominously low, however, with more of black than purple in them now.

This miniature river was formed by the conjunction of two little streams which had been diverted from their course to add to the beauty of the Castle pleasure-grounds, by dividing the flower-garden from the park. It made a pretty little bit of landscape, with its fringe of bulrushes and water-flags on one side, and plantation of aspens and willows on the other.

As Madge stepped into the boat, a sleepy swan sailed majestically from out the shadowy reeds. It headed the boat for a few minutes, showing snow-white against the dark shadows thrown on the water by the inky clouds overhead; then it disappeared into the dimness beyond.

Madge's good-humour came back to her.

"This is heavenly!" she said, taking off her bracelet and paddling with her hand in the cool stream. "I dare say we shall get a good fifteen minutes out here before the storm breaks."

Lance shook his head.

"Ten only," he said, reading the sky with an eye practised in cloud and mountain presages. "Madge, don't let's squabble for five, at least, out of those ten

minutes ; there is something I particularly wish to say to you."

He had grown suddenly serious.

Madge grew serious also.

"It's about Miss Shore?" she said, questioning and affirming in a breath.

"Yes ; about Miss Shore," he answered quietly. "Madge, do you know she is very friendless, very desolate, and, I should imagine, only partially recovered from some heavy sorrow."

"She has taken you into her confidence?"

"To a very limited extent," laughed Lance ; but his laugh was a little uneasy. "Just before dinner this evening I came upon her in the garden. We talked—no, I suppose I did the greater part of the talking—but, at any rate, somehow or other I elicited the fact that she is homeless and friendless, and it doesn't require a very vigorous stretch of imagination to conclude from those facts that she is moneyless also."

Lance's "somehow or other I elicited the fact," can scarcely be said to be a true statement of what had taken place between him and Miss Shore, in that brief five minutes before dinner of which Madge's prejudiced eyes had conveyed so distorted an impression to her brain.

He had found the young lady in the garden, leaning back in her chair with white, inanimate face, like that of one newly recovered from a swoon. The flowers he held in his hand to present to her he had at once tossed on one side, as incongruous with the look of suffering her face wore.

"You are ill," he had said with real concern. "Let me send word to your friends."

"You must find them before you can send to them," had been her brief reply.

Then she had waved him on one side with the impetuous request that he would let her alone—not persecute her with questions.

"I thought she was travelling to friends up in the North when the train broke down. You said so ; Sir Peter said so—some one said so, at any rate," said Madge presently.

"Did some one? I'm not sure. Well, at any rate, from what I got out of her this afternoon it seems that she hasn't a friend in the world, and, what is more, she appears perfectly callous on the matter, as if the fact were of no importance whatever."

"And you want me to take a vast interest in a matter on which the person most concerned is callous!" exclaimed Madge.

"Well, yes ; why not? A man jumps into the water and tries to drown himself, and sometimes he is more than callous on the matter—has, in fact, a very strong objection to being pulled out again ; but, for all that, we do our best to save him."

Madge made no reply.

She was a woman of strong prejudices, and those she had conceived against Miss Shore at first sight were stubborn ones ; nevertheless, she had been so accustomed all her life long to yield compliance to Lance's wishes, that it was almost easier for her to let go those prejudices than to deny him now.

Lance's manner did not exhibit the uneasiness he had expressed to Sir Peter over-night, respecting Madge's possible reception of a petition from him on Miss Shore's behalf.

He went on composedly as if denial were out of the question.

"I've no doubt I went to work this afternoon in a very bungling fashion—I'm not a particularly good hand at getting people's confidence when they've no mind to give it, and she was very loth to speak of herself—but I dare say, Madge, if you were to interest yourself and have a talk with her——"

There came at this moment a flutter and a rustling from among the reeds and osiers at the water's edge.

"What's that?" queried Madge sharply, turning her head towards the sound.

Lance's look followed hers.

"An otter, I dare say," he answered quietly. But, nevertheless, he kept a steady eye on the spot whence the sound had come.

Madge dealt a sharp, though not a final, blow to her prejudices.

"Yes, I'll try and get a talk with her to-morrow, and find out if we can help her," she answered slowly. "It's rather difficult to offer people money right out—but perhaps she may be clever at singing, or painting, and may be able to give me a few lessons. At any rate, I'll promise to do what I can." Then she changed the subject abruptly, exclaiming: "How dark it's getting! Hadn't we better think of turning back?" In good truth, she had had enough of Miss Shore and her friendless condition.

Bird-notes had ceased now ; only a

distant sound of whirring insect life broke the stillness.

Lance looked up at the sky. "We must get back at once," he answered. As he finished speaking, there came the low growl of advancing thunder.

Lance plied a swift oar. As they shot past the shadowy nook, whence the rustling sound had come, he peered in curiously among the reeds. The flags waved; the osiers bent and whispered; but it was only the wind rising now.

FIFTY YEARS AGO.

NOT a large proportion of our readers, or of any community, can go back in memory fifty years, and recall the events which were then moving the world, the habits which characterised society, and the faces of the men and women who were notable in literature, and art, and politics, and fashion, and rascality. No doubt the world is a good deal wiser now than it was in the later thirties—no doubt it is in some respects better—but can we be sure that men are more happy, or, indeed, in any essential aspect different from what they were then? To those of us who had not yet seen the light when Queen Victoria was crowned, the year 1838 seems in the very dim and distant past. But then, was it not the year of the maturity and full pulse of life of our fathers and mothers? To them the world was as full of stern reality and as suggestive of romance and infinite possibilities as it is to us to-day. Let us be assured that could they have forecast a picture of what the world would be like and what the people in it would be wearing, and doing, and saying, they would have been quite as much disposed to wonder and to ridicule, and to disapprove, as we may be in looking back at their doings in 1838.

The world is very young yet—as Mr. Lewis Morris observes somewhere—but yet it is so old that fifty years here or there are as nothing in its age. Old Time laughs as we look back in amazement over such a trifle—a mere eye-blink to him.

In 1838, Queen Victoria completed her first year on the throne of the United Kingdom, but she was not yet Empress of India, and she probably did not account herself much glorified by the possession of those convict settlements which now form the Dominion of Australia. She had for Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, who

included in his Cabinet, Lord John Russell as Home Secretary, and Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary.

These are but names to the living generation; but what powers they were in their time! Louis Philippe was then King of France, and Louis Napoleon, exiled for his attempt at Strasburg two years before, was publishing his "Idées," preparatory to his descent on Boulogne two years later.

The Reform Bill had passed six years previously; negro slavery had only been abolished in the Colonies and "Plantations" four years; the Anti-Corn Law League was marshalling its forces for the struggle for "free bread;" and the Tractarian movement was in full swing at Oxford.

Who then were the lights of literature in that, to us, distant era? Walter Scott was dead, but his son-in-law, Lockhart, was in his prime. Christopher North, too, was rollicking in his elephantine manner, although his bosom-companion, the Ettrick Shepherd, slept beneath the turf. Joanna Bailie, and Allan Cunningham, and Delta, and Barry Cornwall were singing after their kind; and the first sweet notes of Tennyson, of Mrs. Browning, and Robert Browning had also been heard with more or less appreciation.

Carlyle, and Macaulay, and John Stuart Mill, and De Quincey, and Henry Hallam were in full work. Tom Hood, and Barham "Ingoldsby," and Douglas Jerrold were cracking their jokes. Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton were the fashionable novelists of the day; while Charles Dickens was publishing "Pickwick," and Thackeray was mending his pen.

A goodly list this, but woefully incomplete, and not even to be rendered complete by a reference to Professor Nichols' admirable "Tables of European History, Literature, Science, and Art." Let us see how Mr. Walter Besant* can assist us in gaining a view of the times of our fathers and mothers.

But first let us see what the people were doing. How fared the masses? How sounded the pulsation of what grandiloquent writers call "the great heart of the nation"?

Badly, we fear. If trade is bad in 1888, it was a thousand times worse in 1838. The factory system had disorganised industry and had thrown thousands of men out of employment. A succession of bad

* "Fifty Years Ago" (Chatto and Windus).

seasons had raised the prices of bread and of all necessaries, and the year 1838 was a year of great destitution and of great discontent.

There were no Socialists in those days, but there were Chartists, and there were a great many desperate persons who were disposed to adopt very extreme measures if only they could get a sufficient number of supporters.

The Reform Bill, as we have said, had passed, but the people were not yet really exercising their full voice in the government of the country. There was, indeed, a good deal of smouldering danger to all political institutions in the holes and corners of the land, and it would not have taken a very great deal in 1838 to have brought about a revolution.

Infidelity is said to have been remarkably prevalent about this time, and certainly Tom Paine and Carlile had many readers, but, on the other hand, there was also a remarkable expansion in Dissent. When Nonconformist sects were being multiplied and chapels of all denominations were springing up like mushrooms all over the country, one could hardly say that the religious spirit was not alive and active.

Drink? Yes, plenty of that; but have we any grounds for supposing that it was more in proportion to the population than now?

Three million pounds sterling were spent annually on gin in London alone fifty years ago, which would not be much if distributed over the whole people. It was a great deal distributed among the limited classes of gin-drinkers. But figures are dry things and we shall not go into them, contenting ourselves with the general expression of opinion that, although there were few Teetotalers, and no Good Templars and Blue Ribbon men fifty years ago, there was probably not a greater average abuse of drink than to-day. Some people say there was less, and quote police statistics. But the police statistics of 1888 cannot be compared with those of 1838, because we have now so much greater vigilance, and so many lynx-eyed reporters.

We are compelled, nevertheless, to admit that the balance of evidence is in favour of the conclusion that fifty years ago the great mass of the people were brutish and rebellious. Mr. Besant, indeed, says that they had no loyalty either to the Queen, or to the political institutions, or to the constitution, or to the

Church. This, perhaps, is an extreme statement, but there was a good deal of outward chafing against law, and of inward yearning for Republicanism.

Meanwhile, instead of sporting the red cap and annihilating their social superiors, the people amused themselves at prize-fights, and dog-fights, and bull-baiting, and badger-drawing, and duck-hunting, while they talked treason and drank gin and beer.

These were the days, too, before our model convict prisons, when criminals were transported to Botany Bay and other penal settlements, with all the attendant horrors of the outward passage.

These were the days, too, of debtors' prisons, including the Marshalsea, only pulled down the other day, and the story of which is known to every one who knows "Little Dorrit."

There were no Board Schools in those days, but plenty of parish schools, and dame schools, and Sunday schools, and schools of the Dotheboys Hall class. Education was not neglected, but it was not compulsory, and it was not universal.

The great middle class was then much more of a class than it can be said to be to-day. It had its own place, and knew it; but it gave us, as Mr. Besant does well to remind the world, nearly all our poets, novelists, essayists, journalists, and artists. Hood was of it, so also were Thackeray, and Dickens, and George Eliot.

What then was this middle-class life fifty years ago? It was not lively, and, especially in the country, was often very, very dull. Here is Mr. Besant's view of it:

"The men had their business, the women had the house. Incomes were small: a great deal was done at home that is now done out of it. There was a weekly washing-day, when the house steamed with hot soapsuds and the 'lines' were out upon the poles—they were painted green, and were square—and on the lines hung out half the family linen. All the jam was made at home, the cakes, the pies, and the puddings, by the wife and daughters; the bread was home-made, the beer was home-brewed—and better beer than good home-brewed no man need desire—all those garments which are not worn outside were made at home; everybody dined in the middle of the day, therefore, in the society of the county town, dinner-parties did not exist. On

the other hand, there were sociable evenings, which began with a sit-down tea, with muffins and tea-cakes—very delightful—and ended with a hot supper. Tobacco was not admitted in any shape—except that of snuff into the better kind of middle-class house—only working-men smoked vulgar pipes; the Sabbath was respected; there was no theatre nearer than the county town; the girls had probably never seen a play; every man who respected himself 'laid down' port, but there was little drinking of wine except on Sunday afternoons; no one, not even the ladies, scorned the glass of something warm, with a spoon in it, after supper. For the young, there was a Fair once a year; now and then a travelling circus came along; there was a lecture occasionally on an instructive subject, such as chemistry, or astronomy, or sculpture; there were picnics, but these were rare. If there were show places in the neighbourhood, parties were made to them, and tea was festively taken among the ruins of the abbey."

Does it sound dull? Yet this was the kind of life which gave us some of the best and greatest of our men and women. And it was the kind of life that your father and mother, perhaps, thought eminently respectable, and thoroughly enjoyed in their own quiet way. There was not much outdoor amusement, except cricket, for the young men; but there was a good deal of winter jollity among neighbours, and the deep, ecstatic joy of the county Ball was known to many, and also the anguish of garments spoiled by the dripping grease of the candles. At private parties the elders played whist, while the young people sang sentimental songs, or read Mrs. Hemans, or played at "round games."

This was the age, too, of horse-hair furniture, of coloured engravings, of china ornaments, of red curtains, and of round tables covered with "Keepsakes" and "Forget-me-nots." And for dress, while the young men revelled in well-oiled, flowing locks, in all-round whiskers and shaven chins, in tight trousers and magnificent cravats filling up the bosoms of still more magnificent waistcoats, the ladies enshrined their faces in "coal-scuttles," and their arms in "leg of mutton" sleeves. Pink was the favourite colour for gala dresses, and the ladies' hair was worn either in side curls, or in artistic loops over the ear; the elders, however, were great in "turbans."

"Society" in these days was very exclusive. You must be born into it, or you could not enter it. If you belonged to it, you went to Almack's. If you went to Almack's, you were stamped as of the very highest. Then Almack's was very decorous and not very expensive; the ball tickets being seven shillings and sixpence each, supper extra. The young bucks in Society were a trifle loud in their talk, and swaggering in their behaviour, but the ladies were, of course, charming. Then dinner-parties were very formidable affairs, and not to be encountered with a light heart.

"The dinners"—hear Mr. Besant again—"were conducted on primitive principles. Except in great houses, where the meat and game were carved by the butler, everything was carved on the table. The host sat behind the haunch of mutton and helped with zeal; the guests took the ducks, the turkey, the hare, and the fowls, and did their parts, conscious of critical eyes. A dinner was a terrible ordeal for a young man who, perhaps, found himself called to dissect a pair of ducks. He took up the knife with burning cheeks, and perspiring nose; now, at last, an impostor, one who knew not the ways of polite Society, would be discovered; he began to feel for the joints, while the cold eyes of his hostess gazed reproachfully upon him—ladies in those days knew good carving, and could carve for themselves. Perhaps he had, with a ghastly grin, to confess that he could not find those joints. Then the dish was removed and given to another guest, a horribly self-reliant creature, who laughed and talked while he dexterously sliced the breast and cut off the legs. If, in his agony, the poor wretch would take refuge in the bottle, he had to wait until some one invited him to take wine—horrible tyranny! The dinner-table was ornamented with a great épergne of silver or glass. After dinner the cloth was removed, showing the table deep in colour, lustrous, well waxed; and the gentlemen began real business with the bottle after the ladies had gone."

Here are some extracts from a book of etiquette of the period:

"Familiarity is the greatest vice of Society. When an acquaintance says, 'My dear fellow,' cut him immediately.

"Never enter your own house without bowing to every one you meet there.

"Never ask a lady any questions about anything whatever.

"If you have drunk wine with every one at the table, and wish for more, wait till the cloth is removed.

"Never permit the sanctity of the drawing-room to be violated by a boot."

Wine in those days usually meant port or sherry. But port was the great after-dinner drink, and everybody of any means always kept a good stock in cellar. Some of us can still remember the heavy cut-glass decanters of the period, and the silver "slides," with green-baize bottoms, in which the bottles were made to circulate without scratching the mahogany. Spirits were not then in general consumption, but gin among the lower classes, and rum among the middle classes, were largely consumed. The famous "bottle-noses" are ascribed to the too free indulgence in rum-and-water, but with what degree of accuracy we are not prepared to say. Certainly grog-blossoms do not seem to be so common now as we remember them in the days of our youth; and possibly "brandy-and-soda," and "whisky-and-Polly," may not leave such outward and visible signs as did their great predecessor among our thirsty fathers.

Well do we remember, also, in the days of our youth, the selection of "British wines," which the family grocer kept in constant stock, and which most families produced for the delectation of ladies and children. The ecstatic delights of elder-wine, of currant-wine, of gooseberry-wine—at least not under that name—are as unknown to the present generation as are those of "British port," and "British sherry."

Is the making of port-wine *negus* now a lost art? It used to be worth while having a bad cold to enjoy; but now one never sees or smells it. It seems to have gone the way of "treacle possets" and "black beer and rum"—the infallible recipes of our grandmothers for colds in the head. And punch—the steaming bowl of fragrant, enticing, captivating, but most deceptive and treacherous punch—does anybody ever brew one now? Perhaps not; and even cold punch was good, as Mr. Pickwick could testify.

Men lived much in taverns fifty years ago. They met their cronies there, heard the talk of the town, exchanged ideas on the condition of politics, or the state of the markets, or the scandal of the day, drank their pint of port or tumbler of rum-and-water, and went home at decent hours to bed. The Toms and Jerries had, of

course, their later houses of resort, and could turn night into day quite as well as their grandsons of 1888. But the tavern was the great middle-class club, and it has gradually faded from public sight as clubs have multiplied. Fifty years ago there were only twenty-five clubs in London, and now there are over a hundred. Crockford's was then in its prime, and Crockford's was the fashionable gambling club of the era. Many a fortune has been lost and won at Crockford's, where supper and champagne used to be served gratis every night to all visitors after a certain hour. The proprietor used to give his chief cook a thousand guineas a year, and his assistant five hundred; but he made it pay.

There were plenty of daily papers in London in 1838, whatever the quality of the matter they purveyed, and there were nearly as many magazines and reviews as now. But there were no illustrated papers, and there was no "Punch," and there were only fourteen daily papers in all Great Britain out of London, where there are now over one hundred and seventy. Consider what that means. "The news" (we again quote Mr. Besant)—"there were as yet, happily, no telegrams—was still by despatches and advice; and the latest news of markets was that brought by the last ship. We will not waste time in pointing out that Edinburgh was practically as far off as Gibraltar, or as anything else you please. But consider, if you can, your morning paper without its telegrams; could one exist without knowing exactly all that is going on all over the world at the very moment? We used to exist, as a matter of fact, very well indeed without that knowledge; when we had it not, we were less curious, if less well-informed. There was always a pleasing element of uncertainty as to what might arrive; everything had to be taken on trust; and in trade the most glorious fortunes could be made and lost by the beautiful uncertainties of the market. Now we watch the tape day by day, and hour by hour; we anticipate our news; we can only speculate on small differences—the biggest events are felt, long beforehand, to be coming. It is not an unmixed gain for the affairs of the whole world to be carried on under the fierce light of electricity, so that everybody may behold whatever happens day after day, as if one were seated on Olympus among the immortal gods."

And yet—would any one of us have preferred the life of half a century ago to that of our own day? To mortals, whatever is, is best.

THE BISHOP'S MISTAKE.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

CHETWYND and Theo had not met, except by chance in the street, for some time; but, early in August, Lady Curtis, the county Member's wife and the great lady of the neighbourhood, gave a large garden-party to which Maurice Chetwynd and the Farquhars were invited. Lady Curtis and Mrs. Farquhar were old friends; they had been schoolgirls together, and had continued their friendship ever since. Lady Curtis was Theo's godmother, and as her own daughters were quite children, she was glad to have a pretty girl like Theo to make her house attractive, and always invited her to her parties.

This garden fête was to be on a larger scale than usual. The Bishop had promised to be present, and several shining lights in the social and political world were also expected. Lady Curtis had given Theo a charming toilette for the occasion. She had also invited Dollie to spend the day with the children at the Hall, so that she might also see some of the grand doings.

For a wonder, the weather was propitious; the sky was blue and clear, and the sun shone brightly all day long. Even Theo, who seemed lately to have lost her capacity for enjoyment, forgot her troubles, and laughed and talked as gaily as the rest. She looked her prettiest, too, in her dress of cream surah silk and lace, with a big hat shading her face, and many admiring looks were cast at her as she stood by Lady Curtis's side assisting her to receive the guests. Even the Bishop's short-sighted eyes noticed her lovely face approvingly as, with his arm through Chetwynd's, he approached his hostess.

"Is that pretty girl Lady Curtis's daughter, Maurice?" he asked.

Chetwynd's face flamed up suddenly at the question.

"No, she is a Miss Farquhar; our doctor's daughter," he answered hastily.

"Then you know her, I suppose? You must introduce me, Maurice. I have rarely seen so sweet a face," the Bishop went on blandly.

Chetwynd was spared the necessity of an answer, for at that moment Lady Curtis saw the new arrivals, and went forward to meet them.

"You are late. I feared you were going to disappoint me," she said, giving her hand to each in turn. "Doctor Phillips, you look tired, and I haven't seen you for an age. You must come with me at once to a quiet nook, and we will have some refreshment and a chat." She put her hand on Theo's shoulder. "Theo, love, your duties are at an end, I think; every one has arrived, so I will leave Mr. Chetwynd in your charge. Take him to see my new orchids."

Theo coloured and drew up her throat.

"Perhaps Mr. Chetwynd would prefer to accompany you, Lady Curtis," she said coldly.

"Now, is that likely? Besides, we don't want either you or Mr. Chetwynd. We have heaps of things to talk about," Lady Curtis answered gaily, and she put her hand through the Bishop's arm and led him across the lawn, leaving Theo and Chetwynd alone. There was a little awkward pause; then Theo said, still in the same sweet, cold voice:

"Do you see any of your friends, Mr. Chetwynd? The visitors seem scattered, do they not? Some are playing tennis, and some bowls, I believe. Would you like to join either game, or would you prefer to see the orchid-house? This is your first visit here, I believe?"

"I should like to see the orchids, if you will show them to me," Chetwynd said eagerly.

"Oh, certainly."

Some tone in his voice, some look which suddenly leaped up into his dark eyes, sent an added glow of colour to Theo's face, a strange thrill of happiness to her heart. "Oh, certainly," she said, and turned and walked by his side across the lawn and down the rose-walk to the orchid-house almost in silence. Chetwynd listened, and looked, and admired, as Theo pointed out the newest and rarest flowers, and descanted on their beauty, but it is doubtful whether he quite knew what she was saying, or what he answered. He was only conscious of one thing, that they were together again; that he was by her side; that her dress touched him; that her sweet voice rang in his ears; that once again for a brief space the gates of his earthly Eden were open to him!

They would close presently, and Duty,

the angel with the flaming sword, would bar the way ; but now they were open, and he entered in and tasted its delights, and looked on its beauties again ! The eyes that looked down at Theo's grew so strangely bright and soft ; the voice that spoke to her was so full of a tremulous happiness that Theo noticed, and wondered, and felt vaguely happy, and excited, and half frightened.

"Shall we go back now and see what the other people are doing ?" she said. "It is dull for you here, for I don't fancy," and she smiled, "that you really care much about the orchids. To tell the truth, neither do I, but Lady Curtis is so proud of them that it is rank treason to say so ! Well," as he was still silent, "have you seen enough ? Shall we go back ?"

"Does that mean that you want to get rid of me — that you are tired of my company ?" Chetwynd said, with a queer laugh.

He never knew why he said the words, or what the impulse was that moved him to put his hand on the gloved hand that was resting on the basin of the fountain that stood in the centre of the orchid-house. He did it just because he could not help it. Theo started, but she did not draw her hand away. She looked at him gravely.

"Nay, it would be more likely that you should tire of mine," she said, in a cold, distinct voice. "You do tire of your friends sometimes, you know, Mr. Chetwynd ! I remember a time when you seemed to like to come to the Red House, when for more than two months your visits were so frequent that we ceased to consider you a visitor. Then for no cause that we could understand, they ceased altogether. I suppose you grew tired," Theo added, and now there was a quiet scorn in her voice that sent the hot blood surging into Chetwynd's face, that filled him with an irresistible longing to tell her the true reason of his absence, and so to justify himself in her eyes.

"Did you really think that was the reason ?" he said, in a hoarse, eager voice. "Nay, then, I must speak. I must justify myself. Tire of you ; of your sweet company ; of the presence that brought rest, and peace, and happiness to me ! Oh, Theo, Theo !" he had never called her by her name before ; even in her agitation she remembered this, and thought how sweet it sounded from his lips, "how could you think so ? I stayed away because I dared not come any longer ; because I was grow-

ing to love you so well ; because you were to me, as you always will be, the sweetest and purest of all women ! And because I knew my love was hopeless and I could not win you, and because I knew the prize I coveted was not for me, I stayed away."

There was a short silence. Theo stood leaning against the fountain, looking down into the water from which her fair troubled face looked back at her with wistful, half-happy, half-wondering eyes. Her pretty dress fell round her in soft, graceful folds ; a great tree-fern spread its tall fronds over her head ; on every side the orchid blossoms, mingled with other gorgeous tropical flowers, were blooming ; one shaped like a scarlet trumpet touched her cheek. She put up her hand mechanically and pushed it away, then after a short silence—

"Why should it be hopeless ?" she said, in a shy, soft voice, and she glanced up at him with sweet, wistful eyes.

Again the silence fell upon them. Chetwynd stood by her side, his hand still rested on hers, and his fingers closed over it and held it tightly, but his face had grown stern and troubled, and there was no lover's triumph, but only a stern renunciation in the eyes which met hers.

"I will tell you why," he said, "and then you shall judge. We priests of the Church of England take, as you know, no vow of celibacy, but none the less do some among us think that a celibate life is desirable ; that a man unfettered by wife and children, and home ties, can give himself up more fully and freely to his work than one who has others closely connected with himself to think of, and to plan for, whose interests must naturally come first in his thoughts and purposes. The Bishop is one of these, and I used to be. You know something of what I owe to him, of the ceaseless kindness which he has always showed to me, but no one but myself can know all. I could never express to any one—not even to you—how deep is the reverence and love I have for him. He is my example, the pattern which I strive to follow. I have no greater ambition than to tread in his footsteps, to be in all things as he is. His thoughts have been my thoughts, his will my will. I may almost say that he is my conscience, for I would truly rather trust in any time of doubt or difficulty to his judgement than to my own. I know well what a great disappointment it would be to him if I married, and I know also, although no promise was ever asked or given, that he would not have appointed

so young a man as I am to this important charge if he had not thought that I, being free from any closer ties, would devote my whole energies and life to my work. And more than this. He has set several schemes on foot which are very close to his heart, but which will not in all probability be completed in his life. The completion of these he has entrusted to me, for I, better than any other person, understand his wishes, and can carry out his plans. I should feel like a traitor if I swerved now from the path which he—with my full consent, remember—planned out for me. I count no sacrifice too great to make for him; yes, even if it involved the renunciation of my dearest hopes, I would make it gladly," Chetwynd cried, and his cheeks flushed and his eyes brightened with generous emotion.

Again the silence fell, still the gorgeous blossoms waved to and fro and sent out their strong perfume, but they had lost their fragrance now, and grown only faint and death-like. As long as Theo lives, the scent of those flowers will bring back to her the memory of the mingled pain and happiness of that moment! She did not speak.

Chetwynd broke the silence at last.

"That is the reason why I ceased to come to the Red House," he said, and as he spoke he released her hand and moved a few paces from her to the other side of the fountain. "I loved you, and I could not tell you of it or ask for your love in return, and so"—and he smiled faintly—"I took refuge in flight."

Theo looked up at the words; there was a mist before her eyes, but yet through that mist a sweet radiance was shining as she said, in a low, tremulous voice:

"I am glad you told me all the same, very glad, for I can confess it now; I did think hard things of you. I thought you were fickle and ungrateful, and I was bitterly disappointed in you, and so"—and she smiled again—"I am glad you have told me, and still more glad to know that I have won your love, that you saw something in me worth loving! Our lives may be spent apart, but be sure, if it is any pleasure to you to know this, that I would not have it otherwise, that I honour you all the more because of what you have told me to-day, and that my love and sympathy will be always yours, given just as fully and freely as if, indeed, I had been your wife."

Her eyes grew brighter as she spoke, the

tremulous voice became suddenly sweet and clear; she held out her hand to him across the fountain, and he took and clasped it eagerly in his own.

"Heaven bless you for those words," he said, and, after a moment's silence, he lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it.

Little as the lovers guessed it, their interview had not passed unnoticed. Two pairs of bright eyes were watching them behind the tendrils of the passion-flower which trailed over the window, and two pairs of black legs scudded off silently and hurriedly down the rose-walk as Theo and Chetwynd turned to leave the orchid-house, and, when safely hidden behind a thick clump of bushes, the owners of the eyes and legs looked at each other in great excitement and delight.

"Oh, Dollie, do you think he was making love to her—that they are engaged?" Milly Curtis whispered in a delighted voice. "Oh, how lovely! How pleased mother will be!"

But Dollie, who was more observant, shook her golden mane doubtfully.

"I don't think so," she said thoughtfully. "When people are in love they are happy, aren't they?—and Theo didn't look at all happy. I am almost sure she was crying, and Theo doesn't often cry," Dollie added.

"Nonsense! Then why should he kiss her hand and look at her so?" Milly cried. "Gentlemen don't do that to ladies unless they love them. He will be your brother-in-law, Dollie, and there will be a wedding, and a big cake all ice and sugar, and bonbons. Oh, what fun!"

But even the entrancing vision of the wedding-cake failed to satisfy Dollie. She still shook her head.

"Then why did Theo look so sad?" she said. "I know what she looks like when she is happy. Her cheeks flush up, and her eyes get bright and soft and shining like stars, and she looks so sweet and pretty that you feel as if you must kiss her! I have seen her look as she did to-day once, and that was when little Charlie died," Dollie added in an awed voice—"never since."

"Oh, nonsense! Look, Dollie, there is Doctor Phillips—the Bishop, you know—coming down the walk with mother. Isn't he a funny little man?"

Dollie peered eagerly from behind the rose-bushes.

"A Bishop! That ugly little man with the spectacles?" she said, in a tone of

infinite disgust. "Why, he's not a bit like a Bishop! I thought they had always beautiful white sleeves, and lovely aprons all trimmed with gold embroidery, not a little shabby black thing like that! Why, nurse would be ashamed of it!"

"Oh, perhaps it isn't his best one," Milly suggested carelessly. "I say, Dollie, I am getting frightfully hungry, aren't you? Let us go into the house and see if we can get anything to eat."

BIRD LEGENDS.

WHEN Dame Nature told her pet brown bird, the robin, of the terrible fires of hell, the suffering of the lost, so distressed was the feathered tenant of the bough that he inquired of owl and raven the way there, and, since then, has each day wended his flight to the Land of Shades with one drop of water in his bill, in the hope that he may thus some time extinguish the fearful flame, and so near does he fly that his soft breast is scorched and seared by the red heat, till it glows crimson as we see, and forms for him a badge of God-like charity.

In some such words as these may one of the many legends of Shakespeare's little "Ruddock" be told, and to them is due the old country adage, that:

A robin in a cage
Sets all Heaven in a rage,

and

The robin, aye the redbreast,
The robin and the wren,
If ye take them out their nest,
Ye'll never thrive again.

In Yorkshire it is believed that if a robin is killed, the household cow will give "bloody milk," and up to the present day the country folk allege that instances of this are known among them. Still farther north it is said that, should a bird of that ilk die in your grasp, your hand will ever afterwards shake as if with palsy.

The Cornishmen have a couplet to the effect that:

He who hurts the robin or the wren,
On sea or land will ne'er do well again.

The Welsh give the bird the pretty, quaint name of Bron-rhuddyn, or Breast-burnt, in allusion to the first legend given. It is said that when an infant of tender years is about to die the robin perches on the roof of the cottage and "weeps," that is, utters its customary little note in a long-drawn, wailing manner.

Another well-known story tells how the

pious and pitiful little bird perched on an arm of the Cross, and, uttering long mournful cries, pecked away at the crown of thorns that he might remove at least one of the piercing torments, while the mystical blood-drops fell down upon his little breast.

Fact and legend, which so curiously often come to each other's assistance, bear out in the present day the feathered dryad's claim to piety, and he has frequently been found to pitch on some quiet nook in a country church for his home. At that of Hampton in Warwick, a pair fixed their nest to the great Bible as it lay open on the lectern, and the vicar, refusing to disturb them, had another copy brought in, from which he read the service.

Another pair built under a dead branch on a railway cutting, within a few feet from where the trains flashed past a hundred times a day; and yet another among the timbers of a ship in the dry docks of Belfast, where they counted and watched their eggs, seeming, if anything, to rather enjoy the boom and bang of the carpenters' hammers, and the shiver of the stout oak beams under the blows.

But, apart from these flights of eccentricity and courage on the part of the "bold, brisk robin," he must always be our friend, from the way in which he burnishes his little ruby breast as winter draws near, and trilling and tootling away on some leafless bough, tells us that our climate is not a thing to complain of after all.

His duties as a red-waistcoated sexton are well known. Herrick has a charming line on a mistake the little fellow once made on finding a lady sleeping so still in a wood, that he promptly brought moss and leaf to cover her, till he was startled by seeing her unclosed eyes, on which

He chirpt for joy to know himself disceaved,
On seeing her not dead, but all disleaved.

His close friendship with Jenny Wren is well known; but, for some unknown reason, he obstinately refuses to hold out a claw of good fellowship to the dainty, artless linnet.

In striking contrast to all the stories of the little ruddock are those of the raven, the ravager of the world, who, "horrid with life," sat on the stern of each of the three hundred ships which came with Harold Hardrada, the Dane, to invade our country, the better part of one thousand years ago, and flapped their great black

wings and uttered their ominous cry, as they told each other of the red wine and the purple flesh that lay piled on the banqueting tables before them.

The raven was sacred to the Norse god, Saturn, and his was called Raven's Day; the same fancy springing up beneath southern skies, dedicates it also to Chronos, Time — a fitting father to him whom Robinson calls the "Methuselah of birds;" and any leader who took the field on this, the sixth day, would as surely find woe in his path as though he flung out his standard during an eclipse of the moon.

He was also the bird of evil omen in prophecy. When the Macedonian Alexander entered Babylon, from out of the hanging gardens of the fair but evil-deeded city flew ravens innumerable, and his glittering, gold-clad warriors shrank back, and looked at each other in terror which the combined armies of half the world would not have been able to call up within them. To fight against man—even all men—was possible, but who could raise his hand against the edict of the gods?

This undesirable prerogative of being the bearer of ill-tidings has been passed on from hand to hand by the poets from classic times to the present day, and, when one among them wished to describe a very quintessence of horror as brooding over the darkened earth, he says:

The owl and the raven are mute for dread,
And the time is meet to wake the dead.

From others we hear of him riding upon, urging on, and hastening on the storm, as though by right of being a bird of the gods the great sombre fowl had even power given it over the elements.

In counter assertion to this we find some one humorously enquiring:

If the great Jupiter had nothing else to do
But to drive about jackdaws and ravens;

while another, with awed old-world reverence, tells us: "It is *ful* unlawful to believe that God showeth His privy counsaile to crows."

A Cornish legend, rejecting the story that the gallant Arthur was borne away to spiritland by a golden-haired maiden, "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," tells us that the British King was transformed into a raven, and under that form they refuse to let him come to harm. From the lines of their poets upon him, they seem to have a far different idea of the Hero of the Round Table to

that which our Laureate gives us; thus they say:

And mark you yon bird of sable wing,
Talons and beak all red with blood,
The spirit of the long lost King
Passed in that shape from Camlan's flood.

And still when loudliest howls the storm,
And darkest lowers his native sky,
The King's fierce soul is in that form,
The warrior spirit threatens nigh.

In the Soudan the respect for the "Bird of the Shade" is unbounded; he is endearingly known to the Arabs as their "Uncle," and they are more exorbitant in exacting blood-money for his chance slaughter by the hand of the stranger, than if it were really the relative in question. Shoot their dove, their ostrich, their varied scavengers of the vulture kind, their once sacred ibis even, and they grin and bear it; but once aim a bolt at the "Noah Bird," and a hundred lean but muscular brown arms will be raised, and the bereaved white-teethed relatives will gesticulate and shout round you, while they explain how black-hued was your accidental crime. Apart from this, the raven, with his jetty plumage, will always be a point of interest in the Soudan from the strong contrast he presents to the ordinary "desert-coloured" birds, which preserve a neutral tint of grey or fawn, which, to the inexperienced eye, renders them almost invisible.

Coleridge has some splendid lines on the revenge of a raven which had buried an acorn beneath the sod, and watched the fruit of his care grow up into a lordly tree, among the branches of which he looked forward to spending the remaining centuries of his aimless life; but the forest king was felled by man that he might float across the deep. Then the ravager plotted with the storm to take revenge, and when the mad water had hurled the tough timbers against a rock, and rolled over the topmast,

Right glad was the raven, and off he went fleet,
And Death riding home on a cloud he did meet,
He thanked him again and again for his treat,
They had taken his all, and revenge it was sweet.

The part the raven plays in Scripture as the unfaithful messenger of Noah and the purveyor of food to Elijah, so finely described in "Paradise Regained," needs none but a passing mention here. But though, in the instance mentioned above, he compares unfavourably with the silver-feathered harbinger of peace, we know now that the palm of constancy ought in fairness to be

taken from the slender pink claw of the Mecca-bird and placed in the sinewy one of the raven, as the latter is one which pairs for life, while, to again quote Robinson, "if doves could read English poetry, they would put their tongues into their cheek and wink at each other," when they hear the hundred-fold praises of their fidelity to one; for the hen-bird knows that the heart beneath her little soft breast beats just as tenderly for the mate under whose care she hatched her brood of "five secrets," as Montgomery delightfully calls the treasures of the nest, on some rocky ledge in the sun-lit Levant, as for that other spouse who coos over and cherishes her here in the Western Isles.

A Greek legend tells that Apollo punished their snowy raven for tale-bearing by tar-and-feathering him in the orthodox Texas manner; while one from the Hebrews informs us that the raven is white when he first puts on his plumes after chipping his egg-shell, and in that garb his mother hates him, leaving him to thrive or die on the chance flies that hover near; but that, when the legitimate suit of glossy black is put on, her maternal affection is lavished on him after the manner of birds. Unless the spoils of the battle-field or the gallows have been placed at his disposal, the raven contents himself with insects and worms, and an occasional small bird or its eggs, with whatever carrion may come in its way; but we are told that he has been known to swoop down upon a flock of homely farm-yard ducks, give one a few sharp blows with his muscular wings; fix his sharp talons in its sleek white plumes, turn it over on its back and proceed to kill and eat it in a business-like manner worthy of the most raptorial of the pirates of the sky.

A popular story of Ralph, the raven, is told at Chatham, where it is said that so distinctly does it imitate the voice of the sentinel on duty that it has more than once turned out the guard!

In conclusion, it may be interesting to trace the bird's nickname of "Ralph" back to the old Dutch "Raaf," the raven; the said word being the way in which the name Ralph, which in Scotland turns to "Raif," is pronounced in the North of England.

It is curious that all the fancies connected with the swallow—the bird which is ever on the wing, which feeds as it flies, and which until lately was supposed to even

rest his little round head and shimmering wing for his midnight slumbers upon a pillow of unconfined air—should be those which are most closely connected with the domestic roof. It wards off the lightning, we are told, with such certainty that the post of metal conductor to the electric fluid is a sinecure until the six months' visit of the swallow is at an end; and a house under the eaves of which they have built will never be attacked by thief. This saying, doubtless, gained strength among the peasantry from the fact of their depositing the family stocking with its foot full of half-crowns under the thatch; for certainly, if a pilfering hand came near the well-lined nest of the shrill-voiced twitterers, such a hullabaloo would forthwith have been raised that Argus the watch-dog himself could not have guarded the treasured hose with better effect.

Another story tells us that the little Parsee fire-worshippers, whose lives are spent in pursuing the sun, with "the God of Nature for their secret guide," are the souls of dead children; if so they have a happy time wheeling round among us Northerners, as long as the days are balmy and the skies are blue, then paying a visit to the myrtle bowers and sweet orange flowers of Italy, and lastly finding a winter city among the palms and tamarisks of Upper Egypt. One species of the long-winged tribe never seems to make its way further north than the shores of the Bosphorus; there they are known as "The Souls of the Dragomen," from the way in they perpetually skim up and down above their own fairy shadows, on the clear waters between the Golden Horn and the entrance to the Black Sea; passing on their way the Devil's Currents, against which the strong arms of the caigees pull in vain till they receive a helping hand from those on the towing-path; the grim old castles of Rumeli and Anatoli Hinar, which failed to keep off Mahomet the Conqueror; the entrance to the Sweet Waters of Europe and of Asia, where queens of the harems trail their long mantles and ill-shod feet; and the white-winged yachts of the foreign embassies, who make of the glittering river-like strait their manœuvring ground.

It was the swallow, according to the legend of the neighbouring continent, who, when Eve and her spouse, sick and sad, and sorry for the delight-realm, the gates of which they had closed behind them, inadvertently lost each other through having wandered apart to grieve for a time alone,

brought them together again, and a swallow too was the third winged messenger which Noah sent from the Ark to learn whether the raging of the waters was yet assuaged. It was from this reason, perhaps, that it, along with the favoured robin, enjoys the special protection of the guardian-angel of the birds :

The robin, aye, the redbreast,
The martin and the swallow,
If ye touch one o' their eggs,
Bad luck will surely follow.

Brand, in his "Popular Antiquities," forgetting the flight from the Ark, says it is probably merely fearing a breach of hospitality, that these little denizens of our eaves are held sacred. The Romans, agreeing with this last idea, dedicated the fleet migrant to the Lares and Penates of the domestic hearth.

The Irish, whose legends are so often at variance with our own, call it "The Devil's Bird," saying that on the head of every human being grows what is called "The Swallow's Hair," and if the twitterer can succeed in twitching it out as he skims rapidly past, the luckless loser of the hair is doomed to purgatory.

Among the ancient Egyptians, as with the English villagers of to-day, the long-winged migrant was the emblem of prosperity, while still further east it is known as the "Bird of God."

Now that we have grown wise, we smile at the natural history of eighty and even fifty years ago, which told us that :

Whether upward to the moon they go,
Or dream the winter out in caves below,
Or hawk at flies elsewhere, concerns us not to know.

The notion of the free, unfettered guest of heaven hibernating along with the bear in a cave until the tenth of April, his usual date for visiting our shores, is too delicious to be serious; and yet Dryden probably meant to be so, for we find Thomson saying, in his turn, that this fork-tailed Ariel spends his winter in

Clinging in clusters,
Beneath the mouldering bark, or where
Unpierced by frost the cavern sweats.

The writer of "The Seasons" doubtless thought that if we only went deep enough into the dank and dim November woods, we should find along the gaunt branch of some old elm, rows upon rows of swallows and swifts, land martins and those of the house, on the twigs above, all for whom no room had been found in the crowded caves, and who waited there for the spring; as we now see them seated in scores along the

telegraph wires, in readiness for their leader to pronounce the air clear and light enough for a start, while each little nerve thrills and quivers with the force of the instinct that makes them cry: "My wings, my wings, they have not power to stay."

The owl shrieked at thy birth; an evil sign,

is said to the luckless Henry the Sixth, who was to see the throne wrested from himself and his race, his Queen and his child flying panting and desolate through the land: the one to seek a life-long and unhonoured exile, the other an early and unavenged death at a caitiff's hand, and to fall beneath a murderer's blow in his own royal palace, which he had known longer as a prison than a home.

Again, "the bird of night did sit, even at noonday, upon the market-place, hooting and shrieking," four-and-twenty hours before Cæsar went out to fall under the daggers of friend and foe alike, with his mantle over his face to hide the death agony from the howling crowd around. But as with some human beings, whose words always seem to have a double meaning, we hesitate how we shall read those of the owl. Was Minerva's bird of wisdom giving a fair and friendly warning when he left his day haunt, and, braving all the dangers of a superstition-steeped race, came out to hoot Cæsar back behind his gates, or was he revelling in the knowledge of the great Roman's certain coming fate?

As the owl which feeds on human flesh has not yet been fledged, it is fair to suppose the former; but mankind, and especially poet-kind in general, has preferred to construe him otherwise. The same doubt can be extended to the shrieking sea-mew, the stormy petrels known to our tars as Mother Carey's chickens. Is it a dirge over the sinking ship that he sings as his broad white pinions flap the storm, or is it an impatient and discordant hymn of triumph in honour of a coming feast? As with all the ever-growing wisdom of our naturalists they have not yet learnt to speak the tongue of the tribes of the air, we must be content to leave the riddle unread, and listen while

The mariner curseth the warning bird
Who bringeth him news of the storm unheard.

It is said that whenever a member of the house of the Arundels of Wardour lies on his death-bed, a pair of large screech-owls fly round the battlements each night till his decease.

Beyond the fact or non-fact of the

owl-bird being one of ill-omen, various beliefs have clung to his blank, blue orbs, and eerie cry. He spat poison upon those who chanced to win his ill-favour; and the only cure, if any, was to bathe at midnight, when the moon was shining full, on the Eve of the Dead. The North-American Indians name it the "Death-bird," and if after dusk they hear its screech in the wood, they call out to it in return; if no backward answer comes, their death within the year is certain. The little "aziola," of whom Shelley loved to write as he wandered by the streams and mountain-side of that fair and treacherous blue gulf, which was so soon to wash away the sweet strains of his lute-like verse, seems to have had no such mournful meaning in her tone, though the Red Children would have told it was a warning of his near end. On the banks of the Ganges the owl is sacred to Rahu, who makes his night journeys seated astride the soft, dusky back of this lover of darkness.

The name of the "Baker's Daughter," which earlier poets like to give it, alludes to a tale of Palestine that one such had refused to give our Saviour bread, and for a punishment was thus transformed. A barn-door belief did, or does exist, that the round, flat, glowworm-like eye had a power of fascination on its prey similar to that of the round, cruel one of the serpent.

As parents, the "Lord of the dark green wood" and his mate have an advantage over the rest of the winged tribe, for instead of bringing up a nestful of young of the same age, one will be a fledged youth, making eyes at some miniature mouse; another a callow, younger brother, trying to claw his way up to the edge of the nest; a third still content to lie with closed lids and gaping bill, ready for whatever chance may send him; while a fourth is chipping away at the inner vault of his limited and brittle home of shell.

As most of the allusions to the monarch of the ivy-bush have been of a gruesome nature, we will conclude by introducing a few of Barry Cornwall's lusty trumpeting lines on the great horned owl:

And the owl hath a bride who is fond and bold,
 And loveth the wood's deep gloom;
 And with eyes like the shine of the moonstone cold
 She waiteth her ghostly groom. . . .
 Nor lonely the bird, nor his ghastly mate,
 They are each unto each a pride,
 Thrice fonder perhaps, since a strange dark fate
 Hath rent them from all beside, . . .
 We know not alway,
 Who are kings by day,
 But the king of the night is the bold brown owl.

BALZAC AND HIS SECRETARY.

ONE of the incidents in Balzac's life to which he always referred with pleasure was the visit paid to him, during his residence at Les Jardies, near Ville d'Avray, by Victor Hugo.

The celebrated poet was, as a rule, the reverse of gregarious, and, beyond the limited circle of his own chosen intimates, had little intercourse with even the most distinguished writers of his day; nor was there any particular sympathy between him and the author of "La Comédie Humaine," the one being as reserved as the other was expansive, and neither of them, perhaps, appreciating the genius of his contemporary at its full value. Their meeting, therefore—an event not destined to be often renewed—was an epoch in the lives of both; and Léon Gozlan, who was present on the occasion, gives an interesting account of it, which may be more appropriately related in his own words.

"Balzac," he says, "was in a fever of impatience, owing to the non-arrival of his expected visitor, who had been delayed by a slight accident on the Versailles line, and kept his little household in perpetual movement, despatching them right and left in order to see, like Sister Anne, if any one was coming.

"At last the gate-bell rang, and Victor Hugo, for the first and only time, entered the domain of Les Jardies. Nothing could be more cordial than the greeting between these two remarkable men, who scarcely knew each other more than by reputation; it must, however, be owned that as far as elegance of costume went, a little more attention to it on both sides would have been desirable. Balzac was, if possible, more picturesquely ragged than usual; his attire consisting of a loose garment of indescribable shape, something between a blouse and a dressing-gown, unbraced and baggy trousers, a cravat deplorably frayed at both ends, and shoes which from long usage had lost every trace of their original form; the whole set off by a bristly beard of four days' growth. His guest wore a white hat of a bygone fashion and a by no means immaculate freshness, a blue coat short in the sleeves, and tightly fastened with brass buttons resembling in hue the interior of a saucepan, a shiny black cravat, and an enormous pair of green spectacles, as a safeguard against the noon-day glare.

"While the déjeuner was preparing, the two chiefs of their respective schools strolled amicably through the labyrinth of narrow paths encircling Les Jardies, even venturing on the almost perpendicular descent, terminating in the high-road to Versailles. Balzac was an enthusiastic cicerone, and expatiated in glowing terms to his companion on the improvements carried out by him on the property, pointing with exultation to the asphalt laid down on every available strip of ground in memory of his beloved boulevard, but without eliciting from Hugo more than a very qualified and monosyllabic expression of approval.

"At table, however, the poet, who had hitherto rather surprised us by his comparative taciturnity, became more genial, and when the conversation turned on the drama, he descanted eloquently on the various subjects which had successively inspired him, dwelling complacently on the large profits—often amounting to three or four hundred francs a night—which many of his pieces had already brought him in. Balzac, to whom the stage was as yet a 'terra incognita,' listened open-mouthed, and, with his customary impetuosity, at once determined, as it afterwards transpired, to devote his whole energies to this particular specialty, which promised such financial advantages, and for which, he felt inwardly assured, no one was better qualified than himself. So that, when evening came, and his visitor, escorted by both of us to the station of Ville d'Avray, had started on his homeward journey, Honoré was wild with excitement, and so entirely absorbed by the thousand and one projects conjured up by his fervid imagination that he could think or talk of nothing else. There cannot, indeed, be the slightest doubt that his chequered career as a dramatist—certainly not the most brilliant episode of his literary life—dated from his memorable interview with Victor Hugo."

Somewhere about a fortnight later, while Théophile Gautier was hard at work on his novel, "Fortunio," Balzac, in his ordinary abrupt fashion, burst into the room.

"Théo," he cried triumphantly, "I have engaged a secretary!"

"What for?" coolly enquired Gautier. "To write from dictation and copy your manuscripts, if he can manage to decipher them?"

"That of course," replied Balzac, after he had partially recovered from the fit

of laughter into which any allusion to his illegible penmanship invariably threw him; "but his duties are not to end there—far from it. What I want is a man who can furnish me with suggestions, plots, and situations which I can easily mould into shape, thereby saving me an infinity of trouble, and enabling me, without neglecting my other work, to give Harel the drama I have promised him for the Porte St. Martin, of which I haven't yet written a line. A colleague, in short, brimful of ideas, like the one I have chosen, Lassailly."

"What," exclaimed Théo, staring in amazement, "the crack-brained fellow who wrote 'Triumph'?"

"The same."

"Why, my good friend, the poor fellow hasn't a single idea left!"

"Well," retorted Balzac, rather disconcerted by this contemptuous estimate of his protégé, "we shall see. At all events, if he has anything in his head, I shall make a better use of it than he can."

The opinion so candidly expressed by the author of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" respecting the capabilities of the newly engaged secretary for the office undertaken by him, if not particularly flattering, was substantially correct. Of the many candidates at Balzac's disposal, he could hardly have selected one less fitted for the post than Lassailly, a visionary enthusiast and ardent disciple of the ultra-romantic school, who, on the eventful first night of "Hernani," enrolled himself among the champions of "la jeune France," and after performing prodigies of valour, was ignominiously hustled out of the theatre, hatless, and his coat torn to ribands, by "les séides du pouvoir," as he indignantly designated the "sergents de ville."

His chief claim, however, to notoriety was the authorship of "Les Roueries de Triumph"—published in 1833, and now become a bibliographical rarity—one of the most extravagant conceptions of a disordered brain ever offered to the public, a mingled tissue of horrors and absurdities from beginning to end, partly autobiographical, and preceded by a long preface, wherein Napoleon, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Robespierre, and the Prefect of Police successively figure.

"My name," he says, "is Triumph, derived from Trielph, which in the Danish language signifies 'confusion'; these are my memoirs, and any further explanation is unnecessary."

The appearance of this extraordinary book, in the course of which the hero either assassinates or otherwise disposes of all the principal personages, and ends by committing suicide, made a certain stir in the literary world; and, although severely handled by the critics, was deemed worthy of an exhaustive analysis by Charles Monselet. It is presumable that in this "confusion worse confounded," Balzac imagined that he had discovered a germ of originality likely to suit his purpose; for in no other way can his selection of so singularly unpractical a colleague be accounted for.

Before another week had elapsed, the author of "Triumph" was formally installed at Les Jardies, and at first matters went smoothly enough. The change from a hand-to-mouth existence to comfortable quarters appeared a godsend to Lassailly, and without a moment's hesitation he gladly subscribed to the conditions imposed on him by his employer, and agreed to be always at his disposal "by day or by night," and to suggest whatever dramatic situation or incident—Balzac being then intent on monopolising for an indefinite period the bills of the Porte St. Martin—might occur to him. It is but fair to state that the owner of Les Jardies amply fulfilled his part of the contract, and treated his secretary so luxuriously that the latter, who was as thin as a lath on taking office, soon threatened to rival his patron in embonpoint; and, placidly resigning himself to this unwonted beatitude, felt a growing distaste for any exertion, mental or bodily. This state of things by no means suited Balzac, who naturally counted on reciprocity, and was impatient to profit by the "ideas" with the possession of which he had somewhat prematurely credited his intended "collaborator." Moreover, he himself was then so deeply engaged in unravelling the entanglements of half-a-dozen plots connected with divers episodes of "La Comédie Humaine," that his theatrical projects almost entirely depended on the aid he expected to derive from the inventive faculties of his colleague, who, however, had not as yet contributed a single hint or suggestion to the common stock.

One clause in the agreement between them—which had been regularly drawn out and signed by both parties—was especially distasteful to Lassailly, and he bitterly regretted having rashly consented to it: namely, his liability to be summoned by

his chief at any hour, "by day or by night." Nor, as will be seen, did he complain without reason. Balzac, to whose practical mind sleep appeared an inexcusable waste of time, was in the habit of sitting down to work about midnight, and seldom retired to his chamber before the approach of dawn. His secretary, therefore, was constantly exposed to the disagreeable possibility of being called up at a moment's notice through the medium of a bell clanging at the head of his bed loudly enough to startle the seven sleepers. The record of one night's sufferings will serve as a sample of the rest.

It is striking two, and Lassailly, aroused from his first slumber, and only half-awake, is stumbling along the passage leading from his bedroom to his patron's study, yawning portentously as he goes. He has scarcely entered the room, when Balzac, laying aside his pen, turns abruptly round, and puts the usual question:

"Have you hit upon an idea?"

"An idea!" feebly echoes the secretary. "Yes, that is what we want. Something original and——"

"Well," interrupts Maître Honoré, "have you found it? Answer, man! Every moment is precious; the Porte St. Martin is waiting; Harel and the public are waiting; and Frédéric Lemaitre, who waylaid me yesterday on the boulevard, pesters me out of my life about it."

"Ah," replies Lassailly, striving to gain time, "you have seen Frédéric?"

"Don't I tell you so! He wants a new creation—a drama safe to attract all Paris, and he counts upon us for it. Is that clear?"

"Quite clear."

"Very good. Then where is it, this drama. Have you it ready?"

"Not exactly; but——"

"No buts! Come to the point at once, and let me hear your plan."

"If it is the same to you," stammers Lassailly, nervously fingering the tassel of his nightcap, "I should prefer hearing your ideas on the subject before communicating my own; and then, you see, we could compare notes, and——"

"Lassailly," quietly interposes Balzac, "you are asleep!"

"No, I assure you."

"My good fellow, you can hardly keep on your legs. Go back to bed, and we will see what another hour will do for you."

Mechanically retracing his steps, the

unfortunate secretary is soon once more in the land of dreams, to be rudely awakened therefrom at the expiration of the allotted sixty minutes, when the same ceremony is again gone through; the same questions eliciting the same unsatisfactory answers; and the famous drama, so impatiently awaited by manager Harel and Frédéric Lemaitre, remaining in its mythical "statu quo," and thus probably escaping a similar fate to that subsequently experienced by Vautrin and *Les Ressources de Quinola*.

After three weeks of this intolerable régime, matters came to a crisis. Worn out by a constant succession of sleepless nights, and utterly incapable of performing the duties assigned him, Lassailly lost heart altogether, and, profiting by a temporary absence of Balzac, secretly decamped from *Les Jardies*, and returned to Paris. A day or two later, happening to meet Gozian, the latter asked why he had voluntarily cancelled an agreement which had ensured him so many material advantages.

"Ah," replied the ex-secretary, with a sigh of regret, "in that respect I shall never see the like again. A table worthy of Lucullus, roast meat every day, the earliest 'primeurs' from Chevet's, and such coffee, the very essence of the most fragrant Mocha! But to be called up six or eight times in a night to discuss an apocryphal drama of which neither of us had the faintest idea, no mortal brain could stand it. The clang of that infernal bell is still ringing in my ear, and to the last moment of my life I shall never hear the name of Balzac without a shudder!"

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XI. MONSIEUR DE CERNAY.

MRS. PERCIVAL was not without an adventure, in her short journey between Tours and Saint-Bernard. At the second station from Tours, a Frenchman, small, ugly, and agreeable, got into the carriage, and after one or two covert glances, begged very politely to recall himself to her memory. Mrs. Percival thought at first that he must be mistaken, for she had quite forgotten him, and was sure that she knew no one in that part of the country, except the Marquis de Montmirail. At the same

time, the name of De Cernay did not seem quite unknown to her.

"Our poor Montmirail has mentioned my name to you, no doubt, madame," said M. de Cernay; and he went on to remind her of a certain evening in Paris, when she and her niece had dined with Madame de Ferrand, at the *Hôtel Ste. Monique*. "My first sight of your beautiful niece—I am not likely to forget it—or the effect of that evening on my friend Achille. If one could know the future—however, madame, I well remember the impression that those two English ladies made on me."

"Oh, yes, I remember," said Mrs. Percival. She could not be complimentary enough to tell the little Baron that she remembered him, for in fact his presence had made no impression at all on her. But that evening, the evening when Paul had come back from England with the news of Colonel Ward's death, the evening that had brought all to an end between him and Celia—she did not need much reminding of that.

How charming Madame de Ferrand had been! What a loss she was to her family! This was a little subject which occupied the next few minutes agreeably enough. Then she told M. de Cernay that she was on her way to *La Tour Blanche*.

"To pay my first visit," she said. "They have often most kindly asked me, but I have never succeeded in getting there yet."

"And now, madame," said M. de Cernay, throwing up his hands in a sort of rapture, "you are coming like an angel from heaven."

"Oh no, monsieur," she said, smiling, "I have no pretension to be like any one of that kind."

"I am not exaggerating, I am not talking nonsense," said M. de Cernay, shaking his head. "The visit of an angel—what is it supposed to bring? Peace, kindness, truth—in fact, a great many charming things that find themselves pushed aside sometimes in this thoughtless world of ours. Pardon me, madame, if I am hinting more than I ought," said the Baron, with a bow and a shrug. "But I consider myself Achille de Montmirail's best friend—he might not give me the title, perhaps, in these days—and the Marquise, who could fail to admire any one so beautiful, and so clever! Mais——" he ended his speech with a long-drawn sigh, lifted eyebrows, and a greater shrug still.

A cold shiver crept over Mrs. Percival as she listened, and looked at him, for he gave her the impression of speaking quite honestly. Now she thought of Achille's letter, and all the little fears she had almost forgotten.

"I do not understand——" she began nervously.

"Of course you do not; how should you, dear madame?" cried M. de Cernay. "I am making mischief—alas, my wife tells me that I can never hold my tongue! And you really had no idea that there was anything wrong at La Tour Blanche? Well, I see now that we need not distress ourselves. Your visit, as I say, is an angel's visit; everything will go right. Your advice will have the best effect in the world. Perhaps Achille has been a little fanciful. Mon Dieu, believe me, I know hundreds of men in France who are far less fortunate than he is, and who do not complain—simply let things go their own way. But he is sensitive, my poor Achille. He has a devotion, you see. The object is, perhaps, a little disappointing, and he is very much hurt—too much; he had better take things cheerfully, like a philosopher—because, after all, it is nothing."

"But what is it?" said Mrs. Percival. "You mean to say that they are not quite happy—he and his wife—my niece?"

"Not quite happy," repeated M. de Cernay. "And what a pity it is! No one can see anything unnatural in Madame de Montmirail's great friendship for her cousin, though for my part—— But tastes differ. I assure you, as I said just now, many ladies in France allow themselves quite as much liberty, and a great deal more. It is, no doubt, the well-known character of Englishwomen which causes surprise in this case. People are sorry for Achille; he is sensitive, as I say. And he has been so very fond of his wife; she has ruled him completely. All these things are unfortunate."

Mrs. Percival flushed crimson, and looked out of the window; she was utterly horrified. M. de Cernay did not, of course, know that Vincent was her son, and she could not tell him.

"But you must remember," she said, after a moment—"they are cousins, and old friends, very intimate friends."

"Certainly, no doubt," cried M. de Cernay. "But even more than friends, madame, though possibly you did not know it. M. le Capitaine made a little confession to my wife, I may tell you.

And then, since that, we have all been at Trouville together."

For a few minutes Mrs. Percival sat perfectly silent. She was reflecting that Achille's letter had indeed brought her into a frightful hornets' nest, wondering how she could possibly cope with Celia and whether she had authority enough over Vincent to send him away at once. On the whole, she did not feel afraid. It was a terribly disagreeable business, but she had her share of goodness and courage, as well as of the dignity which was wanted in a matter like this. In her prettiest and most foolish days, the most scandalous tongues had never been able to breathe a word against her.

M. de Cernay watched her with interest as she sat there thinking. He and his wife had been boiling with indignation for some weeks past, against the odious woman who was so evidently making his friend Achille unhappy. They were still more furious, because it was impossible to say a word of advice or sympathy to Achille himself. A whole family appeared to be going to the dogs, without a hand being put out to save them. But here was this excellent aunt, coming at last to the rescue. She, being English, would know how to manage both the Marquise and her beast of a cousin. Her visit was indeed that of an angel; the Baron felt that there was no exaggeration in saying so.

Poor Mrs. Percival, her mind quite occupied in rising to the occasion, was not at all aware of the deep respect and admiration with which M. de Cernay was regarding her.

As a rule, he disliked the English as cordially as his friend Achille liked them; but this Englishwoman, though cold and indifferent after the manner of her nation, inspired him with confidence and hope. He listened with interest when she began to speak again.

"And about his daughter," she said; "there is some question of her marriage, is there not?"

"Well, poor child, we hardly know whether it will come to anything," said M. de Cernay, with a shrug. "When we were at Trouville it suddenly occurred to Achille, it seems to me, that he might as well get rid of his daughter. He said a word to my wife on the subject, and she brought forward a distant cousin of hers, a good sort of young fellow, not handsome, not particularly rich; but then Made-moiselle Antoinette's 'dot' is far from

enormous. This young Jules of ours had seen her photograph, however, and admired it, as everybody must. He was willing enough — is so still, though we soon found that there was an obstacle. Mademoiselle Antoinette sets herself violently against marrying at all, and says she would rather go into a convent, though she certainly has no vocation. She has always been such a good daughter — except in one instance, years ago, when she prevented her father from marrying a charming person we had all chosen for him—that I am surprised at her giving him this extra trouble now. The convent is all nonsense; she does not wish to leave him; but she had much better leave him, and, in fact, I have reason to believe that he thinks of sending her to his cousins in England."

"Yes," said Mrs. Percival, "he has an idea that she will travel back with me."

"Madame, you give me excellent news," said the smiling Baron. "I shall tell my wife that we may now be happy about Antoinette; she has been a sad element in the situation, to our minds. When she comes back everything will be better, and in the end her marriage will come off successfully."

"She is very pretty, is she not?" said Mrs. Percival.

"Charmingly pretty! A most picturesque contrast to her stepmother, you know; but you have seen them together?"

"Some time ago. Not since Antoinette was grown up."

"Ah! it is hard to remember that she is grown up. Her beauty will always be the beauty of a noble, innocent child. No bad example will ever do harm to Antoinette—though it is impossible to tell her father so—she walks like a star through this wicked world."

M. de Cernay sighed and checked himself. After all, in his most poetical moments, it was necessary to remember that he was talking to the aunt of the bad example herself.

By the time the train reached Saint-Bernard, Mrs. Percival was well prepared for all and any discoveries that might be waiting for her at the Château de la Tour Blanche.

Certainly the wish crossed her mind that she could go travelling on to the north, and at last reach the sea and cross it again to old England, and find herself once more, peaceful and artistic, in her drawing-room at River Gate.

It certainly seemed that married people ought to manage their affairs for themselves, and that she could not be held responsible for the good conduct of Celia. But Vincent was her son, and she thought she had some influence over him. Besides, she had been invited both by the Marquis and by Celia. In short, it was a great deal too late to turn back now.

She was a good deal vexed and astonished that nobody, not even a carriage, met her at Saint-Bernard station; but she bore it more calmly than Timms, who was weighed down with the anxiety of luggage, and who proclaimed loudly that this was the most outlandish part of France she had ever been in. M. de Cernay was full of kindness and attention. He bustled about, got hold of the "chef de gare," and heard from him the startling news that Madame de Montmirail, with mademoiselle and the English gentleman, had gone to Tours by the morning train, and had not yet come back. A conveyance for Mrs. Percival was a difficulty; nobody at Saint-Bernard either wanted or possessed a "fiacre." To be sure, they had a little carriage at the "Boule d'Or."

"The carriage of M. le Baron is waiting outside," suggested the chef de gare, with his head on one side, and an agreeable smile.

"Precisely! The large carriage! But what a fortunate miracle!" cried M. de Cernay; and Mrs. Percival soon found that the whole thing was decided.

She and her maid and her luggage were to be sent in the Baron's carriage to La Tour Blanche, and he himself would walk home. "Three steps—through two streets;" he earnestly assured her; and he would hear of no remonstrance. "Madame," he said, with a low bow, "it is not every day that one can facilitate the journey of an angel."

The chef de gare, looking on, thought at first that such language as this would displease Madame la Baronne. But then he thought that perhaps the strange lady was too old to be dangerous; and he put it down to M. de Cernay's well-known eccentricity.

"We have a shooting party at La Tour Blanche to-morrow. Au plaisir de vous revoir, madame," said M. de Cernay at the carriage-door, in farewell.

In happier days Mrs. Percival would have enjoyed the golden twilight of that evening; the charming, unfamiliar country; but as it was, while M. de Cernay's horses

whirled her quickly through the picturesque lanes, she was too much occupied with her own thoughts to notice anything. She wondered, now, that she had not had presence of mind enough to insist on waiting at the station till the party came back from Tours. Probably they had gone there with the idea of meeting her, and of course the carriage had been ordered to meet a later train. That kind M. de Cernay had been too fussy; he had not given her time to think of these things; the chatter of French was a little confusing, though she spoke and understood it well. The farther she got from the station, the more she began to shrink from meeting Achille de Montmirail, alone. He certainly must have some cause to be angry with his wife, and, perhaps, with Vincent. Mrs. Percival did not believe, from her old knowledge of Celia, that she would do anything really imprudent, or dangerous; but there is no smoke without fire; and Celia might very well have shown a cool disregard for her husband's feelings. As for Vincent, it was quite possible that he had been very foolish indeed. Confession to Madame de Cernay! that was incomprehensible, and sounded as if he had indeed taken leave of his senses.

Mrs. Percival awoke from these puzzling thoughts to find herself driving down an irregular village street, with lights flashing among trees. The moon had risen, and all the landscape, the straggling gardens, white walls, lines of poplars, were lit up with a faint, magical glow, a struggle of sunset and moon-rise, from which the colour was gradually dying as silver conquered gold. Mrs. Percival had hardly time to think—"Can we be there already?"—when the carriage turned into the avenue, flashing past the white balustrade of a bridge. A few yards farther, somebody on foot spoke to the coachman, and the carriage stopped.

A ray of moonlight fell through the branches on Achille de Montmirail's fair head as he came up to the door.

"My dear aunt, what has happened to you?" said the kind, familiar voice in English. "You missed the young people, then? They went to Tours this morning on purpose to meet you."

"Yes, I must have missed them," said Mrs. Percival hastily. "But I had no idea they were coming."

"No idea! Celia wrote to Paris."

"To Paris!"

"Certainly—to the Deux Frères. She

felt sure you would pass the night nowhere else."

"Oh! Well, we did not go there, so that explains it," said Mrs. Percival. "I travelled just now with your friend M. de Cernay, and he most kindly sent me here in his carriage, as you see."

"Ah—yes, yes!" said the Marquis. "I hope you may find my house as well prepared as his carriage. Drive on," he said to the coachman, and was instantly left behind in the avenue by the impatient horses.

Mrs. Percival felt as if she was dreaming, and never afterwards could look back on that evening—and the next—without the same strange feeling that it was all a dream, and that in real life she had never seen Achille de Montmirail since certain agreeable days in Paris—long ago, they seemed—when he and Celia were staying with Madame de Ferrand, and she was at her favourite hotel opposite. Perhaps this unreal feeling was caused by Achille's own manner, removing at once, she felt, any fears of a painful or sensational visit; but still, somehow, not quite natural. She understood it better afterwards, but never entirely. Then, the unreal effect was heightened by the strange light in which she got out of the carriage—a light "neither clear nor dark," the great old chateau towering dimly, the ivied walls, the broad terrace across which forms of dogs, quite oddly familiar, came with wags of recognition; servants hurrying out in great surprise, the horses' bells jingling, and in the background a great silence and stillness of slowly-brightening moonlight, across which an owl floated with his melancholy cry, while the Marquis came striding up from the avenue, gave her his arm, and took her into the house, into the great beautiful shining salon, dimly lighted with one lamp that only made the shadows darker.

"How lovely! What an exquisite room!" cried Mrs. Percival.

"You can't see it; they will light it up for you presently. Celia will be glad if you like it; she always talks of your taste. But this is terrible—only myself to receive you after such a journey. How did you leave the Canon? and how did you manage your journey? Sit down, ma tante; I think you will like that chair."

Mrs. Percival sat down and answered his questions, feeling all the time as if she hardly knew what she was saying. She could not see his face well; but it

seemed to her that he looked a good deal older—quite his age now. A handsome, distinguished-looking man still; but thinner, browner, graver than she remembered him. What struck her most was a sort of dignity, unconscious, unintentional, which made her feel that she could ask him no questions, and that he would tell her nothing. She felt quite sure that he had not complained of his wife, or any one else, to M. de Cernay.

She told him how Paul Romaine had escorted her to Tours, and then was sorry, for he said once or twice rather gravely:

“I wish he had come here! Why should he not come here? I should like to see him again.”

Mrs. Percival tried to explain that Paul was bent on visiting various old towns and castles.

“They will stand for some years yet,” said the Marquis.

Presently Suzanne appeared, and offered to take madame to her room. Then came dinner, at which the Marquis talked almost entirely about England and his old friends there. He did not think that he should ever be in England again, he said. But he was anxious that his daughter should see it, and he asked rather earnestly if Mrs. Percival was sure that she could take her back.

“My reasons are too many to explain,” he said.

“I don’t want any reasons,” said Mrs. Percival. “I shall be only too glad to have her. You said there was some idea of her being married—”

“Ah—I will not have her tormented about that,” he said quickly. “She shall go to England, and after that she shall do as she pleases. You will kindly remember, *ma tante*,” he said, leaning towards her with an odd sort of intensity in the expression of his eyes, “that I will not cause Antoinette any unhappiness; I have done quite enough in that way. This marriage is only an idea. It is at present disagreeable to her, and she shall not be reminded of it till she comes back to France, if then.”

“I will not remind her of it, certainly,” said Mrs. Percival. “But as to your causing unhappiness to any one, my dear Achille, I should say that your whole life had been spent in doing the contrary.”

“You flatter me, as I used once to flatter myself,” he said. “But, after all, we do

not always know when we are selfish. Have you taken any notice of your old friend Di? Here she is, looking at you.”

After dinner the Marquis amused Mrs. Percival by showing her the beauties of the salon, now brilliantly lighted. Then they went out into the glorious moonlight, and walked up and down on the terrace with the dogs, talking of all sorts of indifferent subjects. He talked agreeably, though perhaps more gravely than in old days. Now and then he mentioned Celia’s name, quite simply, and as a matter of course. Mrs. Percival could detect no sign of the sensitiveness M. de Cernay had mentioned, though she believed that it might be there; for whatever his talk might be, he certainly did not look happy; the boyish, light-hearted cheerfulness which she remembered had disappeared utterly. As she walked up and down with him, to the curiously dreamy feeling of the evening was added a feeling of utter helplessness; a feeling that some catastrophe was coming; that she ought to stop it, but could not. It was like a nightmare to be alone with this man and her anxiety, in the silence of such a night, down in this country unknown to her. She secretly resolved—why she did not know, for Achille was perfectly kind and pleasant—that she would never go anywhere again, so far from home, without the Canon’s solid earthly presence to take care of her.

“I hear the carriage; they are coming now,” said Achille at last; and then Mrs. Percival spoke in sudden desperation:

“I am afraid Vincent has been paying you much too long a visit, my dear Marquis,” she said.

“I am glad he finds France amusing. I like England very much,” he said; and Mrs. Percival could say no more. The great carriage, with four people in it, appeared at that moment out of the darkness of the avenue.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

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CHAPTER X.

THE storm was a dry one; it broke in its full fury almost immediately after Madge and Lance got back to the house. They had scampered up the steep garden paths as if pursued by the storm-fiend himself, and Madge had to stand a good three minutes just within the hall-door to get her breath back.

"Get away from the trees, Madge," he had said, catching her arm and pulling her along at a fine pace.

Well, she could easily understand his anxiety that they should be under shelter from the storm. What she could not understand was his haste to rush out into it again. It is true he shouted to her as he disappeared in the outside darkness: "I've forgotten something, I shall be back in a minute." But that something ought to have been of great importance to necessitate such a headlong rush into what threatened to be one of the worst storms the country-side had known for years.

Lance's seemingly eccentric conduct, however, admitted of an easy explanation. When he had peered among the reeds and water-flags as his boat shot past, he had thought he saw the flutter of a grey skirt, whose wearer it was easy to identify.

Madge had read easily enough the forlornness which Miss Shore's white face and stony manner expressed. Lance had read the forlornness, and something else beside. A mood half-desperate, half-defiant, which might possibly find for

itself a desperate means of ending a hopeless life.

It was this thought that speeded his feet through the storm to the water's edge once more.

But when he got down there among the sedges and willows, not a soul was to be seen. A startled bird flew from out a marshy hollow with a sharp cry; a solitary frog croaked a dismal note of warning; an ominous breeze, rippling the dark surface of the water, set the reeds bending and whispering together. Other sound there was none.

Something glittering at the bottom of the little boat they had just quitted caught his eye. Picking it up, he saw that it was the bracelet which Madge had unclasped as she had paddled in the stream.

A brilliant flash of lightning cleft the inky clouds over his head, and for one brief moment the whole night-hidden landscape stood revealed.

Old Cuddaw crowned it, standing out bold, bleak, and bare against the leaden sky. Below, the castle showed a grey solid block of masonry with every turret and gable sharply defined. Lower still the valley lay, a dim expanse of waving, shadowy trees, out of which crept a white, stony path, leading with many a wind up to the fells.

It seemed less like one grand expanse of scenery thus laid bare to view than a combination of two landscapes, the one belonging to the sky, the other to the earth beneath.

In that brief, vivid illumination, Lance saw something else beside the sky picture and the dim valley with its upward-winding path—the figure of a woman in a long flowing cloak in that path, making her way rapidly towards the mountains.

It did not need a second flash of lightning to tell him who that woman was. But what her motive could be in thus daring the storm on those mountain heights was not so easy to discover.

He thought with dismay of the slippery mountain paths, the shelving ledges, the holes, and gaping precipices. He who had known them from boyhood would yet have hesitated to dare their dangers on a moonless night. And there was she—a woman, a stranger, without guide or light—making for them with straight and rapid steps, which implied purpose and design.

His course was clear to him. A shorter way led out of the valley than the one she was following; it intersected the former path at the point where the mountain ascent began. By using his utmost despatch he might intercept her at that point, and succeed in inducing her to take shelter in a sandy hollow beneath the over-arching rocks, which, in his boyish days, had been a favourite play-place for him—his "Crusoe's cave."

It was not possible to make swift headway through the woody moorland which lay between him and this haven of refuge. The darkness was increasing with every step he took. Overhead the thunder crashed with a bewildering rapidity, every peal prolonged to twice its length by the mountain echoes, till from east to west, from west to east, the heavens seemed one vast plain of rolling artillery.

He hailed the bright, scintillating lightnings as he would have hailed a friendly lantern. They showed him the briar and tangle in his path, the big stumbling-blocks of boulders, the pitfalls of disused gravel-pits. They showed him also, when at length he reached the "Crusoe's cave," Miss Shore's slender figure standing about thirty feet above his head on the overlapping ledge.

Whatever she was or was not, one thing was certain: she must be a practised mountaineer, or she could never have reached even this moderate height in safety.

"How much higher is she going?" thought Lance. Then, making one vigorous effort in the pauses of the thunder, he shouted to her at the top of his voice, calling her by name, entreating her to wait for him, so that he might take her to a place of safety.

There came an awful flash of lightning at this moment, which seemed to spend its fiercest strength on the very ledge of rock on which she stood.

Lance, half-blinded, looking upwards, saw the girl standing motionless, while the lightning seemed literally to smite the ground at her very feet. Then came the terrific, resonant thunder, then the inky, bewildering darkness closed in upon the mountain-side once more.

Half-stunned, as well as half-blinded, Lance made his way up the stony path which lay between him and Miss Shore; his heart, stout as it was, quailing at the thought of the sight that might greet his eyes as the dire result of Nature's cruelly expended forces.

But no sight more dire than that of Miss Shore leaning against the bulging side of the rock met his view as he rounded the path. She might have been carved out of the rock itself for the motionlessness and rigidity of her outline. The hood of her grey cloak had fallen from her head; her bandeau of black hair had uncoiled, and hung in a long black line on one side of her ashen-white face; her eyes were round and staring.

She did not turn her head at his approach, merely pointed to the ground at her feet, where the quick thunderbolt had literally split the rock.

"Did you see that?" she asked, under her breath, in an awe-stricken voice.

"See it!" cried Lance. "Who could help seeing it? Thank Heaven you are safe—don't waste a moment, take my hand. I'll get you down into a place of safety."

But the girl did not stir. "Would that have killed any one else?" she asked, in the same slow, suppressed voice as before.

"Why, of course not, or else it must have killed you," answered Lance, trying to laugh off what seemed to him a stupefying terror on her part. "You see I wasn't far behind you, and I wasn't hurt. Come, make haste into shelter; we don't know what the next flash may do."

His last words were lost in the crash of another peal.

But it was farther off now. The storm had evidently spent the worst of its fury. The dense sky parted; light clouds went travelling across it, carried by the upper current.

Still the girl did not stir.

"My mother said on her death-bed," she said, and now her foreign accent became more markedly apparent, "that not poison, nor flood, nor fire, can kill those who are to die by the hand of man." It was said slowly and absently, with eyes not looking at Lance, but beyond him.

"Poison, flood, fire!" All in a moment there seemed to be revealed to Lance a terrible reason for the emptied glass beside the bed, for the crouching figure among the water-reeds, for the bare-headed defiance of the lightning on the mountain.

Debonair and light-hearted to the last degree, it cost him an effort to shut his eyes to the horror of the whole thing, and to say in an easy, commonplace voice: "Never mind about that; the thing is now to get into a place of safety. Come."

She looked at him steadily for a moment. "Yes, I will come," she said slowly. "Fate is stronger than I."

She did not take his hand; she walked slowly beside him with head bent, and eyes fixed on the ground.

There was no need to seek the refuge of the "Crusoe's cave." Overhead, the light clouds parting showed a faint rift of light from a young moon; far away in the distance the thunder was dying hard in a succession of low, sonorous growls.

But few words passed between them on their way back. Lance thanked heaven when they stood within the Castle grounds once more. Miss Shore seemed tired and dazed; her voice was weak, her footsteps dragged.

Lights were more conspicuous in the upper than in the lower rooms as they approached the house. One long French window of the library left unshuttered and unbarred, gave them easy and unnoted entrance.

"She ought to be locked in her room at night," thought Lance, as he said his good-night to his companion at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh, Lance," said Madge, coming out of the drawing-room a moment after, "where have you been? How white you look! We were just talking about sending out a party of men with torches and umbrellas in search of you."

Lance tossed her bracelet to her. "A golden reason for risking a wetting," he said laughingly, and then vanished forthwith before she had time to frame a second question.

CHAPTER XL

MADGE, bent on keeping down the growth of her prejudices, did not forget her promise to Lance, and the morning after the storm saw her seated in Miss Shore's room doing her best to win that young lady's confidence, with the bene-

volent hope of finding a pretext for inducing her to prolong her stay at the Castle.

It was uphill work, however. Miss Shore seemed bent on playing the part of a fertilising shower to Madge's prejudices, for rebuff after rebuff did she deal to her kindly overtures.

Miss Shore had not made her appearance at the breakfast-table on the morning after the storm. Her breakfast had been taken to her in her own room, together with the morning's paper, for which she had once more sent down a special request.

"You are interested in politics—in the foreign news?" asked Madge by way of making a beginning, and noting that Miss Shore had folded the paper with the Continental news uppermost.

She started.

"I care for foreign news! Why should I? It is nothing to me," she answered almost fiercely.

Madge felt that she had somehow made a wrong start.

"One naturally likes to have news of one's own country when away from it," she said apologetically.

"Country!" cried Miss Shore, flushing scarlet, "this is my country; I have no other."

Madge felt bewildered.

"But—but," she stammered, "you are not English, surely. Are you not Italian? You gave me the impression of being Italian."

"I am not Italian; I am English. My father was English; I am English. Hear how I speak!"

Evidently she was ignorant how markedly foreign her accent was.

"I am sorry," said Madge frankly. "I was hoping that you might be Italian, and that—that we might have studied the language together. I am so wishing to be a fluent linguist."

She did not like to say: "I was hoping that you would be able to give me some lessons in Italian, for which I might have paid you a guinea an hour." She could only hope that her meaning would gradually dawn on her languid listener.

The meaning, however, did not seem to dawn, so Madge went on again:

"I am wanting to improve myself in all sorts of ways. I sometimes feel that I am very much behind other people in accomplishments. I want to get some good teaching in singing—I am particularly fond of singing. Do you sing?"

"I do not."

"Dear me, this is unpromising!" thought Madge. "There's one thing she certainly couldn't give me lessons in — courtesy. What shall I try next? Ah!—Perhaps you play on the piano or on the violin?"

"I do not know a note of music."

"Really?"

There came a long pause.

Miss Shore folded her newspaper with the advertisements outside, but still kept it tightly in her hand.

Madge looked out of the window. The storm of over-night had disturbed the weather; the air was full of a vapoury heaviness through which the mountains showed black against a leaden sky.

Those mountains suggested an idea:

"I do so wish I had devoted more time to art before I married! I would give anything if I could paint those mountains—that sky. Of course you can paint?"

"I can."

Madge's spirits went up.

"How I envy you——" she began, but then stopped.

She did not care, with other interests growing upon her, to volunteer for a long course of painting lessons; that would mean at least three hours daily in Miss Shore's company.

Another idea suggested itself.

"I don't mean flower-painting or portrait-painting; I mean can you sketch scenery—mountains, and lakes, and valleys?"

"I hate the mountains," she said with slow, suppressed bitterness.

"Hate the mountains! Well, even if you hate them, that needn't prevent your being able to paint them," said Madge, beginning to lose patience a little.

"I can paint them. I have painted mountains grander than these." She broke off a moment, then added, as if she were compelling herself to a course which was advisable rather than attractive: "Do you wish me to paint these mountains for you?"

"That's it—the very thing," cried Madge, drawing a long breath of relief. "I have been wanting, for a long time, to decorate a little room downstairs, which I occupy sometimes, with a set of water-colour sketches." (This was a fib, but Madge was at her wits' ends.) "It was my boudoir before I married, and now Sir Peter is good enough to have it refurnished for me. If I could get six or eight pictures

of Cumberland scenery hung round it, I should feel it decorated at once."

"Six or eight! There," thought Madge, "she can take just as long as ever she likes over them, and I will pay her whatever she asks me for them. And if Lance isn't satisfied with my morning's work, I don't know what will please him."

"I will paint them if you wish it," said Miss Shore, and then she looked at the door as if she had endured Madge's company long enough.

Madge rose instantly.

"Is your room comfortable? Have you all you want here?" she asked, looking round as she so often did when welcoming Lady Judith's guests to the Castle.

Both looking-glasses were pushed into a corner now, both turned face to the wall.

Miss Shore followed Madge's gaze towards that corner.

"They were in my way. I pushed them there," she said coldly, in a tone that prevented further questioning.

Madge felt that she had earned the thanks which Lance accorded to her, when, later on in the day, she contrived to inform him of her plan to put a little money into Miss Shore's purse.

"I must admit that she is not a taking young woman," she said. "I never felt myself so chilled and repressed in my life before."

The seriousness Lance put into his answer startled her.

"Madge, I do believe," he said, "that that poor girl has had some terrible experience. I never before in my life saw human eyes with such a hunted, desolate look in them."

"It's wonderful," said Sir Peter, coming into the room at that moment, "how much one can get through between sunrise and sundown, if one only sets to work with a will!"

"Wonderful!" echoed Lance, his seriousness gone in a moment, like a ghost at the cock's crow, and getting up and opening a door on the opposite side of the room, in order that Sir Peter might have free egress whenever he felt so disposed.

Sir Peter had been in a particularly lively frame of mind during the past few days, and Mr. Stubbs had had rather a busy time of it, owing to his patron's wish to re-model every one of the charities on whose committee-list his name figured. The letter-bag had gone out stuffed every night, yet Sir Peter's brain appeared to be brimming over with ideas.

"I have a splendid scheme on hand just now," he said, thoroughly content now that he had succeeded in breaking the thread of Lance's and Madge's talk, and had concentrated their attention entirely on himself. "A splendid scheme! A little vast—a little vague at present, perhaps."

"Ah," echoed Lance again; "a little vast, a little vague!"

"But what of that? In my schemes I must be vast, or I am nothing. The fault of one-half of the schemes of charity submitted to me, is that they are microscopic. I say to Stubbs every morning of my life, 'Double, treble, quadruple the proportions of that project, then I will look at it.' But I must have elbow-room—elbow-room in all I undertake." Here he lifted his elbows in the air with an upward wing-like motion.

"Ah, elbow-room, of course," said Lance, also executing the wing-like movement with his elbows.

Sir Peter made one turn round the room, and came back again.

"The truth of it is," he said, lowering his voice, and looking over his shoulder, "that if it were not for Lady Judith I should by this time have won for myself the reputation of an universal——"

"Provider?" suggested Lance.

"Benefactor," finished the old gentleman, not understanding the allusion. "But as it is"—here a deep-drawn sigh—"when I would soar on wings like a bird," here he again executed the upward wing-like movement, "Lady Judith brings me down to earth again, and I feel myself nothing more than a kite with a string attached to it."

Then he pulled out his watch.

"What, half-past twelve is it? And I have had no exercise to-day. Ah! I must be off for a little stretch in the park."

"There is a case of foot-and-mouth disease at Lower Upton," said Lady Judith, entering the room by the door by which Sir Peter was about to quit it.

She was fanning herself vigorously. Sir Peter backed into the room before her. Her robust handling of her fan might have conveyed the impression that she had fanned him back again over the threshold.

Now that the husband and wife were together in the room, Madge thought it would be a splendid opportunity to get their combined sanction to the little plan she had just been detailing to Lance respecting Miss Shore.

She accordingly, in a key sufficiently loud to reach Lady Judith's ear, asked Sir Peter's consent to it.

Sir Peter's face grew rosy with pleasure.

"The very thing! the very thing!" he cried, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I told you, Lance, that if Madge were only consulted on the matter, she would arrange it all easily enough! And you said——"

"No, I didn't," said Lance, apprehensive of what was coming, and not at all pleased that Madge should know that he and Sir Peter had beforehand taken counsel together on the matter.

"Well, I said I have a hundred plans for——"

"Ah! I dare say you said that," interrupted Lance, bent on preventing further disclosures.

Lady Judith unintentionally became his ally.

"Is she to be a permanence in the house? That's what I want to know," she asked in her highest key, her fan once more with its backward motion stirring the air as much for Sir Peter as for herself. "And am I expected to take her in hand, and be a sort of Providence to her?"

Sir Peter slipped behind her, retreating backwards towards the door.

"No, no, my dear, nothing of the sort; don't trouble yourself. Madge will take all responsibility on her own shoulders, I'm sure."

Lady Judith turned on him, executing the double action with her fan once more.

She caught the word responsibility only.

"Yes, it is a responsibility, and I admit, if I am to have responsibilities, that I would sooner they should be of my own choosing. There was the last gardener's boy you sent home—wretched little being! He had lost a thumb, and was horribly bow-legged, and I remember you said to me: 'Nice little fellow! Can't you put him into page's livery, and make something of him?'"

"My dear, I have no wish for you to put Miss Shore into page's livery, I assure you," said Sir Peter, making a feeble effort to make the situation comic, but getting at the same time a step or two nearer the door.

Lady Judith fanned him on another step or two.

"And the last stable-boy you brought home from London had such a diabolical squint, that he could only see the time by turning his back on the clock and getting a glimpse of it over the top of his ear. Yet you said to me: 'First-rate lad that! find him something to do at the farm!'"

But she had fairly fanned Sir Peter on to the door-mat now, and had to appeal to Lance and Madge as audience.

They, however, through long practice, were able to continue undisturbed their own subjects of conversation under the immediate fire of her oratory.

THE LAND OF THE PINK PEARL.

UNDER this very attractive name is sometimes known a not very flourishing portion of Her Majesty's dominions, with which our American cousins are better acquainted than stay-at-home English people. But in the revived interest in West Indian affairs, partly caused by the commotion in sugar, and partly by Mr. Froude's recent book, it is desirable that the Land of the Pink Pearl should not be lost sight of. It has lately found an illustrator in Mr. L. D. Powles, ex-circuit Justice of the Bahama Islands; but it is to be regretted that Mr. Powles has not given to the world more of actual description and less of personal grievance than his book contains.

The Bahamas are very much of an unknown country, even to the West Indians themselves. "Why waste your time in writing about the Bahama Islands?" said a West Indian merchant to Mr. Powles. "We in the West Indies know no more about the Bahamas than we do about an Irish village." Mr. Froude not only did not visit them—he never even mentions them in his book. There is no steam communication between them and the other West Indian islands, and the mails are mostly transmitted by way of New York, with which place there is a regular line of tourist steamers.

Yet, while there is so much scope here for an energetic globe-trotter, so persistent a recorder of incidents of travel as Mr. J. J. Aubertin, who since his "Flight to Mexico" has had "A Fight with Distances" in the New World, and who was in the Bahamas last year, only gives one page out of three hundred and fifty in his last volume to these interesting islands. True, he was only at Nassau, the capital, and he was ill all the time; but what an opportunity for book-making he has missed!

That which first rivets one's attention on the Bahamas is the fact—or at least the extreme probability—that they were the first discovered portion of the New World.

San Salvador, now called Cat Island, is believed to be the first land which Columbus sighted after his adventurous and memorable voyage from Europe.

At any rate, this San Salvador, or Cat Island, is one of the finest in some respects of the whole group. It comprises some hundred and two thousand four hundred acres, supporting a population of about four thousand two hundred and thirty persons, and in the slave days was famous for its flourishing plantations. But with the abolition of slavery, the prosperity of the Bahamas has declined, and the chief exports are now various varieties of fruit, but chiefly pineapples and bananas. Cat Island is shaped very much like Italy, and is about sixty miles long by four broad. As in the slave days great numbers of cattle were reared here, there seems no reason why this industry should not be revived, for the island is reputed to be eminently suitable for cattle and horse breeding.

The total area of the numerous islands and islets forming the Bahamian Group is about five thousand eight hundred square miles; and, in 1886, the total population was forty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty, of whom about four-fifths were blacks.

But there is a great difference in the character of the islands. Some are mere barren rocks, and others are densely clothed with vegetation, including thick woods of mahogany, satinwood, lignum-vitæ, cedar, and pine.

New Providence is not one of the largest, but it contains the capital, Nassau; and it was occupied by the English so long ago as 1629, which was just one hundred and thirty-seven years after Columbus had discovered the group. They have changed hands several times since.

The Spaniards drove us out in 1641; we returned in 1666; the Spaniards again turned us out in 1703; and, finally, the islands were formally ceded to us in 1783. They have not been a very rich possession, and for several years had to be supported by a Government subsidy. But that was after the plantations "gave out" with the abolition of slave labour.

In physical formation the Bahama Islands are coralline, and are surrounded by rocks and shoals. The northernmost is quite close to the coast of Florida, and the group takes a sort of curve south-eastward nearly down to Hayti.

The Spaniards called the group "Lucayos," from "Los Cayos," or "the keys;"

but "Cayos" also seems to signify "low rocks."

Generally speaking, the soil on these low rocks is thin but rich. It is said that in planting cocoa-nuts, the natives used to excavate a hole in the rock and then fill it with earth to form a bed for the tree, but we cannot vouch for the truth of the statement. It seems, however, a fact that the natives made more out of the sea than they did off the land, for they were notorious wreckers, and have prospered on the spoil of many a goodly and richly-laden craft in days past. They had an evil reputation in this respect, and it is asserted that wrecks were regularly planned between them and dishonest seamen, for mutual profit. Even now they carry on a considerable business in "salvage" work, but as salvors they require to carry a license from the Governor.

But last century the Bahamas were just as much a nest of pirates as were the Sulus in the Pacific.

The people seem to have returned, as far as they dared, to old practices after "emancipation" had caused the plantations to be abandoned, and the houses of the once rich whites to be left to ruin and decay. Mr. Powles says:

"For many years after emancipation, a great deal of money was brought into the colony by systematic wrecking. Hurricanes, shoals, reefs, and shifting banks seem to have conspired to place these waters amongst the most dangerous in the world. One might, therefore, have imagined that they would produce a harvest of wrecks plentiful enough, without adventitious aid. But the greed of the Bahamian native was not so easily satisfied. Every year one or other of the Nassau merchants went on a foreign trip, and shortly after his return a vessel was wrecked somewhere on the Bahama banks, abandoned as a total loss, and all its materials and salvage stock sold off in Nassau, to the gain of the island of New Providence, and the immense loss of the unhappy underwriters, for she was invariably heavily insured."

Now, however, lighthouses and a system of regulations have been established, which have reduced wrecking to a minimum.

But, what with wrecking and then with blockade-running during the American war, the Bahamians neglected agriculture, and, as nobody took the emancipated slaves in hand, a large portion of the land fell out of cultivation, and became practically valueless.

The native whites are not called "Creoles," as in other parts of the West Indies, but "Conchs"—from a mollusc, which is one of the commonest and most useful natural products of the islands. It has a very handsome shell, which is largely bought by visitors, and which is also used as a horn, for forming the foundation of wharves and piers, and for innumerable other purposes. The flesh is largely used both for food and for bait; and imbedded in the flesh is found the pink pearl, which gives the fancy name to the Bahamas.

Sometimes these pearls are of great size, and of immense value; but the finding of them is a pure lottery.

The human "Conchs," however, do not seem to be either very useful or very ornamental. They are all more or less connected by marriage or descent, and they form a sort of "family" which monopolises all the good things in the colony, and steadfastly resists all interference with usage and vested interests.

Their contempt for "coloured people" is extreme, and the blacks are ground down and oppressed by them in a manner which Mr. Powles characterises as "a disgrace to the British flag."

The coloured people live quite apart, and in settlements of their own, where they retain the African tribal distinctions, and are divided into Yourabas, Egbas, Congos, etc. Some of them elect annually a Queen, whose will is law on certain matters. They are fond of dancing and pictures, and have many festivals; but the curious thing is that they have appropriated white men's commemorations without knowing why. Thus Guy Fawkes' Day celebration would not be omitted on any account, and they solemnly carry on the fifth of November an effigy in procession with bands of music and torches, and they solemnly hang the effigy on a prepared gallows. At Christmas time, too, they break out into processions and cracker-firing to a prodigious extent. On such occasions, and on Sundays, the coloured women wear cotton dresses of blue, or pink, or white—occasionally even of silk, satin, or velveteen—with gorgeous hats, and tight white boots or shoes. On Sundays the men come out in broad-cloth and tall black hats, to purchase which they scrape and save, wholly unsuitable though they be for the climate. Their names, too, are remarkable. Prince of Wales's and Prince Alberts are innumerable. One man is called Tiberius Gracchus, another

Thaddeus de Warsaw Toots, another Duke of Wellington, another Evangelist. A favourite name at christenings of late has been observed to be Randolph Churchill. Many children, however, are named after the month or the day on which they were born, as March, July, Monday, Friday, etc. The coloured ladies rejoice in such names as Brinhilda, Clotilda, Cassandra, Malvina, Daphne, etc. Curiously enough, the surnames are nearly all Scotch, taken from the old planters.

Hymn-singing is their favourite amusement, and very curious are some of the hymns they sing.

There is much that is interesting and attractive about the coloured inhabitants of the Bahamas, and it is desirable that something should be done to relieve them from the grievous yoke of the truck system, which is galling them so sadly. This is how it works in the sponge-fishing, now the principal industry of the group. A negro applies to the owner of a craft to go on a fishing voyage. He is engaged to be paid, not by wages, but by a share of the profits of the take. The employer keeps a store, or is in partnership with somebody who keeps one, which is stocked with all the trashy rubbish that American dealers cannot find a market for elsewhere. Out of this store the negro is compelled to take all the supplies he needs, and a great deal he does not need, by way of "advance," and he is charged first-class prices for worthless goods. When he returns from his voyage, in perhaps six weeks or so, the fisherman is compelled to sell his cargo in the Sponge Exchange at Nassau, which is the only place allowed by the law for the traffic, and the Nassau merchants arrange the prices to suit themselves. Then the proceeds are divided, and the fisherman usually finds that he is in debt for his advance, and must sign articles for another voyage, to "clear himself;" but really only to get deeper into the mire. A colonial paper, indeed, says that "The truck system permeates almost the whole of the agricultural, and the sponging and turtling industries." The fishermen "have been accustomed to take up or receive commodities which they do not really need, at one price, and to dispose of them immediately afterwards at a very much lower price in order to obtain money with which to procure the commodities they really do need. This has been going on from day to day for half a century, and it is not surprising that such practical lessons

in improvidence and wastefulness have now become thoroughly learned."

It is pretty much the same with the pineapple cultivator, who is frequently a peasant-proprietor. This fruit is one of the principal exports — chiefly to the United States — but the trade is managed by the Nassau merchants, who go round every season with their packs of rubbish for barter. There are few large producers of anything in the Bahamas, and both fruit and vegetables are brought to market in small quantities. And yet there is no doubt that the islands are eminently suited for fruit-orchards on a large scale, while they are quite close to a market in the United States, which they can never over-supply. It has been pointed out that in the cultivation of onions and tomatoes alone, for the American markets, the Bahamas could make a small fortune.

But the people do not seem to rise above the pineapple, and a few oranges and bananas.

Good soil is required for the cultivation of the pineapple. It is first cleared by burning the bush, but no attempt is made to grub up the roots. The field is then planted with suckers, and the rest is left to Nature. Suckers produce no fruit until after eighteen months. At the end of that time the first crop is gathered, and with the fruit new suckers appear, growing out of the root of the plants, which develop into new plants and produce fruit the next year, while the old plant withers away.

This automatic process may go on for even six or seven years without exhausting the soil; but exhaustion does follow in time, and then the land is allowed to lie fallow and to get into bush again for fifteen or twenty years, after which it is again brought into so-called cultivation. The pineapple plant gives out other suckers just below the fruit, and these are cut off to plant new fields. Fruit intended for the English market is cut off below the suckers so as to preserve them during the voyage, but for the American market it is cut off at the base. Surely some process of fertilising, or some rotation of crops would be preferable to and more profitable than this primitive system of cultivation.

There are primitive customs, too, in the Bahamas. Thus in Dunmore Town in Harbour Island, there is no clock, but a policeman strikes the hours on a bell from seven a.m. to nine p.m. After he has struck nine, he gives three solemn final strokes, which are supposed to say, "Kiss-no-more." At any rate, after these strokes,

no one with a character to lose risks being seen in the streets. Lovers in the midst of their moonlight rambles part suddenly and fly affrighted at the sound, for flirting which five minutes before was harmless, now becomes dangerous, nay, even sinful. At the stroke of this curfew all respectable persons retreat to their own homes.

Salt used to be a great article of export from the Bahamas, but the high American tariff has now almost killed the trade. All that the sea now yields in the way of traffic is the conchs, the sponges, and the turtles already named.

But the waters surrounding the shores are full of wondrous beauty—marine gardens of the most exquisite coral bowers and grottoes, full of choicest form and most lovely colour. The "madrepora," or branching coral; the "astræa," or brain coral, the "alcyonoid polyps," or coral shrubs, and the fairy-like "algæ;" the gorgonias, and sea-fans, and the clusters of purple sea-feathers, form the most fascinating combinations beneath the transparent waters.

Nassau, which is built on the north side of the island of New Providence, is now a regular winter-resort for Americans with pulmonary complaints. The harbour is excellent and very deep. Above it the ground slopes upwards about ninety feet, and on the top is planted the town. It is a city of flowers—every house standing in its own garden of wild almond, and acacia, and other flowering plants. All sorts of creepers, with many-coloured blossoms, abound everywhere, and the cocoa palms give a tropical aspect to the scene.

The principal business street is Bay Street; but Government House and the Great Hotel are situated on the crest of the hill. From November to May this hotel is crowded with hundreds of American visitors, who seem to lose their coughs and weaknesses almost as soon as they land. It is said that for persons with weak lungs there is no climate in the world better than that of Nassau.

The hotel is managed by an American, and upon American principles. Steamers during the season ply fortnightly between Nassau and New York, and there is plenty of life and enjoyment.

As an American writer has said, to go from the North in midwinter to the Bahamas, is to get as near an approach to fairyland as can be found. But in fairyland one does not have boating, and fishing, and driving, and picnicking, although one

may have dancing; and all these things one has at Nassau, with a delicious atmosphere and endless fruit and flowers.

Were it not for the annual American immigration, the Bahamians would be infinitely poorer than they are; but the natural attractions of Nassau as a wintering place are so great that the wonder is that English people leave it entirely to the Americans.

THE BISHOP'S MISTAKE.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

LATE that night, when Theo, after giving her mother a long account of the party and the distinguished guests, came at last wearily upstairs into the room which she shared with Dollie, she was surprised and not particularly well pleased, for she was longing to be alone with her thoughts, to find the child still wide awake. She went to the little white bed and bent over it.

"Why, Dollie, what is the matter? Are you too tired to sleep?" she asked.

"No, but I wanted to speak to you, Theo," and Dollie threw her arms round her sister's neck and hugged her. "I wanted to be quite sure you were not unhappy about anything, Theo! You are quite sure, aren't you, dear," and Dollie's grey eyes looked so searchingly up into Theo's that the elder girl coloured and hesitated.

"Unhappy? Of course not, Dollie. What put that absurd idea into your head?" she answered lightly.

"Because—because—oh, Theo, don't be angry with me"—Dollie's arms tightened round Theo's neck—"but I saw you and Mr. Chetwynd in the orchid-house, and I saw him kiss your hand. I didn't hear a word—not a word; but I thought he was saying something that made you unhappy. Was he, darling?"

It was an odd thing for Theo to make so young a child her confidant. She often thought so afterwards, and wondered what possessed her to pour out the story of her unhappy love into Dollie's ears; but she was aching to unburden herself of her trouble and to seek comfort and sympathy from some one, and she would not tell her mother. "Poor mother has plenty to trouble her without that," Theo told herself. She knew, too, that Dollie was true as steel, and that there was no fear that anything she said would be repeated again.

And so, with her face close to Dollie's, and with Dollie's tiny hands clasped round her neck, she sobbed out her story.

"You must never repeat anything I have told you to mother, or Mr. Chetwynd, or any one, Dollie," she whispered when she was a little calmer, and more than a little comforted by Dollie's kisses and loving sympathy. "I ought not to have told this to a child like you, only my little Dollie"—and Theo smiled tenderly—"is such a wise little woman, and always gives me such good advice, that she seems different from other children. Now we will never speak of this again, dear, and you must go to sleep and forget it all."

It happened a few days after the garden party that Dollie was invited to spend a day with an aunt who lived in a town a few miles from Dulborough. The nurse took her to the station, and, seeing a benevolent-looking elderly gentleman in a first-class carriage reading a newspaper, put Dollie into the carriage, and asked if he would be kind enough to see that she got out at the right station.

"Oh, certainly, certainly. The little lady and I will take care of each other," the gentleman, in whom Dollie had already recognised the Bishop, answered pleasantly, and he smiled at her benevolently over his spectacles as the train went out of the station, and remarked what a fine day it was; but as Dollie absolutely declined to respond to his advances, he felt snubbed and retired behind his newspaper.

Dollie sat bolt upright in her corner, swinging her legs gently to and fro, and stared at him with an expression, which can only be described as malevolent, in her big grey eyes. There he sat, the wretch who had made Theo unhappy, whose cruelty had made Theo shed such bitter tears. Dollie ground her teeth and clenched her small hands in impotent rage as she looked at him, and inwardly longed to stick pins into the neat gaitered legs which peeped out from underneath the newspaper. He became uncomfortably conscious of the severe gaze at last. It fidgeted him; he could not read his newspaper in comfort with those severe eyes staring at him. He put it down in desperation at last, and looked and smiled at her.

"Well, my dear, and why do you look at me so intently?" he said. "Are you wondering who I am and what my name is?"

Dollie glowered at him.

"Oh no; I know who you are well enough," she replied in a tone as severe as her looks. "You are the Bishop, and I met you at Lady Curtis's garden party. I daresay you don't remember me," Dollie went on with much dignity, "for you weren't introduced to me; but I saw you, and I must say"—this with crushing sarcasm—"that I was very much disappointed in you! Very much," Dollie repeated emphatically.

"Indeed? I am very sorry to hear it. May I ask why?" the Bishop asked meekly.

Dollie gave a contemptuous laugh.

"Oh, you arn't a bit like a Bishop," she said. "Not like the Bishops in the Illustrated and Graphic, you know. I thought you would have been tall and handsome, with beautiful white sleeves, and a grand apron like father wears when he goes to the Freemasons' banquets! Not a shabby black thing."

The Bishop laughed.

"I am very sorry you were disappointed in me," he repeated gravely. "You are not one of Lady Curtis's little daughters, I think? No," as Dollie shook her head; "then what is your name?"

"My name is Dorothy Marion Farquhar," Dollie replied, and she fixed her bright eyes on the Bishop, and she looked very much as if she expected to see him shrink and shrivel up at the mention of the name. But finding, to her surprise, that instead of being crushed he merely nodded and smiled benevolently, she added rather weakly: "But they generally call me Dollie at home."

"Ah, yes; I remember I was introduced to a pretty young lady, a Miss Theo Farquhar I think, by Lady Curtis. I suppose you are her sister. You are rather like her," the Bishop answered.

"Indeed I am not. I am not half so pretty and nice as Theo. She is the dearest, and prettiest, and sweetest girl in the whole world," Dollie retorted energetically, and then with a gasp she added: "and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you horrid old man, to make her so unhappy, that you ought!"

Never in the whole course of his life had the good Bishop been half so much astonished and bewildered as he was by this sudden unexpected accusation. For a minute he simply gasped and stared at Dollie, and she stared back at him with defiant, frightened eyes; then he said:

"My dear child, what do you mean? How have I made your sister unhappy? I scarcely know her."

"You have made her unhappy, both her and Mr. Chetwynd! And it is too bad of you when they love each other so much; just because you are so old and ugly, that nobody would want to love you or marry you," Dollie went on in her shrill, excited voice, "you don't want anybody else to get married."

And then she drew a short but trenchant parallel between the Bishop and the fox which had lost its tail, which at any other time would have vastly amused him; but now he was too bewildered and also too troubled to feel any amusement.

"I think you had better tell me all about it, my dear," he said gravely. "Do I understand you to say that Mr. Chetwynd is in love with your sister?"

"Of course he is, only what is the use of being in love when you won't let him marry her?" Dollie cried; and then, carried away by her feelings, and forgetful of her promise of silence, she poured a tolerably correct version of the story Theo had told her into the Bishop's attentive ears.

He listened in silence, not without some faint anger, some great disappointment. He had hoped so much from his young neophyte, from the young disciple who had sat at his feet and drunk in his words of wisdom, and who was to all appearance following so steadily in his footsteps. And it was a great shock and a bitter disappointment to him to find that already the one on whom he had fixed his hopes, to whom he had entrusted the completion of the many schemes which he had set on foot, but which in all probability he would not live to carry out, had turned aside from the path they had marked out together and was hankering after forbidden joys! And yet, severe though his disappointment was, there was mingled with it a faint feeling of pride and satisfaction. After all, his pupil had been loyal to his training, to his teacher! Great though the temptation was, he had been strong enough to put it aside, and had preferred to crush back the natural yearnings of a young man's heart, rather than prove dialoyal to his master's teaching. There was good stuff in the lad, the Bishop thought approvingly. But it was a pity, a great pity!

He looked so grave and sad that Dollie grew frightened. Her anger died away, and the remembrance of her promise to

Theo, which in her agitation she had quite forgotten, came back to her. She put out her hand and touched the Bishop gently.

"Are you angry with me?" she whispered in a subdued voice.

The Bishop smiled kindly. He took her hand and gave it a reassuring squeeze.

"No, my child. I am not angry—only very sorry," he said absently.

"And you won't tell Theo, or Mr. Chetwynd, or anybody that I told you," Dollie went on in an imploring tone. "She would be so angry with me, and I can't bear Theo to be angry. I—I love her so," Dollie said, clasping her small hands fervently. "So don't tell her, please."

The Bishop smiled again.

"No, I won't tell her," he said. "I think with you that she would not like to know that you had told me this, so we will keep it a secret between us—eh, Miss Dollie? You can keep a secret, can't you? And I will promise you another thing," he added more gravely—"that if it is as you say, and if I am the only obstacle in the way of your sister's happiness, that obstacle will be very soon removed. There," he held out his hand with a kind smile, "let us shake hands on the bargain."

They were the best of friends after that. The Bishop got out at the next station, and bought some chocolate, and a long-desired book of fairy tales for Dollie, at the sight of which the delighted child's face brightened into absolute beauty; and they were both mutually sorry when they reached the station where Dollie was to alight, and they had to say good-bye to each other.

The Bishop had to attend several meetings that day, and was too much occupied to bestow any more thought upon such a trivial matter as his godson's love-story; but late at night, when all the arduous work of the day was over, when all of his household but himself were in bed and asleep, and he was sitting alone in his study, it rose before him vividly again.

What if he had made a mistake—if his pupil were right and he wrong after all, he wondered? Some words which had been said to him only a short time before, by a poor fellow whom a terrible accident had bereft at once of wife and children, and to whom the Bishop had gone with kindly words of consolation and sympathy, came back to him.

"Eh, ye mean well, my lord," the man had said—"ye mean well, but ye never had a wife and bairns yourself, an' ye

can't understand what their loss means to me."

And the Bishop had bowed his head, and in silence acknowledged the truth of the words, and felt that he in his ignorance could not fathom the anguish of that grief-stricken heart.

Might it not have been possible that his sympathies would have been wider, his heart larger—that he could have done a better and nobler work in the world, and drawn closer to the hearts of his people, if he, too, like other men, had known more of earthly joys and sorrows, had loved and been loved again, had rejoiced at the marriage feasts or wept by the graves of his children? And then there rose before him a vision of a fair face, whose sunny blue eyes and golden waving hair had once, in his undergraduate days, touched his heart and tempted him to turn aside from the settled purpose of his life. Love had passed by him very closely once, but he had no welcome for it, and it had left him for ever; and now old age was coming rapidly upon him, a lonely old age, uncheered and unbrightened by love of wife or child, and he would go down to his grave full of years and full of honours, and die as he had lived, a lonely, loveless man.

Sitting there alone in his study, surrounded by the beloved companions of his life, his books, he looked back over his life, and honourable, and useful, and blameless as he felt it to be, he acknowledged that there was something wanting in it, that in spite of its success and honours it was but a poor, incomplete thing after all; that there was another and a more excellent way which he had failed to see. And now out of the mouth of a child wisdom had spoken to him, and from the lips of little Dollie he had learned the great truth, that human love can never contract the heart or weaken the energies, but rather would strengthen and enlarge both heart and energies.

When at last his vigil was ended—and that was not till the grey morning light was stealing in through the windows—the Bishop had fully learnt his lesson, and was a sadder and humbler, but a wiser and a better man. There was yet one thing for him to do before he sought his much-needed rest, and that was to write to Maurice Chetwynd.

"I have heard, my dear lad," he wrote, "no matter from what source—that you have become deeply attached to the young

lady I saw with you at Lady Curtis's party, and that you have been fortunate enough to win her love; and it has occurred to me that, remembering certain conversations which we have had together on the subject of matrimony, you might hesitate to tell me that your views had changed, and that you doubted whether after all a solitary life, such as I have lived, is the life best calculated to further the great work which is equally dear to us both. So I write to you, and I charge you by the love I bear to you and you to me, that you will not allow yourself to be influenced in any degree by the opinions which I have formed and expressed in the matter, but freely follow the dictates of your heart and conscience. For the older I grow and the longer I live, the more sure I feel that the love of a good and pure woman is the greatest safeguard and the greatest blessing that any man—whether he be priest or layman—can win for himself. We all make mistakes, Maurice, and perhaps the plan of life which I years ago marked out for myself may have been one of them—Heaven only knows. And so I bid you god-speed in your wooing, my dear lad."

The dawn was brightening into morning before the Bishop finished his letter. He extinguished the lamp and went to the window, and drawing up the blind, admitted the sunshine and the fresh air. The fresh calm loveliness of the summer morning rested on the garden and park, the sun was shining, the dewdrops sparkled on every leaf and flower, the birds were singing, an early rising bee buzzed among the roses. Nature, with a hundred voices, spoke to him of a divine love—that love of which earthly love is but a sign and symbol—and he bowed his head upon his hands, and in all earnestness gave heartfelt thanks that his eyes had been opened to his mistake, and that the knowledge had not come too late to save his pupil from falling into his own error.

Maurice Chetwynd found the Bishop's letter awaiting him, when on the following day he came, tired by a long round of visits and the sultry heat of the August afternoon, into his study. It may be easily imagined with what feelings of mingled delight and surprise he read it, and how quickly after reading it he found himself standing before the door of the Red House, with the precious letter in his hand, and a flush of joy and triumph in

his face which made him look absolutely handsome for once.

Mrs. Farquhar had gone out for a drive with her husband, but Miss Farquhar and Miss Dollie were both in the drawing-room, the maid told him. He entered unannounced. Dollie was in her favourite seat reading, and Theo rose from the piano where she was seated, and welcomed him with a blush and a smile. She held out a slim white hand for him to shake, and was much surprised when, instead of that formal greeting, he put his arm round her waist, and, drawing her closely to him, kissed her.

"There, read that, my darling," he said. "See what he says—oh, he is the kindest, the best of men!" Chetwynd cried.

Theo trembled and grew very pale. She pushed the letter back to him.

"I can't understand—you read it," she faltered, and Chetwynd, in a voice broken with happiness, obeyed.

No one noticed the start Dollie gave as he read, or the vivid flush of delight and triumph which swept over her face, or the radiant light in her big grey eyes. It was all she could do to be silent, to refrain from proclaiming her share in the matter, and to claim their gratitude and thanks. But she had promised, and she bit her lips resolutely and choked back the eager words that rose to her lips, and with a discretion beyond her years—but she was always such a wise little woman—she slipped noiselessly out of the window and left the lovers alone. And never once did either the Bishop or Dollie allude to the conversation which had taken place in the railway carriage, and which had been productive of such happy results; but a few days after the engagement was announced publicly, when the Bishop came to call at the Red House, both Theo and her mother were greatly surprised to see Dollie, who was generally very shy and reserved with strangers, run forward to meet him with a flushed face and sparkling eyes, and hold up her lips to be kissed. The Bishop, however, understood it all well enough, all the gratitude and love which the kiss and the fervent pressure of the small fingers mutely expressed, and returned both kiss and pressure with equal heartiness. And from that day a curious kind of friendship grew up between the oddly assorted pair. Dollie was very often a guest at the Palace, and the Bishop's callers grew quite ac-

customed to see the little figure in the window-seat bending its fair face and golden head over a book, or riding on her white pony by the Bishop's side through the pleasant country lanes. And as the years went on and Dollie grew from a pretty delicate child into a tall, slim maiden, with a beautiful, thoughtful face, and wistful grey eyes, and a lover came to woo her, it was into the Bishop's ears that Dollie first whispered the story of her love, and asked for his consent and approval.

A TRAGIC PAGE FROM THE HISTORY OF AN OLD CITY.

THERE is one city in our kingdom, and perhaps only one, which in this noisy, innovating nineteenth century of ours still remains emphatically an old-world city. Red-brick houses and rows of trim cottages have done their worst; huge barracks and a colossal railway station have appeared; but even they have, each in turn, been forced to yield to the charm of Eboracum. In York, the most flaunting of new buildings soon assumes a sober, decorous air, befitting a town guarded by gates, which perhaps the Romans had a hand in making.

As you wander through its streets, you come across old names—Goodramgate, Spurriergate; hear odd expressions—duties of the pasture-masters, rights of the freemen, and chance allusions to quaint saint-day rites and customs, which seem at once to plunge you into the far back ages.

Jewbury and Jubbergate, however, two of the oldest names in York, are now names, and nothing more. Of the old Jewbury, the ancient Israelitish burial-ground, lying, as was the custom, beyond the city walls, not a trace remains. Jubbergate, a narrow winding street of picturesque, gabled houses, with projecting storeys, is still an interesting relic of mediæval architecture; but not a building in it dates further back than the fifteenth century, whilst the twelfth, as we know from the old chronicles, was Jubbergate's golden age, the time when princely mansions and magnificent dwellings stood there, side by side, and vied with each other in splendour. Jubbergate was at that time the head-quarters of a rich Jewish colony, and it seems curious that, whilst the remains of so many other buildings of greater antiquity can still be seen in York, not one stone of these strong-

holds—the chief houses in Jubbergate were fortified—was to be found even so early as the sixteenth century.

The old city historian here comes to our assistance, and describes how, in one night, in the early spring of 1189, Jubbergate, with all its monuments of wealth and industry, vanished from the face of the earth.

When the Normans came to York, they brought in their train some Jewish merchants who, liking the people and the city—in those days York was a thriving seaport, with a trade second only to that of London—established themselves there, and applied themselves, with all the dogged obstinacy of their race, to cultivating good relations with the Yorkists. In this endeavour they must, at first, have met with some success; for, as time goes on, we find them inviting their less fortunately placed brethren to come and share their luck; and these came in such numbers that, by the middle of the twelfth century, the Jews had become an important factor in the city.

From their own records we learn that, when Richard the First was proclaimed King, the Jews were in high feather; they knew that their new sovereign was both warlike and needy, and, with such an one, they could always make good terms. No sooner, therefore, was the date of the coronation fixed, than there was great excitement in Jubbergate; the Jews met in solemn conclave, and decided to send ambassadors to London, to greet the new King with loyal addresses and rich presents. Benedict and Jocenus, two of the leading members of the Synagogue, were chosen for the mission; for—who knew?—perhaps they, being cunning men, might find a chance of whispering in their sovereign's ear all that his Jewish subjects could do for him, if he would grant them the protection they craved.

The ambassadors set out with all the trappings of ostentatious wealth, caring not one whit for the lowering, envious glances of their neighbours, but openly showing their triumph; for the day was at hand, they thought, when Israel should dwell in safety. In London, however, their hopes received a severe blow, for the rumour spread through the Jewish quarter that Richard had forbidden any Israelite to be present at the coronation feast. Their spirits soon revived, though, for one of the young King's closest friends was sent round to whisper to the Rabbis that they

had no cause for fear; the royal proclamation was only meant to please the multitude, and they, the Jews, might rest assured that gold would always secure the favour and protection of the new King.

Rendered bold by this assurance, Benedict and Jocenus, accompanied by some of their Jewish friends, mingled freely with the crowd on coronation day. They did not go near the Court—that was still forbidden—but wandered through the streets as other sightseers might have done. What danger could they fear, with the gracious words of the King's favourite still ringing in their ears? But an excited mob reckes little of the promises of a King.

Reading some real or fancied scorn on the faces of Benedict and his friends, the populace attacked them with spears and bludgeons; the Jews resisted, but were overpowered by numbers, and a general slaughter began. Some were killed at once; others were exposed to the most degrading torture; whilst others again were dragged into churches, and, with blows and threats, were forced to forswear the religion of their ancestors. Amongst these latter was Benedict, who, scarcely conscious from the brutal violence to which he had been subjected, was declared to have consented to be baptized. If he had consented, he soon repented of his apostasy; for, the next day, when carried before the King that he might publicly proclaim his conversion, he struck awe and terror into the hearts of the most frivolous of the courtiers, as, standing there, with flowing beard and hair, like another Elijah, he denounced them and their foul deeds, and declared that, as he had lived, so he would die, a Jew—one of God's chosen people. Nor does he seem to have spared the King himself, although it was upon a luckless Bishop who chanced to be present, that the full force of his righteous scorn fell.

Evidently Benedict's address was not without effect, for we find Richard giving minute directions for his security; but it was too late, the ill-usage to which he had been subjected had done its work, and he died that evening.

Jocenus, who had escaped uninjured, hastened to return to York. There is something quite pathetic in the way the old chronicler here wonders what were the thoughts which passed through the mind of the Jew as he trod again the paths he had passed over but a few days before, with

his friend, full of life, hope, and ambition, by his side.

Once in York, Jocenus had a hard task to perform: he must break the news to Benedict's wife that she is a widow, her children fatherless; he must tell the Synagogue that of all the goodly company they sent forth, he alone has escaped. Still, even to the mourning Jubbergate, the royal message, of which Jocenus was the bearer, must have brought some comfort; in it Richard speaks with regret of the recent outrage, and pledges his royal word that they, his loyal subjects, though Jews, need have no fear for the future; neither in life, nor in goods, shall they suffer wrong whilst in his land.

History records not what price was paid for this decree. Assured thus of Richard's favour, the Jews in York continued to ply their trade with all diligence, though the elders, who took full note of the times, felt that all danger was not past.

The old chronicler tells us that, long before this time, the Jews had become objects of strong aversion to their fellow-citizens; and that, when in the reign of Henry the Second, they began to build fine stone dwellings—princely mansions the monks call them—the indignant wrath of the poverty-stricken Yorkshire gentlemen knew no bounds. No great wonder either, he seems to think, for the rough English homesteads of that day could ill bear comparison with the new homes of these foreign traders; whilst the Yorkists lived in timber huts, devoid of any trace of comfort, the Jews not only had stone houses, but, in decorating them, indulged to the full their national love for glowing colours and Asiatic splendour, even hanging before the windows precious silks and damasks.

The chronicler dwells on these curtains, as a special eyesore. Perhaps in addition to gratifying the æsthetic tastes of the Israelites, they served a second purpose, that of shutting out all prying eyes.

Nor was that their only offence. The Jews, with their hereditary herbal lore, knew how to concoct many a savoury dish, the smell of which excited no small amount of envious rage in the souls of their less luxuriously-fed fellow-citizens. Perhaps, too, strong in the protection of the Angevin sovereign, they had cast aside that prudent self-restraint by which they had first won toleration, and no longer troubled to hide the scorn they felt for their boorish Gentile neighbours.

Be that as it may, a dozen causes—the memory of debts which never could be paid, of lands pledged to the hated intruders—all had their share in swelling the wrath of the Yorkists. Money, probably, was at the bottom of this tragedy, as of most others; for the Englishmen were poor and extravagant, and the Jews unscrupulous and grasping.

Nobles, gentry, freemen, all had borrowed money; they all had bonds in the strong chest of the sacred treasure-room; go where they would, the Cathedral frowned down upon them, speaking to them not as God's house of God's service, but of their debts and pledged lands.

When the news came of the massacre in London, the hearts of the Yorkists beat high, and it began to be whispered round that they too might, if they only dared, win back their bonds and thus their freedom.

Whilst Richard was in England, the boldest amongst them did not dare to strike; but the day he sailed for the Holy Land the fate of the Jews in York was sealed.

Richard, nicknamed Mala Bestia, one of the Yorkshire gentlemen who owed most to the Jews, persuaded some dozen of his fellow debtors to join him in a plot, by which they might, he said, not only free themselves from all past claims, but provide wealth for the future. There was nothing specially new or ingenious in their plan; it was one which, from Nero's day—and even he was not its inventor—has been tried again and again, and generally with success. They arranged to set fire to the city, and then, declaring it to be the work of the Jews, make this pretended crime an excuse for their extermination.

The first part of the plan was executed with admirable precision; but, unfortunately for its success, it chanced that on the day of the fire a strong wind was blowing, so that the citizens were too alarmed for the safety of their own houses to think of plundering the dwellings of the Jews. Mala Bestia, however, having no possession of his own to excite his anxiety, promptly led the attack upon the house of Benedict's widow. He did not take it without a hard struggle; but, once in, he murdered the widow and her children, seized everything that was of value, and set fire to the rest.

Meantime, Jocenus, knowing that his house would be the next to be attacked, went to the Governor, and reminding him of Richard's decree, claimed his protection. The Governor at once promised to put a

stop to the disorder, and invited Jocenus, with his family, and such of the Jews as feared the populace, to take up their abode in the Castle, until the city should have become calm. His invitation was thankfully accepted, and when, at daybreak the following morning, Richard Mala Bestia and his troop were preparing to continue their work of outrage, they found to their disgust that their victims had escaped them; for not only were all the Jews of importance safely behind the strong walls of the Castle, but they had taken with them their wealth, money, jewels, and precious merchandise. The mob wreaked its vengeance on the Jews who had chosen to remain to guard their houses; every one of these perished; and that night, every house in Jubbergate was razed to the ground!

Then there was a truce for a few days—only a few, though, for the Governor, by some evil chance, was forced to leave the Castle to discharge his duties in the city; and, in an unfortunate hour, the Jews, suspecting, perhaps not without reason, that he intended to betray them into the hands of their enemies, refused to lower the drawbridge when he wished to return to the Castle. Enraged at what he considered the black ingratitude of those whom he had befriended, the Governor summoned the High Sheriff, Radalphus de Granville, to his counsel; and together they decided that, at any cost, the King's fortress must be delivered from the hands of the unbelievers. As there were not enough regular soldiers in York to undertake a siege, Radalphus de Granville issued a writ of "Posse Comitatus," by which the inhabitants of the whole countryside were summoned to the attack. When he saw the motley crew that answered his appeal, he must have realised the imprudence of which he had been guilty; but it was too late. He found to his cost that it is an easier task to excite than to calm; his orders, his attempts at maintaining discipline, and his entreaties for moderation, were alike unheeded; in fact, as he and the Governor soon discovered, power and authority had fallen from their hands into the hands of stronger, because more violent, men. As always happens at such times, the populace had chosen their own leaders. Richard Mala Bestia was of course to the fore, and, as the first originator of the plot, wielded special authority; his business was to excite the mob by appealing to its cupidity and baser impulses. But the

Yorkists had another leader much more dangerous to the Jews than he. A certain Friar, a "Canon Hermit," the old books call him, clad in a long, flowing, white garment, marched at the head of the attackers, uttering wild shrieks of "Let the enemies of Christ be destroyed," and exciting the people beyond all control by telling them that fighting against the Jews was fighting the battle of God. The Friar promptly led his troops to the Castle walls, and the attack began. Wherever the besiegers appeared for a moment to falter, his white-clad figure was seen flying to that point, and there, with wild words and impassioned gesture, exciting the men to prodigies of valour.

At length, in the ardour of his zeal, the Canon Hermit advanced too near to the wall, and his brains were dashed out by a stone from the great battering-ram fixed on the walls.

In the meantime the Jews, though knowing that for the moment they were safe—the Castle walls were strong—did not deceive themselves as to the danger of their position.

Now, there was by chance a foreign Rabbi on a visit to York at that time. The old chronicler does not give his name, or even say what countryman he was, but speaks of him vaguely as a man of commanding presence, with dark, piercing eyes and a flowing beard, who had come from the far East on a mission, to give instruction to the scattered Israelites. He seems to have been a personage of considerable importance, for, from the first outbreak of the disorder, he assumed absolute authority over the colony. For two whole days he directed the defence with a singular knowledge of military tactics, never leaving the ramparts; still, from the first he must have felt the hopelessness of the struggle. There were not five hundred men in the Castle, whilst the assailants might be counted by thousands; the bread, too, was running short, the supply of water was scanty, for there had been no time to provision the garrison.

On the evening of the second day of the siege, the Rabbi visited the fortifications, and carefully calculated how much longer the stout walls would resist attack. Some few hours, perhaps twelve, he thought; but he saw clearly that the end was drawing near.

Well, he swore it should not find them unprepared. He summoned the whole of the besieged—men, women, and children

—into the room of state, the room where, when the Kings were in York, they held their councils. He stood under the dais, the place reserved for Royalty in quiet times, and, facing that flock confided to his care, scanning them with burning, eager eyes to be sure that they caught his meaning as he spoke, he delivered perhaps the strangest address that man ever gave his fellows.

“Men of Israel,” he began, “our God, whose laws I have prescribed to you, commands that we should at any time die for our law; and, behold, Death now looks us in the face, and we have but to choose whether we should lead a base and scandalous life, or take the best method to come at a gallant and glorious death. If we fall into the hands of our enemies, at their own will and pleasure we must die; but our Creator when He gave us life did also enjoin us that with our own hands, and of our own accord, we should devoutly restore it to Him again, rather than wait on the cruelty of any enemy. This many of our brethren in many great tribulations have bravely performed; they knew how to do it; and the most decent manner of execution is pointed out to us.”

Although we read that the greater number of his hearers listened to his advice with kindling eyes and unflinching demeanour, we can scarcely wonder at finding that some few—the weaker brothers and sisters who are never lacking in any assembly, no matter how heroic—felt that the ordeal was too hard, that they could not face it.

In any case, we know that the controversy ran high, but the Rabbi stopped it with denunciations fierce as any Elisha ever hurled at Ahab's Queen; and this was the decree he made:

“Those that this good and pious course displeases, let them separate and be cut off from the Holy Congregation; we, for the sake of our paternal law, despise the love of transitory life.”

Then we are told that the weaker Jews withdrew, and one of the most piteous scenes that history records began. First a solemn sacrifice was held. The great stone hearth, in the middle of the hall, as was the fashion of the day, was laden with rich spoil—costly merchandise of every kind, damasks, silks, cloths cunningly wrought with gold and silver, all were placed there and burnt. Pearls and delicately-worked gold ornaments were crushed under men's heels, coins were chipped and defaced; for

each one in that crowd was resolved that not one iota of the Jewish wealth should fall into the hands of the Christians.

This done, there was a solemn leave-taking, and then Jocenus, having for the second time tenderly embraced his wife, the queenly Anna, plunged a dagger into her heart. She smiled into his face as she received the blow, as if to thank him for the deed he was doing, and fell dead at his feet. Then, from the eldest to the youngest, each in turn, he slew his children. For one moment—only one—he paused in his work. His wife and his four sons lay dead before him, killed by his hand, and his Miriam, his dark-eyed darling, the Benjamin of his old age, alone remained. Must he slay her too? He glanced wildly around. Was there no way of escape? The stern eye of the foreign teacher was upon him; duty must not be shirked; and little Miriam was added to the heap of slain. Then the Rabbi—thinking some mark of favour was due to one who had set such a heroic example, perhaps, too, pitying the sore distress of the man—with his own hand cut the throat of Jocenus.

The work of suicide continued, until the floor lay strewed with the bodies of more than four hundred men and six hundred women and children. The Rabbi was the last to die; and not he alone, but each one of these women and children, met death with the calm, heroic fortitude which scorns to utter a complaint.

The renegades who had withdrawn before the slaughter began, but who had lingered around the closed doors, declared that, from first to last, not a shriek, not a moan, was heard.

The next morning when the mob, with redoubled fury, returned to the attack, instead of the resolute defenders of the previous day, they found on the walls only some fifty white and trembling men, who hid their faces and seemed to dread the light of day. In answer to a parley, the besieged related what had taken place during the night, and, as a proof of the truth of their story, they threw from the wall the bodies of the Rabbi and Jocenus.

It was easy now to come to terms, as the only wish of the besieged was to leave the Castle, whilst the besiegers, now that their chief enemies were dead, were willing to consent to anything that would give the citadel, with its supposed wealth, into their hands. They gladly promised that such of the surviving Jews as would consent to be baptized should escape unhurt.

The gates of the Castle were then opened; but, when the Yorkists discovered how the Rabbi had balked them of their hoped-for booty, their fury knew no bounds, and they at once set to work to wreak their vengeance upon the few Jews who were still in their power; they slew them without mercy. Some few, as soon as the gates were open, had fled straight to the Cathedral, and there clung with desperate hands to the altar for protection; they alone escaped the general slaughter.

Even the cunning, foreign Rabbi had been unable to prevent the Yorkists reaping some profit from their crimes. The securities for the money lent by the Jews to the Yorkshire gentlemen were in the Cathedral; but the conspirators were too deeply steeped in crime for any feeling with regard to the sanctity of the place to stop their progress. So they burst open the door with scant ceremony, and forced their way into the treasure chamber. Was there ever another such scene in a Christian church? Hundreds of men stained with blood, blackened with fire, struggling in one mad fight for their bonds! With what fiendish joy they must have watched those old parchments crumble away in the flames! When the work was done, they stood forth as free men, without a debt, and therefore, as they thought, without a care.

But their joy was short-lived; when once the intoxication of their triumph was passed, they began to be haunted by misgivings. King Richard had pledged his word that the Jews should live in peace in his land, and the Plantagenets were not to be played with; they would tolerate no poaching on their preserves, and the Jews were a royal sport. If Richard had been in England, there is little doubt but that York would have paid dearly for its crime; but he was in the East, and messengers travelled slowly in those days. Still, there was a panic in the city when the news came that the Bishop of Ely, Chancellor and Regent, was on his way thither, with the King's command "to execute strict justice, without favour or affection, on all offenders." The chief criminals fled at once to Scotland, where in those days the enemies of the English Kings were always sure of a welcome. The remaining Yorkists pleaded that it was not they, but the fugitives, aided by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, who had committed the crime. In spite of all excuses, however, the Bishop levied a

heavy fine upon the city; committed the Governor and the High Sheriff (poor Radalphus) to prison; placed his own brother, Osbert de Longchamp, in command of the district; and then departed, taking in his train one hundred citizens of York as hostages for the future good behaviour of the city.

On King Richard's coronation day, the Jewish colony in York numbered one thousand five hundred souls, rich merchants, learned physicians, skilled artisans, men and women of a culture far surpassing that of the English noble of that time; but, before the new King had reigned a year, all these had perished! No, forsooth; some twenty of the lowest type of Jew, the renegade, were spared. But, although this was in the so-called iron age—the age of a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye—no single drop of Christian blood atoned for the murder of those Jews!

STARS AND THEIR AGES.

ON the twenty-fifth of October, 1887, at the annual public meeting of the five Academies at Paris, M. Janssen, the eminent astronomer, Director of the Meudon Observatory, read a very remarkable Paper which may fairly be called the universal application of the doctrine of Evolution.

He first mentioned the more correct notions now accepted concerning the constitution of the Sun. The great Herschel believed it to be inhabited; Arago allowed it to be habitable. Those opinions entertained by two such illustrious men, show what progress Science has made in a quarter of a century. At present, there is not an astronomer who would admit for an instant the possibility of life in our great central source of heat and light.

And yet it would be incorrect to suppose that recent ideas about the office and constitution of the Sun are the result of direct observation. The grand discoveries in Celestial Physics made of late years by the Spectroscope, combined with the facts already revealed by telescopes, have enabled us to rise to a higher order of truths, and to apply to the Universe, the Stars included, the notions of age and evolution, which have hitherto been exclusively reserved for terrestrial phenomena.

The word "age" implies an existence which has had a beginning, a development, and an end. Age denotes a cycle

of events subordinate to the lapse of time. Whatever is eternal has no age. The Age of Stars, therefore, signifies that those luminaries obey a law of evolution similar to that to which organised beings are subjected on our globe.

The stars, then, whose light appears extra-terrestrial and purely heavenly in its nature; whose fixity has so often been taken as the symbol of immutability itself; which our education and traditions have taught us to consider as eternal lights suspended in the skies; those stars, like all earthly existences, are amenable to the laws of birth and death; they also experience the effects of time and the vicissitudes inherent in every form of life. For the stars are suns analogous to our own; and they obey the laws of evolution, the results of which for them are a beginning, a period of activity, a decline, and a finish.

These ideas may be said to have had their origin in William Herschel's observations of the nebulae, which often present brilliant points. Those points, if, instead of considering them in one single instance, you follow them in a great number of nebulae, are found to be surrounded by cloudy matter or nebulosities, more or less extensive and diffuse. It appears that those bright points or nucleuses exhibit every degree of condensation of the matter of which they are composed, from the thinnest cloud to the completely formed star.

The idea which then struck Herschel was that, in the nebulae, we behold worlds in the course of formation. The stars, consequently, are only nebular matter which has been condensed, and so has given birth to suns and to the planetary bodies which attend them.

It was, therefore, the invention of the telescope which permitted the doctrine of Evolution to extend itself beyond the Earth, and become applicable to the Solar System. Herschel, as we have seen, was thereby enabled to study the series of progressing nebulae. Spectral Analysis now permits us to investigate the condition of the stars called fixed.

The stars, in fact, present a problem of extreme difficulty, for they are nothing but simple brilliant points; and such they remain when beheld through the most powerful telescopes. Nay, even, the more perfect the instrument, the smaller the luminous point ought to appear. The point is surrounded by luminous rings, and is often affected by scintillation or

twinkling. The rings result from the constitution of the luminous movement itself, the twinkling from our atmosphere. Neither phenomenon has any influence on the image of the star, unless to disfigure it. In this investigation, therefore, we can expect no help from the telescope. Some other mode of inquiry must be employed.

This method consists in separating the elementary rays emitted by the star observed. Instead of studying its light in respect to the image which it presents, that light is analysed, and the analysis reveals the chemical nature of the body which emits the light, and even of those which, lying on the forward passage of the rays, are likely to modify them by absorption.

The history of the discovery, and of the first applications of Spectral Analysis, is too long to recapitulate here. An immense sensation was produced in the public mind by the announcement that the analysis of the Sun's atmosphere had been made, and that it was proved to contain the greater part of our earthly metals. This analysis was soon applied to the Stars, and even to the Nebulae, until Science was able to assert the chemical and material unity of the Universe.

No method of investigation is so universally applicable as that supplied by Spectral Analysis, which writes its record of what is going on throughout boundless space in characters unmistakeable by those who have learned to interpret them.

Since the Earth, once a globe of fire, has already passed through a complete series of periods before arriving at its actual state, and since all these phenomena have the Earth's cooling for their cause, the logical and unavoidable induction is that the Sun, composed of the same elements as the Earth, although their entire mass is so much greater, must also pass—infinitely more slowly, it is true, but quite as inevitably—through similar phases.

The Earth is only an incrustated sun. When the Sun is incrustated, I cannot help asking, will it be habitable like the Earth? It would be difficult to prove a negative answer. If, even in this world, insects are believed to be endowed with senses of which the human race has no conception, surely extinct suns, now become worlds, may be inhabited by creatures of whose life-conditions we can form no conjecture. We may guess widely; we cannot know; but still it may be.

And now, how can the stars, formed of

like elements—varying only by their combinations—escape the consequences of this grand law? Let us add that Herschel's idea, namely, that the nebulae which the telescope cannot resolve into stars, are formed of cosmic matter and not of stars, whose immense distance prevents their separation, is strikingly confirmed by Huggins, whose analysis, in fact, declares that they present the characters of incandescent gases. We may, therefore, legitimately make use of the word Evolution when speaking of the stars; we may rightly apply to them the word "age," which is only a consequence of the former term.

It is by consideration of the spectrum given by stars that their relative age can be assigned to them. When a sun has once been formed, we may take it as a general rule that, under equal conditions, the higher its temperature, the more efficiently it will fulfil its functions as a radiating body, and the longer will be the period during which it is able to fulfil them. Thus we may say that the age of stars is connected with their temperature.

Now their temperature is denoted by the characters of the spectrum. The admirable prismatic image which shows us all the rays that a star emits, separated, classified, arranged, in which we can now read its chemical composition and other valuable data, also tells us of its temperature.

If the body were simply heated without attaining incandescence, its spectrum would inform us of that circumstance by the absence of the rays which produce the sensation of light. But when incandescence is reached, luminous and photographic rays show themselves. When the temperature rises yet higher, the spectrum becomes richer on the side of the violet, which is always the indication of very great heat.

At a still further increase of heat, the violet, and the rays invisible to us, which follow it, become more abundant. We can even conceive, by a sort of abstraction, a body brought to so high a temperature that it would emit only the invisible rays lying beyond the violet, which our eyes could not perceive, and which would be revealed only by photography or by instruments constructed for the measurement of heat. Thus, on the ascending scale of temperatures, a body at first is not visible; it becomes so afterwards, and then ceases to be so by very excess of temperature.

There exist in the heavens a great number of stars whose spectrum is de-

veloped at the violet end. They are those in general whose light appears to us white or bluish. The most remarkable is Sirius, the Dog Star, who, by the floods of light he sends us, is without a rival in the sky. The volume of this star is enormous, and incomparably greater than that of our Sun. He is enveloped by a vast atmosphere of hydrogen, as evidenced by his spectrum. He contains, without doubt, the other metals, but their presence is difficult to prove, in all probability on account of the very power of radiation possessed by the vapours of those metals. All which, according to M. Janssen's theory, indicates a Sun in the full possession of its activity, and which will retain that activity during immense periods of time.

After Sirius, who is the glory of our sky, and who will long remain so if Science is not mistaken, we find another star surrounded by a vast hydrogenised atmosphere, namely Vega, in the constellation of the Lyre. There is no doubt that the temperature of the mass of this distant sun is very high, and that it has before it a long period of activity and radiation.

These two examples of stars in the full development of their solar energy are perhaps the most remarkable within our scope of vision; but they are not the only ones. There exist in the heavens a considerable number of stars belonging to this category. We may even say that the majority of stars visible by the naked eye are in a like condition. But, at the same time, another class of stars has been discovered, the character of whose spectrum would indicate a much more advanced degree of condensation. Instead of vast atmospheres of hydrogen, analysis shows a gaseous stratum, lower, denser, consisting of those metallic vapours which we find unmistakably in our Sun; for our central luminary belongs to the class of stars whose solar functions, although still energetic, have nevertheless passed the period of what may be called "their youth," if such an expression be permitted. A remarkable fact is that, in general, the colour of these stars is in accordance with their constitution. It has lost the brilliancy, the whiteness, which characterises stars of the first class. Some have a yellow, and even an orange tinge of colour.

To cite examples of stars which have passed the most active period of their radiation: we have, first, our Sun, as has just been mentioned; then Aldebaran, the eye of the Bull, which lies in the Sun's

path along the Zodiac, and which shines in winter above the splendid constellation Orion; Arcturus, the bright star in Boötes, which may be found in a prolongation of the line of stars in the Great Bear's tail, and whose ruddy light betrays a considerable advancement of its evolution.

But there exist other stars which have arrived at a still more pronounced degree of sidereal progress. In these cases, the spectrum shows signs of fatal cooling-down. The violet, the colour of high temperatures, is here absolutely wanting; at the same time, dark bands—indications of a thicker and cooler atmosphere, in which chemical affinities are beginning their work of association—intrude themselves upon the spectrum. Again, we have the remarkable fact that the colour of these stars answers in general to the conditions admitted to be signs of decrepitude; it becomes deep orange, often passing into sombre red.

This method of investigation leads us to the recognition of the grand principle of Evolution, which is destined to become one of the most fruitful in astronomical Science. Sprung from the consideration of our earthly existences, it seemed unlikely to reach beyond the horizons of our globe. It has, nevertheless, not been confined within those limits, and, at present, has taken decided possession of the whole expanse of the heavens.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alesia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XII. ANTOINETTE.

MADAME DE MONTMIRAIL was, of course, the ruling spirit at La Tour Blanche; that was only natural. But her aunt, whom she met with a great appearance of cordiality, was not quite prepared for the way in which she used her power. As to scolding Celia, or remonstrating with her at all seriously, that had been a difficulty even in her young days; now it was totally out of the question, and obedience to Celia, more or less slavish, seemed to be a necessity.

The Marquise decided that her aunt must be very tired, and carried her off to her room very early. Mrs. Percival was

tired, but she was not in the least sleepy, and felt a little unwilling to leave the people downstairs, each of whom interested her separately.

Antoinette, it was true, had already disappeared. Vincent, flung at full length in the most comfortable chair, was reading the "Figaro." The Marquis was outside the window in the moonlight, with his unexpected guest, Paul Romaine, to whom he had given a hearty welcome. Mrs. Percival felt vaguely as if she were looking on at a play.

Now she sat down in her rather gloomy tapestried bedroom, and watched Celia as she moved about, with a kind of idle staidness which was very becoming; it had grown upon her of late years.

She was a beautiful woman, though she had lost the charm of youth; she had grown out of her aunt's knowledge in a way not to be measured by years. Yet Mrs. Percival, being constant and soft-hearted, looked at her with lingering admiration, almost affection. She would have liked to speak to her openly if she could have hoped for any sincerity, or even softness, in return. But she knew too well that Celia, with all her smiles and seeming frankness, must be a disappointment for ever.

"I almost forget an English room," said Celia, looking round; "but I hope you have got everything you want, Aunt Flo. Timms will be here directly; Suzanne is taking care of her—Antoinette's old nurse, you know."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Percival. "This is a most beautiful old place, Celia; I hope you are happy."

After she had said this, she felt foolish, but the words came out in spite of her.

"Oh, yes," said Celia indifferently; "but mixed marriages are a mistake. Take my advice, and don't encourage another."

Mrs. Percival stared, silenced by her coolness. Nobody, indeed, could truly say that she had encouraged this one.

Celia laughed a little.

"Don't look so frightened," she said. "It is all right. I only said what everybody says. I don't regret anything, you know. I don't wish I had married Paul—though his beard is certainly an improvement. But, good heavens, how we should have hated each other!"

"You used to take things more easily," said Mrs. Percival.

"Well, I am not in the habit of worry-

ing myself, even now. But there are limits, and Paul would have driven me beyond them—simply by expecting too much. He is so desperately critical too, and in that I think he has got worse.”

“He is a very nice fellow,” said Mrs. Percival.

“Oh, I know you were always fond of him. I thought it would make you happy, if I brought him back to-night—and Achille too; he shares your weakness. I knew that only one person would object, and he was not worth considering.”

Mrs. Percival listened, and felt that she had nothing to say. But she did not quite like the tone of the allusion to Vincent; and it incited her to make a small effort at independence.

“I have hardly spoken to Vincent yet,” she said. “Would you send him up to me, when you go downstairs? You have quite monopolised him this summer, Celia.”

Celia, cool and calm as ever, looked at her with a smile. “He likes being here,” she said. “Yes, I know—I have told him that Woolsborough will be jealous. But I shall not send him up to you to-night, dear, because you look tired, and it will be very bad for you to talk any more. There will be plenty of time to-morrow. Here’s Timms; now I shall say good-night.”

“I shall not sleep,” muttered Mrs. Percival; but the charming Marquise did not hear. She lingered to say a word to Timms, who felt uncomfortable, and answered gravely. Then she gave her aunt a little kiss on both cheeks, and disappeared. White dress, fair face, red-gold hair, eyes a little sombre as the smile died out of them, she glided along the dark polished corridor, and down the broad stairs to the salon, still occupied only by Vincent and the “Figaro.”

Mrs. Percival did not sleep. Perhaps the deep silence, deeper than anything possible in England, only varied in ghostly fashion by the owls that hooted now and then in the moonlight, had something to do with her restlessness. Then she was wearying her brain to think what she could do, what she ought to do, in these difficult circumstances. It would be so easy to exaggerate, to make things out worse than they were; for, judging from outward signs, it seemed that M. de Cernay in his warnings—which it was impossible to mention—had certainly exaggerated. At any rate, it was plain that Achille de

Montmirail had no idea of complaining to his wife’s relations, whatever his secret griefs might be. And Celia did not betray herself, except by those heartless and ungrateful words about a mixed marriage. They were hardly enough to found a serious lecture upon; and besides—a lecture to Celia!—who could or would undertake such a task? Vincent was not a promising subject, either, but his mother felt that she absolutely must say a word to him to-morrow.

Another person who did not sleep that night was Paul Romaine. He got up and went out in the very early morning, while the avenue and all the lower ground were full of mist, just beginning to be gilded, and to shine dazzlingly in the light of the rising sun. He wandered about the old yards, the wild walks through grass and wild flowers and young chestnut woods, which led mounting up towards the vineyards, all hung with purple bunches, and silvered with dew. It all seemed to him like a sort of fairy-land. He, too, like Mrs. Percival, was dreaming; especially when Di and Jack joined him, knowing an old friend, and ran with him through seas of soaking white grass, while the sun rose higher, and colours began to glow, and the world became more brilliant every moment. The sky was clearing into blue, the tints of the trees were almost dazzling, jewelled all over as they were, and beginning, some of them, to turn yellow and red after the long hot summer. Above them all, above old white walls, flowers, shadows, colour, the high vanes of the chateau, with all their flashing gilded points, pierced the blue.

Paul walked down towards the avenue, and there, between seven and eight o’clock, he met two figures coming up out of the misty valley. They were not the first people he had seen, for work was going on already in the vineyards and about the farm.

But these were of a different sort, being the Marquis de Montmirail and his daughter coming back from early mass in the village. The church bells were even now ringing, Paul did not know why; he felt strangely excited, and as if he had been carried into some ideal world, as he met these two, and wished them good-morning, and was suddenly struck with a sort of likeness between them, different as they were. He could not afterwards remember what it was; but he did remember the tenderness, the nobleness of Antoinette’s eyes, childlike as they

were, and his feeling of being unworthy to meet them. He remembered, too, another feeling, which did not seem unreasonable: a wish to do something hard for these two, to fight for them; they had somehow, that morning, the look of creatures too noble to defend themselves.

"I wish you were a Catholic, my friend," said the Marquis, in his straightforward way. "You might have been with us this morning. Do you remember our talk one Sunday on a hill—the first day we ever met?"

Paul smiled. He could not echo the Marquis's wish, yet, somehow, it vexed him at that moment to be reminded of any barrier between himself and his foreign friends. Yes, he was an outsider, an alien, after all. For years past he had felt himself divided from Achille de Montmirail, because of the marriage with Celia; now that division had ceased to exist, for Celia was unworthy of regret. Yet, as he stood there in the golden morning shadows, keenly conscious of the sweetness of Antoinette's eyes, he felt himself embarking on such seas of difficulty as he had never even dreamed of before.

They strolled slowly to the top of the avenue, and stood there for a few happy minutes, talking, looking down over the meadows. The Marquis laid his hand on Paul's shoulder, and leaned on it a little. As he talked, his daughter watched him, and Paul was aware of every change in her face. There came to him a mad wish then and there to kneel down at her feet, and say:

"It was your will that I should come here. What is the next work that you will give your servant to do?"

The day before, Paul had felt sufficiently old, cynical, and world-worn. Now he felt triumphantly that he was only twenty-eight; though he would have been startled to see Antoinette in a pinafore. But the experiences of that summer had given her more than a few weeks of age; she was as innocent, true, and loving as ever, but she would never again be a child.

Presently the Marquis left them suddenly and went off with long strides across the courtyard, past the front of the slowly-waking chateau, disappearing in an arched doorway beyond. Antoinette gazed after him as long as he was in sight; then she clasped her hands, shrugged her shoulders, and sighed, "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!" with an accent of intense vexation. She flushed a little, then turned pale and frowned.

"Is there anything that vexes you?" Paul ventured to ask, for the girl made no attempt to hide these signs of feeling.

"It is my poor father," she said.

"Mademoiselle, you are not the only person who loves your father," said Paul, after a pause.

"Ah, si! You don't know—of course you don't think so. But he knows—what am I saying?"

"Nothing at all. Don't go away! I only meant that I love him too. I might be able to help, somehow—tell me, why did you look so anxiously after him just now?"

Paul stood and looked down at the girl, speaking very low; and just then, in his voice, look, and manner, there was something of which very few people would have believed him capable, something the like of which poor little Antoinette had certainly never seen before. The charm was irresistible. Paul knew by instinct that he had committed himself for ever, while her dark eyes fell, and a wave of colour crimsoned her young face. What would have been the sentiments of her grandmother, Madame de Ferrand, who thought no girl ought to know of love's existence till after she was married! For a moment they both stood still, as foolish as two young lovers in a play; then Antoinette was the first to recover herself.

She lifted her head a little proudly, looking in the direction that her father had gone, with eyes resolved to show no consciousness of anything new or wonderful.

"He is gone into the chapel to pray," she said.

"Why not?" said Paul softly. "I know he is a very good man."

"Yes—he is indeed—but do not you see anything strange in it, monsieur? He was always good and religious, but he did not always pray at all hours, like a saint. He will not go anywhere now; he would not go with us to Tours yesterday, and Suzanne says he was in the chapel nearly all day. And now you see, we have just come from mass. Surely le bon Dieu could not expect him to pray again now!"

Paul could not smile—he did not even feel the inclination to do so—at the girl's anxiety and her odd way of expressing it.

"I see what you mean," he said. "Is it long since he took to it—since you noticed the change in him?"

"A few weeks. But don't you agree with me? Don't you think he is changed too?"

"He seems graver than he used to be. But that happens to us all as we grow older, you see."

"Yes, but it is not that. Papa would never have changed, if he were happy. Well, it was at Trouville. He did not like being there, this year—and one day he went out for a walk with our friend, M. de Cernay, and came in quite strange. He seemed to have taken things into his head—about me, too—and I am afraid I vexed him——" Antoinette spoke very low, blushing again, and with drooped eyelids. "After that he spent half of his time in the church, and there seems to be a sort of fog between him and the rest of us—though he knows I love him—oh, how much!"

Paul stood looking at her in silence for a moment. Then he said, his voice hardening slightly: "Have you said anything to Madame de Montmirail about this? Has she noticed it too? But of course she has," he added quickly.

"I don't know," said Antoinette.

Paul watched her with the intensest pity and indignation. He knew that her confidence in him could go no further; the shadowy trouble which was oppressing her could not be put into words—unless—but he pulled himself together, and remembered where he was, who she was, everything. He felt rather a hopeless fool, however, as he muttered the only suggestion he could think of at the moment.

"We must try to keep your father as cheerful as we can. There's the shooting to-day."

"Yes. If I may ask, monsieur—will you do me a great favour?"

"You have only to say what it is, mademoiselle."

"Will you stay with him all day, and take care of him?"

"I shall be very glad. I thought perhaps it would be something much harder than that."

"That will be a comfort to me," said Antoinette.

Paul wondered a little what train of ideas had made her ask him this. A sort of general anxiety about her father, he supposed.

He had half thought that she might say to him, "Send Captain Percival away;" that would have been a hard task—would be, for it must be done somehow, by some means, Paul felt, though he had not had the advantage of M. de Cernay's information.

His studies in the thoughts of Antoinette were interrupted by Suzanne, who came bustling down to tell her that her coffee was getting cold. Suzanne had been watching the tête-à-tête for several minutes, till she could bear it no longer; there was no limit, she found, to the insolence of these English gentlemen. But Paul was not conscious of her unfriendly looks. Antoinette asked him gently if he, too, was letting his coffee get cold, which reminded him of the fact that he had seen no coffee, and that his morning's walk had made him ravenously hungry. They walked up to the château together, Suzanne hurrying on before. Mrs. Percival happened to be peeping through her shutters, and wondered if young French ladies were allowed in these days to walk about alone with young men. Achille de Montmirail, bare-headed, his fair hair shining in the sun, came out from the dark chapel doorway, and joined them on the terrace. To Paul there seemed a curious light about his brow and eyes; he might have been some knight of old time, who had seen the Holy Grail.

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THE EXTRA

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

MADGE, in a moment of exasperation, had wished that gout would seize Sir Peter and hold him prisoner for a week, while she and Lance arranged their affairs to their own liking. Gout, however, was far too elderly and dignified a complaint to attack one of his essentially juvenile temperament.

A single case of measles occurred to a six-months-old baby in a hamlet about fifteen miles distant. It seemed a perfectly natural dispensation of Providence that Sir Peter should be the second victim.

"Don't know what's the matter with me, Lance," he said pitifully, "I feel as if my legs didn't belong to me."

"Perhaps you've tired them a bit," said Lance, suggesting a far-away possibility.

"I would sooner have it myself twenty times over," said the worthy medical practitioner who was called in; "how on earth we're to keep him in one room without a lock or key is more than I can think."

When by dint of combined efforts they succeeded in getting Sir Peter to bed, they could have fancied that his pillow was stuffed with steel springs which sent his head up with a jerk as soon as it was laid upon it, so perpetually were his eyes and ears on the alert for all that went on around him.

His correspondence was a great anxiety to him.

"You'll see to my letters, Lance, won't

you?" he begged; "and"—this added in a timorous whisper—"you'll keep my study-door locked and the key in your pocket, won't you?"

"Oh, you mean lock Stubbs in, and not let him out till the letters are all answered?" queried Lance.

"No, no, no." Here the whisper grew more confidential still. "I mean keep Lady Judith out, in case—in case she might—you know—you know."

"Oh yes, I know," answered Lance reassuringly. "I'll look after your letters, never fear, Uncle Peter, and keep down the correspondence right enough."

Lance's idea of "keeping down the correspondence" was simple and effective. He evaded Sir Peter's order to lock the study-door by never going near it at all.

"Bring the letters and pen and ink into the gun-room, Stubbs," he said; "while I overhaul my fishing tackle, you can read them out to me, and I'll do a Sir Peter and dictate replies."

So to the gun-room the letters were accordingly taken, and Lance, with a cigarette between his teeth and his fishing gear in his hand, quickly disposed of Sir Peter's correspondence.

Mr. Stubbs read the first letter, and then waited in silence for a reply to be forthcoming.

"Go on," said Lance. "We'll read them off half-a-dozen at a time, and then I dare say one answer will do for the lot."

The first half-dozen consisted mainly of appeals for advice on matters concerning the internal working of certain charities of which Sir Peter was president.

"Toss all that lot into the waste-paper basket," said Lance. "They'll answer themselves if they're let alone. If they don't get any advice from Sir Peter, they'll

conclude they'll have to do without it. Now we'll go on to the next half-dozen."

They chanced to be appeals for help from various benevolent institutions.

"Ten pounds to each all round for that lot, Stubbs, and tell them not to bother again," said the young man. "And that'll do for this morning—the rest will keep till to-morrow; I'm off to the stables now."

If he had known what letter lay unread in the packet which Mr. Stubbs proceeded to lock up in Sir Peter's secretaire, he would scarcely have decreed in such light-hearted fashion that "the rest would keep" till the morrow.

He detailed to Madge, later on in the day, the easy, comfortable manner in which he got through his morning's work.

"The truth of it is, Madge," he said, "half the world fret themselves to fiddle-strings over nothing at all! Rest on your oars and let the wind carry you along whenever you've a chance, that's what I say."

Madge, drawing conclusions from a contrasting experience, was disposed to contest the matter with him. "What if the wind carries you the wrong way?" she asked.

"Oh, then try your muscles and have a tussle for it," said Lance, half-way up the stairs to Sir Peter's room, in order to explain to him his patent way of disposing of troublesome correspondence.

"Don't, don't," cried Madge, guessing his intention, and following him at express speed. "It will send him into a fever and give him a bad night."

"It'll make him sleep like a top," persisted Lance, and forthwith, much to the consternation of the nurse in attendance, he proceeded to recount to the old gentleman his morning's work.

Sir Peter was wrapped up in flannels; his face was very red; his eyes were streaming. His face grew redder still, his eyes streamed worse than ever, as he listened to Lance's description of "the mass of work" he had got through in a quarter of an hour.

"It'll take weeks to undo the mischief you've done," he moaned, and then his cough stopped him.

Lance vanished discreetly before the combined wrath of Madge and the nurse.

Madge volunteered her services in the way of opening and assorting letters.

"I can at least send temporary answers and tell everybody to wait till you're well again," she said soothingly.

"The very thing, Madge; the very

thing," cried Sir Peter, all serenity once more. "You open my letters—no one else, remember—and tell every one they shall have my entire attention so soon as I get about again. Any letters of importance put carefully on one side in the right-hand drawer of my secretaire—lock it up and keep the key yourself."

And then he coughed incessantly again, and had to eat black currant lozenges for the rest of the afternoon.

As Madge crossed the gallery leading from Sir Peter's room, she paused at a big flowering myrtle which nearly filled a window-recess. Letting her eyes wander for one moment to the outside greenery and flower-garden, she was conscious of a sensation as physically painful as the scent of the myrtle was physically pleasant.

Yet it was nothing very much out of the common that met her view—merely Lance arranging sketching stool and easel on the green sward below the terrace, under the shade of a big sycamore, whence a good view could be had of the magnificent sweep of mountain scenery without daring the heat of an afternoon sun.

Now, purely as a matter of common sense, Madge ought to have been delighted at Miss Shore's promptness in endeavouring to carry out her wishes. And as for Lance, well, she had seen him scores of times performing the same office for the numerous young ladies who had fallen in love with the mountain, and had forthwith conceived the desire to caricature it in wish-washy colours on a square of pasteboard.

Yet, nevertheless, Madge, as she noted the graceful, undulating outline of the dull grey figure against the shining background of a laurel hedge, and the lingering assiduity with which Lance adjusted the easel, had to do battle all over again with the unaccountable prejudices with which the very first sight of a beautiful face had inspired her.

CHAPTER XIII.

MADGE, true to her promise, seated herself after breakfast next morning at Sir Peter's writing-table, informing Mr. Stubbs of her intention of opening the invalid's letters and dictating their replies.

Mr. Stubbs, all obsequious attention, seated himself in his usual place at a smaller table at her right hand.

Madge's prejudices had made themselves heard respecting Mr. Stubbs as well as

Miss Shore. She had conceived for Sir Peter's private secretary an intense dislike, the ground of which did not seem to be covered entirely by the fact of her having discovered him in what appeared to be a listening attitude.

She had tried to imbue Lance with her notions, hoping that from his wider experience of men and their ways she might get wherewithal to substantiate her shadowy repugnance to the man.

"I am sure he is sly and underhand," she had said; "and he looks, looks, looks at me whenever he comes near me, as if he were taking stock of everything I do or say, or think, even."

Lance had characteristically laughed off the idea.

"I never knew any one like you for taking fancies into your head," he had said. "Why, if I lived twenty years in the house with the man, it wouldn't occur to me to notice whether he turned his eyes up or down, this way or that. He writes a good hand, and he does what he's told to do, and what more in reason can be expected of him?"

Madge was not a bad woman of business when she gave her mind to it. She ran over one-half of Sir Peter's correspondence lightly enough, dictating brief and temporary replies; Mr. Stubbs's pen failed to keep pace with her fluent dictating, so, as he wrote, she continued opening the remaining letters and mastering their contents.

One among those to which Lance had been too lazy to give his attention, had an Australian post-mark.

"Dear me! Sir Peter's fame has reached the antipodes," was her mental comment as she broke the seal.

But when her eye had mastered the first few sentences, mental comment she had none to make, for the simple reason that her brain was in a state of chaos.

It was a bulky letter, some two or three sheets in length, but was written in a round schoolboy's hand which rendered it easy reading.

It was dated from "Rutland Bay Settlement, Western Australia," and ran as follows:

"SIR,—I must beg your indulgence for the liberty I am taking in thus addressing you. The remarkable circumstances I have to communicate must be my excuse.

"Let me begin by stating that I am a minister of the Wesleyan persuasion, and sole spiritual adviser of the rough but not unkindly miners who constitute the scanty

population of this place; also, that my statements can be very easily substantiated by reference to some of the leading members of the community whose names I subjoin.

"Now for my story.

"Sixteen years ago, when this settlement consisted in all of fifty souls, there occurred during the equinoxes a terrible wreck on this coast. A vessel went down with all hands, in the night—at least, so it was supposed from the spars and wreckage washed on shore at daybreak. Something else besides spars and wreckage was washed up with the tide—a portion of the mainmast with a woman and an infant lashed to it. The woman appeared, from her dress, to be a nurse; but she had been so terribly injured during the gale that she died as soon as she was brought to shore. The child was a fine little boy of about a year old, dressed as a gentleman's child. His linen was marked simply with the initials G. C.

"All this, sir, occurred about ten years before I came to the colony. When I, by the direction of our Conference, took upon myself the office of shepherd to these stray sheep, this infant had grown into a handsome boy, and was of so strikingly refined an appearance that so soon as I set eyes on him assisting the miners in the lighter portion of the work, I asked the question:

"'What gentleman's son is that?'

"The miners who had sheltered and brought him up were the roughest set of men I had ever lived among, but for all that had treated the boy with the kindest consideration, had taught him to read and write, and had, on account of the extreme fragility of his health, allowed him to lead an almost idle life, evidently looking upon him as one cast in a different mould to themselves.

"I took the boy in hand immediately on my arrival in the settlement, supplied him with books, and carried his education as forward as possible.

"So much for the boy. Now for the sequel to my story.

"About six months ago a vessel put in here, a Canadian trader, manned by a crew of divers nationalities. One of the seamen, a Scotchman, by name John Rutherford, had a strange story to tell. He said that sixteen years previously he was serving on board a Mexican passenger-boat which had been wrecked off this coast. He, with some others, had taken to the boats, and, after many perils, had been picked up by a Canadian schooner. Subsequently, he had

joined the Canadian merchant service. He gave full particulars concerning the terrible wreck of the Mexican boat and the names of the passengers, so far as he could remember them. Among them, he said, was an English gentleman, a Mr. Gervase Critchett, and his wife, a South American lady, and infant boy, who had hurriedly taken flight from La Guaya, North Mexico, on account of an insurrection threatening there. Rutherford spoke of the father's despairing agony at his inability to save his wife and child, of his lashing the nurse and the boy with his own hands to the mast, and of his frantic endeavours to make his wife leap into the boat as it pushed away in the darkness. He related also, how that on the previous night, when the gale had first burst on them, Mr. Critchett had taken him on one side, and, in view of possible danger to himself and the chance of his child being saved, had related various particulars concerning himself—how that he was brother to Sir Peter Critchett, of Upton Castle; that his marriage had been solemnised at the British Consulate at La Guaya, and his boy's birth had been duly registered there—

"Madge, Madge!"—at this moment said Lance's voice just outside the door—"are you going to shut yourself up with the ink-bottle all the morning? Can't you come for half an hour's canter?"

Madge started. Her thoughts were far away from Upton, among the wild miners of Australia, and yet, if the truth be told, the under-current of those thoughts carried but one name in their depths—Lance's, and Lance's only.

Instinctively she jumped from her chair and met Lance at the door. It would have been too dreadful, it seemed to her, if, without word of warning or kindly preliminary hint, he had stood behind her and had read over her shoulder the story which gave Sir Peter an heir to his name and his wealth.

"I can't ride to-day," she said, steadying her voice as well as she could. "I mean to work all the morning at Sir Peter's letters, and then I have to drive with Lady Judith to Lower Upton."

"How white you look! Have you a head-ache?" interrupted Lance. "Look here, Madge, I want to show you my last new fowling-piece; it came down by the first train this morning." And there and then outside in the hall he exhibited his latest acquisition in deadly weapons, unscrewing and putting together again its

internal arrangements, descanting meanwhile in enthusiastic fashion on its vast superiority over all others he had ever been possessed of.

Madge's thoughts were in a whirl. It was with difficulty that she managed to keep up a fair show of interest in Lance's talk. She trembled for the safety of the letter, which, in her haste to intercept Lance, she had thrown open on the writing-table.

She went back in five minutes' time to the study to find the letter folded neatly in half with a paper-weight on top of it.

She flashed an enquiring glance at Mr. Stubbs, who sat, pen in hand, waiting for further instruction.

"The wind fluttered it off the table," he said quietly by way of explanation. "The draught is very great when the study-door is opened as well as the outside door."

Madge felt the impulse to ask the question, "Did you take advantage of the friendly draught and master the contents of the letter?" almost irresistible. Her eyes and flushing cheeks asked it plainly enough; but Mr. Stubbs's pasty, expressionless features made no sign, and his eyes appeared fixed on nothing at all.

She had no more ideas to bestow on Sir Peter's correspondence. Everything in life had shrunk into insignificance beside the baleful tidings which those few sheets of closely-written paper had brought.

FROM THE THAMES TO THE GARONNE.

A RUN TO WINE LAND.

To those who require complete rest and change of scene, a sea voyage, even a short one, can be recommended as one of the most pleasant forms of holiday. When once on board there is none of that bustle and undue activity which characterise most modern holiday-making, and too often render it a further trial to already overstrung nerves. These considerations weighed with us, when a friend and myself, both lovers of the sea, decided to spend a portion of our annual holiday in taking a brief sea trip.

Our destination was Bordeaux, about three days' voyage from London, and we decided to make the passage by one of the boats of the General Steam Navigation Company, leaving Saint Katharine's Wharf for that port every Friday. The company offer return tickets at greatly reduced prices

to passengers going and returning by the same vessel; and persons availing themselves, as we did, of this privilege, have about four or five days ashore, and yet are back in London within ten days from the date of their departure. We were most fortunate in securing berths in the Albatross, the largest and best of the company's steamers. Amongst other advantages, it may be mentioned that the saloon and sleeping-cabins are quite separate, that there is an excellent bath-room, a good piano in the saloon, and on deck a ladies' drawing-room, and a cosy smoking-room. It should be added that the cuisine is excellent, and tariff moderate. These details are by no means unimportant when the passage is one of days, and not, like crossing the Channel, a matter of a few hours.

We left London on a fine summer afternoon, with a light north-westerly breeze, and every prospect of a good passage. The number of saloon passengers was very small, and we sat down to meals a party of six, all of the sterner sex, there being no lady passengers on this occasion. By 11 p.m. we had passed the South Foreland, and the fine electric lights at Calais and Grisnez. We then turned in to our comfortable berths for a good night's rest, to which the smooth sea contributed.

At seven o'clock the next day (for on shipboard every one rises early) most of us were on deck again, sipping our morning coffee, and enjoying the fresh, ozone-laden air. There was just a faint outline of the Isle of Wight coast, Saint Catherine's Point probably, on our starboard bow. On enquiry we found that the ship's course was shaped from the Royal Sovereign light-vessel, off Eastbourne, to the Caskets, in the Channel Islands. These dangerous rocks, with their warning lighthouse, were reached at 2.30 p.m. Another day passed, the weather still lovely, and sea smooth. The passengers amused themselves with books, or played quoits on the deck, or lounged in the smoking-room. The glimpses of the French coast were few, and we passed hardly any vessels, except the homeward-bound Bordeaux steamer of the General Steam Navigation Company, with which we exchanged greetings. When we were again ready for our bunks, the vessel was off the Ile de Bas, and passed Ushant during the night, when a good deal of rolling was experienced.

Our second morning found us out of sight of land, in the Bay of Biscay, with an unwontedly smooth sea. Several por-

poises were seen shortly afterwards, which enlivened us with their merry gambols around the ship, and a small whale was sighted spouting far out to the westward.

Off Belle Isle we took on board, from a very neat pilot-boat of yawl build, the pilot who was to conduct us from the mouth of the Gironde to our destination. He was a typical old French "salt," with keen grey eyes, and weather-tanned countenance. Unlike most English pilots, who usually get themselves up in landsman's attire, our pilot was dressed in blue blouse, wide trousers, and a broad, slouch hat. We found him chatty and communicative; his talk being, of course, mostly in French, with a sprinkling of English.

About six o'clock in the evening, when near La Balue lighthouse, we saw a mirage; the houses, trees, etc., on the mainland, appearing inverted in mid-air, caused a very curious effect.

At 10 p.m. we had passed the celebrated Cordouan Rock, on which a lighthouse—though not the present structure—has stood since the fourteenth century.

Shortly afterwards we entered the Gironde, at the mouth of which there are many dangerous sandbanks. It is excellently lighted, however, as are all the French coasts, and in this vicinity we counted at one time no less than thirteen lights, each sufficiently distinctive in character to prevent the possibility of mistake.

Early the next day we anchored off Pauillac, till the tide should serve for the passage up the river. Here were one or two of the Pacific mail steamers, and several English and foreign vessels. We had now fairly reached the wine-growing district, and, on proceeding up the Gironde, passed several vineyards, each with its château, the names of which (Laffitte, Margaux, La Rose, etc.) are familiar to all claret drinkers.

It being then early in the season the vines were very small, and looked not unlike diminutive currant-bushes. They were trained to espaliers, and did not rise much more than two feet from the ground. They grow in gravelly and sandy soil on either side the river, being separated from its banks by a narrow strip of marshy land. There was nothing whatever in the appearance of the vineyards to attract attention, and those of us who were seeing them for the first time were therefore somewhat disappointed. Of course, at vintage time, the vines are much taller, and the bustle

and activity then everywhere apparent, give a temporary interest to the scene.

As we ascended the river the scenery improved, and the banks became steeper and more wooded; numerous châteaux, all very white and dazzling, came in sight, and here and there bold patches of bare rock.

At ten o'clock on the third day from leaving London, we anchored just below Bordeaux, again waiting for the tide, which in this river is very uncertain in its action. Hard by us were moored two of the fine steamers of the Messageries Maritimes, just returned from voyages to the East. At noon our ship was able to come alongside the quay, and the passengers were soon on terra firma. The Customs officials kept us a long time waiting in the burning sun, and we found the glare most trying. After depositing our traps at one of the hotels, we went out to explore the town.

The extensive quays and noble river frontage of three miles, lined with ships of all nationalities, first attracted attention; and then we turned to the city, with its numerous wide thoroughfares, handsome boulevards and squares, rows of large, well-appointed houses, and excellent shops.

Bordeaux appears to be a very clean place, and even in its old quarter, where the streets are narrower, if more picturesque, we noticed none of the squalor and filth too often to be met with in Continental towns.

First amongst the public squares of the town must be named the Place des Quinconces, on the river-side, a fine open space with trees. Its entrance is marked by two lofty rostral towers or columns, which are conspicuous for a considerable distance round. Hereabouts a citadel once stood. Further up the river is the bridge, of which the Bordelais are justly proud. It consists of no less than seventeen arches, its total length being one thousand one hundred and ninety-six feet. A very interesting remnant of the old Roman city, formerly called Burdigala, to which our steps were next directed, is the Palais Gallien, a portion of an ancient amphitheatre or circus, which we found well worth a visit.

Of churches there are several, and amongst them may be specially mentioned that of St. Seurin, with fine carving over the south porch, and St. Michel, noted for its lofty, detached tower. Beneath this tower, in a large, dry chamber, are over seventy mummies—a somewhat ghastly spectacle, over which, however,

the gardienne waxes eloquent, and enters into surprising details about each of the objects under her charge. The Cathedral (St. André) has two elegant spires, but its interior is disappointing, and noticeable only for the extreme width of the nave, a feature which destroys all symmetry of effect.

Besides the churches there are many fine public buildings in the city, notably the Opera House, Hôtel de Ville, Bourse, etc., which the visitor will soon find out for himself. He should not fail, too, to visit the Jardin Public, the principal place of promenade, which is well laid out, and where a very fine band is to be heard on Sundays and Thursdays.

After seeing the principal buildings of the city, we next turned our attention to its chief business feature, viz., the wine trade; and having obtained an introduction to one of the leading firms of wine merchants, we bent our steps to the Quartier des Chartrons, where are situated most of the cellars, containing vast stores of the wines of the district. Armed with bougies, we descended into gloomy vaults of great size, each one filled with casks, piled two and three above one another, and containing wine in different stages of preparation. A pleasant vinous smell was everywhere noticeable, and, as we wandered through the different cellars, our good friends invited us now and again to taste the productions of this or that favourite vintage.

Some idea of the size and extent of these cellars may be formed when it is stated that the vaults we visited—almost the largest in Bordeaux—are capable of holding ten thousand casks of wine, and at the time of our visit, out of the season, there were more than seven thousand casks in store. Besides wine in casks, we were also shown several cellars of bins containing it in bottle.

At vintage time, which is usually the month of October, it is worth while to take the train to some of the vineyards in the Médoc district, orders to visit which can be obtained without difficulty from most of the wine merchants in the town. The scenes of activity and merriment then to be witnessed repay one for the time spent in making the expedition.

The date of our visit to Bordeaux, however, not being suitable for such an excursion, we decided to spend the remainder of our time at Arcachon, a well-known bathing village and winter resort. A pleasant train journey of about thirty-

five miles through the sandy district known as the Landes brought us to our destination. On the way we passed several woods of pine and evergreen oak, the former tapped for the resin, which is received in cups fastened to the trunks of the trees.

Arcachon is an exceedingly pretty place. It is situated on the Bassin, a large sea lake, noted for its oysters, whilst behind the village are fragrant pine woods, amongst which nestle the numerous villas, of chalet and bungalow type, composing the Ville d'Hiver. Here, in winter, there is quite a large English colony. On the shore, besides several pretty houses and some good hotels, is a picturesque chateau, once a favourite residence of the Empress Eugénie.

We took up our quarters at the Hôtel Continental, and certainly had no cause to regret the choice. It has a pleasant garden in front, with plenty of magnolias, roses, and other flowers, and cooling fountains at play; whilst behind is the fine stretch of sands at one's feet, with the sea beyond. During the warm weather, meals are served in a large verandah, protected from the sun by an awning; and thus, if so disposed, visitors can be nearly always in the open air.

Bathing is the great occupation at Arcachon in the summer time, and whole days are spent in the water by those most devoted to this form of enjoyment. There are no machines, but clothes are changed in small cabins under the hotels and other houses.

There are several good boating excursions to be made here, a favourite one being to the lighthouse on Cape Ferret. We ascended the tower of this lighthouse, and had a magnificent view from its summit. The Ile des Oiseaux, in the Bassin, should certainly be visited; also the oyster parks, the produce of which can be partaken of, with native wine, for a very moderate sum in any of the white hulks or cabins moored hard by.

In the Bassin there is plenty of fishing, and a favourite pastime is that of eel-spearling by torch-light—"pêche aux flambeaux." We hired a boat for this purpose, and left the shore at 11 p.m. one night, returning at three o'clock the next morning. The night was a very favourable one, being exceedingly dark, and the phosphorescence in the water each time the oars dipped was a very pretty sight. Our boatmen had fitted up, over the bows of the boat, a sort of iron cage, wherein were

placed pine logs, a store of which we took with us. When lighted, these gave a very brilliant light, serving to attract the fish, which on rising to the surface were speared with a seven or nine-pronged fork. No little dexterity is required in striking the eels, as they are exceedingly rapid in their movements, and quickly dart down out of sight. However, between us we secured some thirty or forty fish. One of our boatmen was unfortunate enough to lose his spear overboard in making an unusually deep lunge—a catastrophe which might have been avoided by the simple expedient of fastening to the spear-handle a loop of cord, which could be secured to the holder's wrist.

Those who are fond of entertainments will find all they want at the Casino, a very fine Moorish building in the Ville d'Hiver, containing two theatres, a concert-hall, library, reading-room, etc., and surrounded by beautiful grounds.

Our sojourn at Arcachon soon came to an end, and we left the village reluctantly for Bordeaux once more, there to rejoin the Albatross en route for home. Another evening was spent in the city, the whole populace of which seemed to have turned out, and to be enjoying their ices and various drinks in the cafés, or lounging about under the trees, listening to music. The heat was very great, and we were glad next morning when the steamer left the quay, and, speeding rapidly down the river, brought us soon to the region of fresh breezes.

There were more passengers this time, including several ladies, and a few children, who helped considerably to enliven us. We saw much fine scenery on the French coast, which had been passed at night on the outward voyage, otherwise all was the same as before; and after an uneventful passage our good ship arrived in the Thames on Sunday at midnight. We landed next morning, just ten days after leaving London, during which time we had travelled by sea some fourteen hundred miles, and spent nearly five days ashore. Our trip had been a most thoroughly successful one; and those who may follow our example, either wholly or in part, will certainly not regret it.

In conclusion, it may be of interest to readers to know that it is possible, without undue economy, for one to spend a most enjoyable ten days, accomplishing all described in this article—modifying details if desired—and yet return home with change out of a ten-pound note.

DR. JOHN DEE,

MATHEMATICIAN AND ASTROLOGER.

UNLIKE the Campbells or Daviseses, the Dees—those of them who have made their mark—are not a numerous clan. The fullest biographical dictionaries name only four: our astrologer; his son Arthur; a Bishop of Peterborough, who preached before Charles the First in praise of celibacy, and married two wives; and a lawyer (son of Charles the First's physician), who defended Dr. Sacheverell, and is looked on as one of the shining lights of Merchant Taylors' School; and of these none can be called famous except the first.

His father was gentleman sewer (that is, carver) to Henry the Eighth; and Henry, when, in 1546, he founded his College of Trinity, Cambridge, made Dee, already a Fellow of Saint John's, one of the first batch of Fellows, making him also "under-reader of Greek," in which tongue there were at that time very few English proficient.

Dee had qualified himself for his work by working, while at Saint John's, eighteen hours a day, giving himself only four hours' sleep—John Wesley was content with no more—and two for meals and recreation. But he was no dry student; his first work as Greek reader was to astonish the Cantabs. In his own words:

"I did sett forth a Greek comedy of Aristophanes, named the Peace, with the performance of the beetle or scarabæus, his flying up to Jupiter's palace with a man and his basket of victuals on his back; whereat was great wondering, and many vain reports spread abroad of the means how that was effected."

Dee, in fact, showed himself a clever stage-machinist; but such a reputation was dangerous in those days. A little earlier, no one would have thought anything of it; for similar effects were wrought by the clergy in the mystery plays. But, somehow, the Reformation made men put down to witchcraft everything which they could not understand, and which in "the ages of faith," when miracles were of every-day occurrence, would have passed without inquiry.

So young Dee, Fellow of Trinity, and Greek reader to his college, was at once dubbed a magician, and, despite all his gainsaying, the evil reputation clung to him all his life, and probably had much to do with determining his career. Perhaps he was not so much annoyed as some men would

have been; for, though born in London, he was a Radnorshire man, descended—like most Welshmen—from the Kings of the country. However, Dee's contemporaries believed him to be actually in league with the devil, and treated him accordingly.

Sorcerer, however, by repute, he was astronomer by profession; and was one of the first Englishmen who noticed and adopted the inventions of Mercator (his great globes) and of Gemma the Frieslander (inventor of the astronomer's brass staff and brass ring), and of the other followers of Copernicus.

Dee brought over a set of instruments from the Low Countries, and gave them to Trinity, where they may still be seen; and the College, in return, gave him a testimonial under their common seal, with which, in 1548, he went to Louvain, to investigate "the original and fountain of arts and sciences," that is, the intellectual philosopher's stone, which should be the key to all knowledge. Here he became a close friend of Mercator, and set up a school for logic, arithmetic, and the use of astronomical instruments, to which many noblemen, English as well as foreign, resorted. Thence to Paris (1550)—the fashion of going from university to university had not died out. Here he lectured on Euclid, "mathematically, physically, and Pythagorically," with such acceptance—for the thing had never been done before in any university in Christendom—that the big hall of the College of Rheims was full, and many had to hear what they could through the windows. They wanted to make him one of their Regius professors of mathematics, at a salary of two hundred crowns, but he refused the tempting offer, as he did, four years later, a similar offer from Oxford. The grounds of his refusal he does not state. He knew from his father's case the uncertainty of princes' favour; that father had doubtless thought that under a Welsh King a young Welshman of old lineage had only to come to town to be sure of preferment, and he had never risen above the "gentleman sewer." Edward the Sixth did give Dee a living, Upton-on-Severn; but he did not long enjoy the quiet which enabled him to push on his studies. No sooner had Mary come to the throne, than two informers, Prideaux and Ferrers, said he was in league with Elizabeth's servants to take away the Queen's life by magic or by poison. He was imprisoned, and his papers seized; and though the Star Chamber "discharged him

of all suspicion of treason," Bishop Bonner, finding that his bedfellow in prison had been Green, the martyr, kept him to examine into the state of his faith.

Then comes one of those little puzzles which often baffle the student: "Master Dæ," described as Bonner's Chaplain, was present at the examination of Philpot and other sufferers; and Foxe, who, when his book first came out, mentioned Dee's "persecution by Bonner," wholly suppressed his name in his later editions.

Can Dee have taken office under Bonner? Or was the Chaplain only a namesake? Anyhow, Dee felt himself safe enough to petition Mary about the old manuscripts, of which a vast number, he said, were still to be had of the "fletchers," who had bought them when the monasteries and colleges were pillaged, to feather arrows withal. These would make a right royal library, and he undertook to make the thing complete by getting copies of famous manuscripts in the Vatican, in Venice and other Italian towns, and in Paris and Vienna. Mary died soon after; and with Elizabeth's accession came promise of favour in other ways. "Where my brother," said the Queen, "hath given him a crown, I will give him a noble;" but he didn't get it. She promised him the mastership of Saint Katherine's Hospital; but when Dr. Mallet died, Dee was not appointed. Dudley had astrological leanings, and had employed Dee to calculate a fit day for the coronation; but Dudley either could not or would not do anything for him, and Dee in disgust went in 1562 to Antwerp to arrange for the publishing of his books. While there he got hold of some rare manuscripts, among them Abbot Trithemius's "Steganographia," the earliest known treatise on cipher writing, a subject which ought to have recommended him to "Spider Cecil."

It was probably about this time that he made his voyage to Saint Helena, his account of which—Cotton Manuscripts—is surely worth printing.

In 1563 he was at Presburg, and was well received by Emperor Maximilian the Second, to whom he had dedicated his "Monas Hieroglyphica." His living? Well, all Elizabeth did for him was to order her Archbishop, Parker, to give him ten years' leave of absence. She promised him almost everything that fell vacant, including the Deanery of Gloucester, but somehow somebody else was always put in

at the last. The notion—referred to in the preface he wrote for Billingsley's "Euclid"—that he was "a companion of the helhounds, and a caller and conjurer of wicked and damned spirits," probably stood in his way. Elizabeth, with her many enemies, had to be somewhat careful about Church preferment; but why did she go on deluding the poor man with promises?

So Dee lived quietly at Mortlake, studying, and gathering a noble library; now and then coming to the front, as when in 1572 a new star, and in 1577 a comet, gave him a chance to show his astronomical skill; or when, a wax image of the Queen, with a pin stuck in its breast, having been found in Lincoln's Inn Fields, he was hastily summoned to Court to counteract such a fearful portent.

Like many another dabbler in occult science, he seems to have taken up with the "dowsing rod," for after assuring Burghley that "in zeale to the best learning and knowledge, and in incredible toyle of body and mynde, very many yeres, therfor onely endured, most assuredly this lande never bred any man whose account therein can evidently be proved greater than mine," he offers to discover a gold or silver mine in England which the Queen is to have in exchange for all treasure-trove.

Twice, while he was at Mortlake, Elizabeth came to see him. The first time his wife had only been buried four hours. The Queen, therefore, stood outside and got him to bring out and explain his famous glass—a highly polished globe of "smoky quartz"—now in the British Museum, as are the consecrated cakes of wax, marked with strange hieroglyphs, which he used in his "ceremonies." This "glass," he used to say, was given him by an angel. His magic mirror was a highly polished disc of cannel coal; through various hands it has passed, leather case and all, to Lord Londesborough. But the instruments are naught without the man, with "his very clear, sanguine complexion, long beard as white as milk. A very handsome man and a great peacemaker," says Aubrey. "If any of the neighbours fell out, he would never let them alone till he had made them friends. He kept many stills going, and the children dreaded him because he was accounted a conjurer; yet he was a mighty good man." Clearly every inch an astrologer; for in this, as in many other cases, the dress is the man; his "long gown, with hanging sleeves and a slit," must have been as impressive as the

magic mirror. Like many other dreamers, he was a bad man of business. When the Queen added Long Leadenham, in Lincoln, to his Rectory of Upton, and desired Abp. Grindal to give a dispensation from residence—for he would undertake nothing involving the cure of souls—for the term of his life, he neglected to get the Great Seal attached to the document; whereby—as he complains in his "Compendious Rehearsal," a sort of autobiography—he lost over one thousand pounds.

At this time he was busy over the reformation of the calendar. Pope Gregory the Thirteenth had, by bull, promulgated his great change in 1582; but this way of introducing the new system was not likely to make it popular in England, and though the best mathematicians—Thomas Digges, and Sir H. Savile (founder of the Oxford professorships), and Chambers—strongly recommended the change, the Bishops, including Grindal, said: "No; better let Christmas-day come round to spring-time, better any anomaly, than follow the lead of Rome, the mother of abominations, the mystery of iniquity that sitteth on the seven hills." So the "old style" lasted one hundred and seventy years longer, to the confusion of English chronology, and the glorification of bigotry at the expense of science.

It is possible that, had the Bishops not stood out, something better even than the Gregorian system might have been introduced; for Dee proved that Rome was a little bit wrong—she had assumed that the Council of Nice was infallible as to dates—and, by ascertaining the actual position of the earth in regard to the sun at Christ's birth, he had lessened yet more the difference which must always exist between civil and solar year.

Though beaten on the calendar question, Dee was about this time a good deal with the Queen. Once she gave him, at Windsor, an audience of four hours, while he talked about comets in general and that of 1577 in particular. Then Dr. Bayly, her physician, conferred with him about her grievous pangs and pains, as if he thought some enemy did "rack her with aches," as Prospero threatened to do to Caliban. Then he was sent over—in 1578—to lay the state of her Majesty's health before the German doctors; and two years after he drew maps and descriptions of all the Queen's possessions in the various parts of the world.

And now, to his cost, Dee began to

dabble in spiritualism. Then, as now, the first requisite for such investigations was a "medium." The magician seldom even pretends to be able to deal first hand with the spirits; even to secure the magic lamp he wants his Aladdin. So Dee consecrated one Barnabas Saul as "skryer" (descrier, or seer), he himself keeping the record of their "actions with spirits." It was the angel Anael whom Saul was able to see by looking intently into Dee's globe. Saul was seemingly a dull fellow, who never went beyond his tether; but, unhappily, Dee soon fell in with Edward Kelley, alias Talbot, a Worcester man, who had been expelled from Gloucester Hall, Oxford, and being convicted of forgery at Lancaster, had his ears cropped off. A black skull-cap concealed that disfigurement, and gave him such an oracular air that Dee—who never found out why the cap was worn—at once fell into his clutches.

Kelley called on Dee and asked to see something of his spiritual practices. "Nay," said Dee, "I am no magician. I can show thee nothing." At length, however, he brought out the globe, to which "aliqui angeli boni"—the pair, we may be sure, talked Latin of some sort—were bound to respond. Both Dee and Kelley then prayed, and were rewarded by the appearance (to Kelley) of the angel Uriel, who gave minute directions for invoking spirits, and ordered that henceforth Dee and Kelley should work together, Saul being put out in the cold.

Uriel also taught them how to construct the "holy table" and the "seal of God"—the instructions are to be found in the Soane Manuscripts—and added: "There is a hostile spirit, by name Lundrumguffa, who is seeking Dee's ruin, and must be got rid of."

So Kelley was installed as "skryer," at a yearly salary of fifty pounds, besides "chances;" and for more than twenty-five years he played on Dee's credulity, and by threats of leaving got a great deal more out of him than the stipulated amount. A thorough scoundrel, he had been sent by some of Dee's clerical enemies, who were anxious to establish against him a charge of witchcraft. But he soon found he could do better for himself by getting into the old man's confidence than by entrapping him into an admission that he had dealings with the devil. This would, at most, bring him a small reward; the other meant permanent employment and probably much honour.

The honour soon came. All Europe then believed in the philosopher's stone, which should transmute baser metals into gold; but Germany, the chosen home of the Rosicrucians, the birthplace of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and many another half-philosopher, half-conjurer, believed in it more practically than any other country. Many a noble, ruined by the desolating wars of religion, thought to restore his fortunes by shutting himself up in his castle along with some chemist who had had wit enough to make a fool of him; there, surrounded with crucibles and retorts to mix cinnabar and sulphur and all sorts of metals and minerals in the hope that, if the stars were propitious, the longed-for "solvent" would at last reveal itself to him. Alexander Laski, paladin of Siradz in Bohemia, was one of these alchemist-nobles. In his palace of Laskoe he heard of the fame of Dr. Dee, and straightway came over to England to confer with him. In July, 1583, Dee was startled by receiving from Lord Leicester the news that Laski would come and dine with him next day. Poor man, he wasn't in a condition to receive princes; the tithes of Upton and Leadenham, his dispensation from which had not been confirmed, dribbled away a good deal before they got to him. So the Queen graciously gave him forty angels wherewith to make fit preparation for his guest. Laski came, and saw, and believed. But drugs were costly, and living in London still more so. He therefore proposed to take Dee and Kelley over to Bohemia, and there carry on the work. They sailed for Holland in September—a disastrous voyage for Dee; for no sooner was he out of the country than the mob, hating him as a wizard, broke into his house, wrecked his furniture, scattered his books (a few he recovered on his return six years after), and stole or broke up his chemical and astronomical apparatus—among the rest a quadrant by Chancellor, which had cost him twenty pounds, and a magnet for which he had paid thirty-three pounds. In happy ignorance of this, Dee reached Laskoe and worked on for some eight months; but "the stone" not showing itself, the paladin lost faith; and, unwilling to throw overboard one whom he had brought so far from his country, he handed Dee over to Emperor Rudolph the Second, at Prague. Rudolph was a dabbler in the occult sciences, but he did not take kindly to Dee, refused him a second interview, and advised him to try Stephen,

King of Poland. So a grand "séance" was held at Cracow; but Kelley could not have been in good form, for Stephen caught him playing tricks, though even this detection of his imposture did not open Dee's eyes. Thence they came back to the Emperor; but the Apostolic Nuncio was at Prague, and he proved as unfriendly as the English clergy—indeed, made such a protest that the pair were ordered to quit the imperial dominions within a week. But they had made one convert, Ursinus Count of Rosenberg, a Knight of the Golden Fleece and Chief Burggrave of Bohemia. Kelley had whispered to him, as the witches did to Macbeth, that he should rise from Burggrave to King of the Czechs; and so after much pains Count Ursinus got the decree so far revoked, that Dee and his companion were allowed to remain unmolested in any of the castles, cities, or towns belonging to the Lord of Rosenberg. This was a happy thing for men who for two months had been driven from one petty German principality to another, and Tribau in Bohemia, Ursinus's chief castle, became Dee's home for more than two and a half years. Wonders are said to have been wrought during his stay. Kelley produced a large quantity of "elixir," which he said he had found in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. From this a powder was manufactured of sovereign potency. One grain of it "projected" on an ounce and a quarter of mercury produced nearly an ounce of gold. To show his liege lady the Queen how her old servant was faring, Dee cut a piece out of a copper warming-pan, which was duly transmuted into gold, retaining its shape and size. Both the piece and the warming-pan were sent to her Majesty; and what more convincing proof could even the veriest sceptic have demanded? Gold, indeed, became as common at Tribau as it was in Jerusalem in the days of King Solomon, or in the Mexican Court when Cortez first arrived there. Arthur Dee, aged eight, and his playmate, the young Count of Rosenberg, played quoits with big gold rings; if they lost one, it was easily replaced. And now Kelley, who from the first had been restive, became so impudent that Dee, now more than sixty years old, "consecrated" his son as "skryer" and general assistant. He prayed long over him, and spent much time in teaching him; but the spirits refused to show themselves, and the doctor was obliged to capitulate and reinstate Kelley in his post of medium and general

assistant. Then the angels began to come more frequently than ever, and what they said was in some sort a foreshadowing of Joe Smith's revelations. But eventually quarrels became so frequent and so violent, that the Lord of Rosenberg interfered, and Kelley was banished, leaving the elixir, the glass, and the books, and went to Prague, where for a time, by maligning Dee, he ingratiated himself with Rudolph. Before many years were over, however, the Emperor saw through him, and put him in prison. He had knighted him not long before; but with Rudolph inconsistency was part of his nature. Kelley tried one night to escape; but his contrivance was not so good as that by which De Latude escaped from the Bastille, and he fell from a great height, bruising himself so badly that he soon died (1595). The strange thing is that Dee believed in him to the last; and though Count Ursinus insisted on his being sent away, kept up an affectionate correspondence with him as long as the scoundrel lived. Meanwhile, the fame of the gold quoits had travelled far. The Czar wanted to have the great alchemist all to himself—offered him a patent of nobility, and two thousand pounds a year, and a seat at the imperial table; but Dee would not desert Rosenberg. However, when in 1588, Elizabeth, excited by the warming-pan, invited him to return, home-sickness became stronger than gratitude. After thinking it over for four months, he started, leaving, let us hope, gold enough—whether in the form of quoits, or something else—to make up to the Count for his departure. He seems to have taken plenty with him, for he travelled in great state, with a guard of horse, three coaches for his family, and waggons for his goods, the cost of moving from Tribau to Bremen, where he took ship, being nearly eight hundred pounds! On his way he received a warm letter of invitation from the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, who had sheltered him from the Emperor while the Nuncio's decree was in force. He did not stop, but made the Prince the magnificent present of twelve Hungarian horses.

Elizabeth received him most favourably, but her favour ended in words. Owing to his absence, and the non-registering of that unlucky dispensation, he found himself wholly cut off from his clerical income; and so, after travelling across Germany in princely style, he was glad to accept a paltry royal Christmas gift of a hundred pounds—only half of which ever got to

him—and in his half-ruined Mortlake house to get together such of his books and instruments as were still in the neighbourhood. I suppose he had left his "elixir" with the Count. Anyhow, instead of golden quoits, Arthur Dee would have been very glad of silver pennies to buy bread with. Shunned as he was by almost all on account of his "practising of devilish arts," Dee was able to borrow from a few who still stuck to him what saved his family from starvation. His plate and jewellery, the gift of German princes, was pawned; and then he began to complain so loudly that he had been deluded back to England to his ruin that the Queen again began promising. She ordered Lady Howard to comfort Mrs. Dee with a letter and a present of a hundred pounds—Elizabeth was fond of making her presents with other people's money—and a promise that when a master was wanted for St. Cross, near Winchester, Dee should be the man. He was further promised a pension of two hundred pounds a year till the mastership should fall vacant—not out of the privy purse, but out of the revenues of the see of Oxford. Dee did not get St. Cross, nor the Deanery of Gloucester, for which he again petitioned. One wonders if his pension was paid, or only promised. At last, in 1595, he was made warden of the Collegiate Foundation of Manchester. His installation was a very pompous affair; but he did not get on well with the Fellows. They seem to have treated him as a mere exorcist—him, the first astronomer and alchemist in Europe, whose son had had gold quoits to play with. They brought before him seven people "possessed with devils," and desired him to cast them out. Dee refused; and when a local conjuror, Hartley, began to take them in hand, he threatened to prosecute him for practising unlawful arts. With Elizabeth's successor, however, Dee's position became so insecure, that in 1604 he petitioned James at Greenwich that he "might be tried and cleared of the horrible slander that he was or had been a conjuror, caller or invocator of devils," offering to be put to death if the charge could be proved. James, who was himself credited with dabbling in the black art, declined to give him a trial.

The end soon came. Life at Manchester was not worth living; so in 1604 Dee went back to Mortlake in very bad health and spirits. He had a new medium, one Hickman; but things went so badly with him that he had to eke out a subsistence

by selling his books. Often, no doubt, he thought of Tribau and the golden quoits, and the free, generous Bohemian life. Why had he come home to be deluded with Elizabeth's promises, and then worried by the pedant who now held the sceptre? He was packing up for a visit to Count Ursinus when death laid hold of him, in 1608. He lies in Mortlake Church.

James did not bear malice. He recommended Arthur Dee to the Czar, who wanted an English physician. The young man, restless like his father, was moreover under a cloud. When, after Westminster School and Oxford, he set up in London as a doctor, he fastened on his door a list of medicines, which he said were "sovereign" in certain diseases. The censors of the College of Physicians were at once down on him as "an intolerable cheat and impostor." So it was as well that he should leave England. For fourteen years he practised in Moscow, bringing back such golden opinions—though little else in the way of gold, for he had the family weakness of not being able to take care of money—that he was forthwith made one of Charles the First's physicians in ordinary. He chose, however, to live in Norwich, finding a kindred spirit in Sir Thomas Browne, the quaint mystic who wrote "Religio Medici," etc. Browne calls him "a persevering student in hermetical philosophy," and says he constantly affirmed that he had "ocularly, undeceivably, and frequently seen projection"—i.e. the manufacture of gold—"made in Bohemia." He, too, towards the close of his life, was starting for Bohemia to "fall upon the solemn process of the great work." But death was too quick for him. He was buried in Saint George's Church, where there is a fifteenth-century wall-fresco of the Saint and his white horse, and some of those guild palls, of which Norwich contains such good examples.

There is a curious story in Aubrey, that Casaubon's "True and Faithful Relation"—which, by the way, the Government tried to suppress; but the copies were bought up too quickly—is only a small part of the "Actions with Spirits." The manuscript volumes were buried. Cotton bought the field to dig for them, but many were much perished with damp. However, what is printed is more than enough. Anything more disappointing it is impossible to imagine. As Dee's latest biographer, Mr. Thomas Cooper, says: "The conferences are such a tissue of blasphemy and

absurdity that they might suggest insanity." Dr. Robert Hooke—the cantankerous claimant to Newton's theory of gravitation, who proposed a plan for rebuilding London after the Fire, and feathered his nest by getting himself made City surveyor—thought he had found in them a cryptogram, like Mr. Donnelly's. "They embody," said he, "a cipher for political secrets." Decidedly the most interesting thing about Dee is not his spiritualism—poor stuff then, as it is now, and always must be—but the man, his adventures, and his strange character. No one was ever less of an impostor; and yet surely imposture thrived by reason of his experiments.

THE NORTH-WEST MOSQUITO.

To adapt one's self to the customs of a strange country is not always easy, particularly where—as in some southern parts of America—the customs are uncomfortable.

In the "smiling South" I was frequently compelled by mosquito moonlighters to go to bed in the sand, with several inches of it over my body by way of counterpane, and a kind of meat-safe on my head for nightcap. But as I travelled farther north I fared worse.

Between the Fraser River in British Columbia and the Yukon River in Alaska lies a mosquito paradise. Here the insect hunts the grizzly bear, the Kuskutchewak and Tchutche Indian, and other unpronounceable big game, and pounces on a stray traveller as a "bonne bouche." No sooner does the snow begin to melt in early spring, than the mosquito is on the war-path; and not till the earth is again icebound does this persistent culex cease its pursuit of prey.

That so small an insect should be so powerful seems incredible. But the North-West mosquito is as hardy as a Norseman, as bold as a Briton, and as evasive as the Artful Dodger, and crowds that northern land in countless millions.

It graduates in adventures like Gil Blas, accepts the most appalling disasters with the indifference of Sindbad, and treats bodily peril with the chivalrous scorn of Don Quixote. It is assailed by the equivalents of thunder and lightning, volcanic explosions, gunpowder, and dynamite, and escapes sudden death like a dipterous Wandering Jew.

Every time the little pest is whicked off a hand it is as if a ten-acre field turned topsy-turvy with a human being, yet the mosquito instantly returns to the same spot, humming merrily as ever. What man of us would be utterly regardless of such an awful earthquake, and do as much?

'Tis true a mosquito is familiar from infancy with the sudden upheaval of apparently solid surfaces, but this very experience proves its dauntless courage.

Never shall I forget my desperate battles with it! But the first encounter is the one most indelibly marked on my memory, and on my body; and even now, after many years, is one of the salient points in a by no means monotonous life.

Another youth and myself had camped on a little water prairie by the Shuswap Lake. Before turning in for the night we made up a "mosquito fire," and after creeping within our respective nets we lit our pipes, knowing what safety there was in smoke.

The freshly heaped on logs blazed brightly, fiery-red in the centre, with brilliant tongues of blue and purple flame, and thousands of glowing sparks shooting high into the still air; whilst clouds of smoke curled lazily upwards in tinted wreaths of grey, till lost in the gathering darkness. But the fire sank, and we got drowsy; and as I knocked out the ashes of my last pipe and curled cosily to sleep, I heard what sounded like the drone of bagpipes approaching over the distant horizon. It was the coming culex, and a flying scout immediately scrambled through my mosquito-bar.

Softly it piped its wee war-song like a Lilliputian lullaby, whilst taking an appetising constitutional around its prey. Not a glimpse of it could I catch, although the exasperating sing-song seemed sometimes close to my eyeballs. It came and went, rising and falling, now at one ear, now at the other; round behind my head, and then down at my feet. At last it suddenly ceased. Lightly as a shadow the "bag-piper" had settled on my ear, and as I felt its bite I cautiously prepared to "bag" the "piper."

The moment for vengeance had arrived! Had it? It was a stunning blow, and I fancy I have been slightly deaf in that ear ever since, but the agile insect skipped away unhurt, and resumed its war-song triumphantly.

Then another of the advanced guard

arrived, and then a squadron or two; and then the whole army charged pell-mell.

The net, as a North-West mosquito "bar," was a failure, evidently made for less gymnastic and more amiable mosquitoes. Gnats skimmed in without touching the meshes, and the leading culex battalions just closed their wings and folded up their legs and were hoisted through by the hosts behind. In they shot, with a cheerful hum, by brigades, whilst the symphony of the "bagpipes" outside grew still more savage. Then a skunk arrived on the scene of action. Not that the little beast could be seen. But the immediate atmospheric shock was circumstantial evidence sufficiently strong for anybody. What words can describe the tortures I endured during that sultry summer's night?—the tossing and the tumbling and the rolling to and fro, the tearing and scratching! We made smoky fires of resinous spruce and were almost stifled. We smoked so much tobacco that we felt ill. We scrubbed ourselves with brushes and tore ourselves with our nails, and only made matters worse. Then we held a council of war, and decided to try and keep cool. But to treat those myriads of demons with calmness, under the circumstances, would have taxed the philosophy of an Archbishop.

Next morning, when I looked in the back of my watch—our only "looking-glass"—I started back in amazement, wondering what manner of man I had become. Even my oldest creditor would never have recognised those frightful features, and the wife of my bosom would have repudiated me as a monstrous impostor. My watch-case reflected a countenance like a flaming full moon overrun with volcanoes. Was the Pythagorean doctrine true? And had my soul escaped from a mosquito-killed body into somebody else's? Was I now the man in the moon? Was I mad, or inebriated with nicotine, and did I see double? Double! Why, there were four cheeks on the left side and three on the right, two and a half upper lips, five eyelids and hardly any eyes, a nose and three-quarters, and ears all round the back of my head! At all events, that was how I appeared in the back of my watch—a most awful reflection! My lips kept getting into my mouth, and my eyelids into the residue of my eyes, whilst my dissipated nose seemed to fall all over my face. My skin felt red hot and as tight as a roasting apple's when about

to burst, and there was no doctor within hundreds of miles. My elephantine ears put hair-brushing out of the question, and my knobby head was swollen many sizes too big for my hat.

My companion was equally—or rather unequally—altered; one side of his usually good-looking face resembling Joe Miller's, and the other that of a conscientious hearse driver. Having no appetite for breakfast, we silently sat on two opposite logs lugubriously contemplating one another. Then we laughed till our enormous features expanded all over our heads, and the tears bounded down our numerous cheeks; and when we frowned fierce vengeance on our foes we looked, if possible, still more ludicrously foolish.

For what can a man do against an intangible insect of neither size nor weight to be dealt with? Were it big enough it might be hit with a stick, or jumped on—if a man could jump on the nape of his neck or get an acrobatic friend to do it for him. Had the insect sufficient solidity it could be taken hold of with tongs and put on the fire, or be flattened out with a brick. But the North-West mosquito is simply a microscopic ghost with a big mouth, and of far too subtle a nature for humanity to grasp; and the cause of its creation, like that of original sin, is still a conundrum.

This Trans-Rocky-Mountain territory also possesses a peculiar black fly and an invisible gnat, whose welcome to strangers almost equals that of the mosquito. Each species of bloodthirsty inhabitant pays its respects in turn, and a mutual aboriginal arrangement prevents the clashing of visiting hours.

When dawn proclaims the coming day, the early mosquito comes without any ceremony to breakfast. Over this the culex lingers till the sun has risen half-way to the zenith, although, from the mountainous nature of the country, the valleys are yet in shade. Then the black fly pays a visit, and feeds at the stranger's expense until sunset, as nearly as one can guess, for only from the coast, or the summit of an extra high mountain, or from a balloon, can human eyes here see the setting sun. Hardly has the helpless host speeded the parting black-fly guest, ere the mosquito hurries back for dinner; and whilst twilight softly sinks around the unhappy stranger, that hungry culex revels over its banquet and quaffs the flowing blood. And when darkness has become a silent fact,

clouds of invisible gnats drop in for supper, and spend the stilly night in festive phlebotomy.

Although the black fly and tiny gnat are awful, the mosquito is "uncrowned king" of the culex tribe. It is described by a celebrated naturalist as having a circle of lancet-like teeth. I never examined the creature's teeth under a microscope, and it always managed to keep me in a state of semi-blindness, but I believe in the lancets. I believe more than that, by a great deal. I believe that the North-West mosquito, in addition to those lancets, is furnished with a complete set of surgical instruments—a pair of meat saws, a suction-pump, and a minute steam-engine, etc.

I was once riding across a marsh, by the Mission on the west side of the Okkanargan Lake, and leading a pack mule. Suddenly a cloud of mosquitoes arose from the swampy grass, like an upward deluge. Of course the mule refused to move, although I tried every means of persuasion, and got badly stung by the mosquitoes for my pains. So, in the words of Cæsar when he describes a retreat, "I retired to higher ground." On looking back I could hardly see the mule, so thick was the culex crowd. But, through my binoculars, I presently made out that the poor animal had laid down. In about an hour a slight breeze came, and the insects hurriedly finished their repast, and retired to digest it and renew their appetites. Alas! the poor mule was so nearly dead, or so obstinate, that I could not make it stand up; and its eyes were closed tight, owing to the swollen lids.

Under such circumstances it was useless for me to remain, as I could neither doctor the unfortunate beast nor keep the mosquitoes off it; so I transferred the pack on to the horse, and performed the rest of my journey on foot, by no means blessing those voracious mosquitoes. On repassing the spot some weeks afterwards, I found the poor mule's skeleton polished smooth and white.

With equal "sang-froid," the North-West mosquito attacks Indians and bears, and slaughters native dogs and such-like small game. Of course it can hardly kill a full-grown Indian; but should an orphan papoose stray too far from its village, the result is an infant funeral—to a dead certainty. Instantly seized upon by an insect army, the nude little savage feels itself pierced all over with darts, and opens its mouth for a juvenile war-whoop. But the warning yell has hardly passed the

baby's gums, ere the culex reserves hurl themselves into the gap, and fill it full to the very lips. Then that ill-used infant turns blacker in the face than usual, and hies in silence to the Silent Land.

My own personal observation of these interesting insects only extended as far north as Cariboo, and that was quite sufficient for me. I am not of a too curious disposition. We are, however, told by Lieutenant F. Schwatka, who commanded the Yukon Exploring Expedition in 1883, how bravely the mosquito flourishes in the far North. He says that the mosquito season lasts from when the snow is half off the ground until the first hard frost, some three or four months, during which time every living creature that can leave the valleys ascends the mountains to the snow-line, and that even there peace is not completely attained. At Fort Yukon, in latitude sixty-six degrees north, some of the summer days were the hottest and most insufferable he ever experienced. Every time the gallant Lieutenant sat down, "a regular down-east fog" of mosquitoes tested every thread in his clothes, trying to find a thin part to bore through. When he tried to shoot game, mosquitoes were so thick that it was absolutely impossible to see through the dense mass to take aim. And he felt confident that a nervous person without a mask would be soon killed.

Even the grizzly bear has to succumb. This statement seems preposterous, but the explanation is perfectly simple. Bruin, finding roots and berries scarce in one mountain, or smelling the odour of salmon, thinks he will cross the valley to another range. Covered with a heavy fur on the body, his eyes, nose, and ears are the vulnerable points, and here the mosquitoes congregate. At last, when the bear reaches a swampy stretch, the insects rise in myriads; and his fore-paws are kept so busy, striving to keep his eyes clear, that walking is no longer possible. Whereupon he becomes enraged, and, bear-like, rises on his haunches to fight. It is now a mere question of time, for the beast's eyes become so swollen from innumerable bites that he is rendered perfectly blind. He then wanders helplessly about until mired in the marsh, and so is starved to death.

Should any ambitious naturalist, or other curious man, resolve to study the manners and customs of the North-West mosquito in its native lair, let him first make his will; then go by Canadian

Pacific Railway to as near the centre of British Columbia as may be, timing his arrival for the beginning of the "mosquito season." From here he must ride or walk to the source of the Yukon, and paddle down that river leisurely, camping each night beneath the primeval forest or by the side of some verdant marsh. If he neither commits suicide nor gets stuck in the mud like a bear, he will probably arrive at Fort Yukon in a state of helpless insanity, in time to be frozen in for the winter. Eventually he will be made F.R.G.S. etc. etc., and of course publish three volumes on that interesting insect, "The North-West Mosquito."

A DAY IN THE OLD FLEMISH CITY.

"QUITE sure, monsieur," said the civil clerk, with a bow and a grin, as he turned his spectacles and blonde moustache towards me, after ransacking for the second time the recesses of one particular pigeon-hole, roomier than the others; "there are no letters, Poste Restante, for you to-day."

It was not a very heavy misfortune; but still the non-arrival of those expected letters compelled me to delay my departure, for another twenty-four hours, from the quaint old town in which I was a temporary sojourner, so that I had much idle time on my hands. Years ago I had made acquaintance with the ancient Flemish city itself, and had seen the few lions it had to boast of, the wondrous Belfry Tower, the Town Hall, with its gigantic stone chimney-piece, supported by marble figures larger than life, the Cathedral, and the dusky pictures by Van somebody which graced the chapel of one of the numerous convents. I had not, therefore, even the resource of putting myself under the tutelage of the hotel cicerone, eager to guide a traveller to the stock sights of the place; but preferred to stroll forth, alone and aimlessly, among the tortuous thoroughfares and beside the broad canals.

The huge old town, in the Middle Ages so bustling and important, seemed now a world too wide for the shrunken remnant of its population. Few industries appeared to exist, save that of a blouse-clad barrowman in wooden shoes that clattered like castanets on the cobble-stones of the uneven pavement, as their wearer's monotonous cry of "Soud!" awoke the unwilling echoes of sleepy streets which some

centuries since were replete with life, stir, and colour. There were the grand old mansions reared by princely merchants of the past, often with armorial bearings in carven stone conspicuous above the wide archway of the "porte cochère," and sometimes with monograms or mottoes on which the gold-leaf was not wholly tarnished by time's touch. But there were none of those picturesque signs of decay of which in Italy we see so much, in the shape of palaces crumbling to dust, of shattered castles, broken aqueducts, and perhaps the disjointed columns of a temple. In this Flemish city of yore there were no ruins, no grass-grown streets, no heaps of rubbish with marble fragments peeping from amidst bricks and potsherds, no ivy draping some venerable pile that tottered to its fall. All was distressingly neat, trim, and well cared-for. The paint and whitewash on every house, large or small, seemed fresh and spotless. The windows were rubbed to a brightness which spoke well for the domestic industry that tended them, and every available scrap of brass had been burnished till it glittered like Mambrino's helmet.

Still, save perhaps among the Dead Cities on the banks of the silted-up Zuyder Zee, there has rarely been seen such a Sleepy Hollow of a town as this over which I rambled, on a sultry summer afternoon. There was shade enough in the winding streets, where narrow shops, in which the humblest wares were vended, alternated with palatial dwellings of bygone magnates, while here and there from the open doorway of a little church, squeezed in as it were between two such mansions, came a whiff of incense and a deep growl of organ thunder. Very many houses had an oval mirror arranged in a black frame outside of each of the lower windows, to enable the indwellers to catch an early view of the features of the passers-by, and which, in obedience to a well-known law of optics, revealed too, should the pedestrian look up, the features of the gazer sitting inside, like a spider in a web. But even this mild source of amusement must have palled upon those who practised it, for scarcely a human figure came in sight. Now and again a sandalled Capuchin monk, looking thoroughly in harmony with the surroundings, would glide past, the other visible figures being mendicants with crutches, black-hooded Béguines, or blue-robed Sisters of Charity, and perhaps a

restaurateur's lad carrying back the shining tin which had contained some customer's twelve-o'clock dinner.

It was strange to me, used as I was to busy Paris and roaring London, to note the placid demeanour of those whose fortunes were bound up with those of the antique Flemish city. No one was in a hurry. The very beggars had a lazy whine. The shopkeepers mostly stood at their doors, listlessly chewing the stalk of some flower, or staring before them with lack-lustre eyes, while humming a tune, nobly indifferent to business. There was one curiosity shop that it was difficult to pass, so crammed were its windows with carved ivory, and carved oak, with brass and bronze tortured into shapes beautiful and grotesque, with majolica ware and Japan porcelain, missals gorgeous with colour, cobweb laces yellowed by age, and ancient weapons, and books, and other relics of the past. But here, too, the venerable owner of these treasures, with horn-rimmed spectacles to assist his bleared eyes, sat in a high-backed fifteenth-century chair, poring over a tome which was probably printed at a similar date, and scarcely deigned to glance at the stranger who was inspecting his stock-in-trade. It was delightful to mark the indolent enjoyment of the red-shirted boatmen who lay languidly smoking on the raised poop of the gaudy barges which lay moored here and there on the wide canals, the quays of which were shaded by lime-trees amidst the rustling leaves of which the bees hummed noisily. It was hard to believe that this was the bustling, feverish, nineteenth century, and that our own insular Babylon was but a few hours' journey from this drowsy town.

At last, however, I found myself in a street wider than the rest, along which painted country waggons, full of lace-capped and kerchiefed maids and matrons, of brass cans, baskets, and empty crates, were jolting and rattling with thunderous din over the stones, drawn by sleek, wild-looking horses, which seemed to wear the minimum of harness and the maximum of bells, and which pranced and snorted in their exultant strength. These belonged, evidently, to well-to-do peasants who had sold their poultry and their tame rabbits, their butter and general dairy produce, and were now returning to the far-off farms where they dwelt among the polders, and the willows, and windmills, and flat meadows, grazed by red and white kine. Turning in a contrary direction to that of

the town gate towards which they were hastening, I presently came in sight of the great market-place of the city, where all of life and movement of the decayed burgh seemed to have concentrated itself for the nonce, since it was market-day, still a solemn and important event in old-world nooks like this.

When I had arrived on the previous day, and was traversing the town to reach my hotel, a regiment of heavy cavalry, mustering nearly a thousand steel breast-plates and shining helmets, had been drawn up there to be reviewed by a general, whose staff made quite an imposing show of white plumes and gold lace. Now the Grande Place was more peacefully filled with stalls, and booths, and crimson umbrellas, while the hum and buzz of voices, and the clatter of wooden shoes on the smooth, round stones of the sun-kissed pavement, contrasted forcibly with the torpor and death-like stillness of the tranquil streets through which I had been wandering. It was getting late in the day, and, no doubt, the scene was less animated than it would have been in the forenoon; but still there was no lack of buyers, no lack of sellers; while the commodities exposed for sale were various indeed. There were piles of oysters from the sea that lay not far away, and long cudgels of that matchless Flanders butter which is best made in farms which lie contiguous to the tall dykes which keep out the sea from the low-lying pastures. Summer snipe would alternate with masses of the guelder rose and the Dutch tulip. Cheeses and mushrooms, turkey poult, and pottery, heaps of luscious fruit, and gingerbread moulded into many a strange device, were jumbled together in picturesque confusion. Beside one stall loaded with capons, and rabbits preternaturally fat, might dangle the carcase of a roebuck, or perchance of a tiny wild-boar, whose budding tusks could hardly have harmed even the soft skin of an Adonis. Another was set out with wares expressly designed to tempt the peasant women from the country, displaying, as it did, bright-hued shawls and kerchiefs, heavy earrings and crosses of yellow gold, rosaries warranted to have been blessed at Rome, pictures of saints in rich colours, rhyming Flemish almanacs, and queer little books which professed to reveal the future for the small charge of one franc.

Here congregated, in considerable force,

the English colony of the town, wary, distrustful, but ever on the look-out for those good bargains which are never more appreciated than by the British *materfamilias* abroad. And the bargains themselves—the higgling and cheapening, the show of contempt on the one hand, of honest indignation on the other, the shrieking, stamping, and gesticulation, which seemed necessary adjuncts to the sale of a couple of chickens or a basket of peaches!

It is not too much to say that in Wall Street, or on the Royal Exchange, millions change hands without a tithe of the excitement and flurry which in that Flemish market appeared indispensable to the transfer of a ham or the vending of a crisp salad. The correct thing seemed to be for buyer and seller to engage in a vehement altercation which was only terminated by the purchaser's walking wrathfully away, pursued, after a little while, by the softening voice of the vendor, imploring him or her to return and take possession of the coveted goods on easier terms. And the wordy war appeared, nine times in ten, to have an amicable ending, and to lead to a deal.

Like a ghostly voice calling from afar, at quarter-hour intervals, rang forth the chimes of the renowned carillon, high up in the lofty tower of the belfry, where stone was carved almost to the delicacy of lacework by the chisels of long-dead masons, who put their hearts into their work.

That market, with its perpetual tussles of wit and will between those who sought to buy cheaply and those who wanted the highest procurable price, suited better with the surroundings—the hoods and lace caps, the blouses and sabots, the gabled houses and tall, narrow windows—than did the few plate-glass shopfronts and Frenchified cafés of the quasi-fashionable street beyond.

I lingered until the throng had thinned perceptibly, and then went back to my primitive hostelry, with its low-browed archway, sparsely furnished rooms, and a basket in the entrance hall, like a cradle for a giant baby, in which I was informed that the much-enduring waiter slept, adding the duties of a night porter to his own professional functions. They gave me a good dinner, however, in the gloomy little "salle," with its sanded floor; and after a while, as the twilight began to gather, I sauntered out again with my cigar, taking my way towards the leafy

boulevard, once a rampart, which flanks the outskirts of the town.

On the leafy boulevard, once a rampart, and bounded still on its outer verge by the water-lilled moat which was once a necessary protection from foreign foes and rival neighbours, the shadows crept slowly as the sun sank low and red behind the distant sand-hills of the coast-line. Save for a few pairs of lovers, whispering soft nothings in Flemish, and here and there a pipe-smoking burgher accompanied by his wife and children, nursemaid and perambulator, I seemed at this hour to have the shaded walks to myself, when suddenly I espied, dimly visible in the distance, something which might pardonably be mistaken for the tail of a comet that had gone astray, and was brushing the earth as it swept on. Fiery specks seemed to be dotted along a lengthening line, waving, swaying, like so many will-o'-the-wisps, as they came on. Higher up, many-coloured balls of fire were fluttering aloft, balls of red, of green, of blue, and anon of violet or yellow, as if ruby, and topaz, and amethyst, sapphire, and emerald, fresh from the cavern garden in which Aladdin was shut up by the necromancer, had been borne along by supernatural agency. A swell of music, however, suggested a more prosaic explanation of the phenomenon.

"C'est la Retraite, Monsieur—la Grande Retraite aux Flambeaux," said a corpulent Flemish citizen in answer to my question. "It occurs but once a year, so that monsieur is fortunate."

On came the lengthy procession, as higher and clearer arose the notes of martial music; on it came, accompanied by a hurrying crowd of sightseers who kept abreast of it, and filled up nearly the whole breadth of the elm-shaded boulevard, while the trampling of feet and the smothered hum of voices resounded through the hot air of the summer night.

"The Middle Ages still!" I murmured to myself, as I stood back to let the pageant pass. It was a sight worth seeing. The torch-bearers were for the most part soldiers and non-commissioned officers of the various regiments in garrison, so that sometimes the glare was reflected back from the polished corselets of a group of cuirassiers, and anon lit up the brass mountings of artillery accoutrements, or shone upon the pearl grey and dark blue of infantry uniforms. The different military bands, divided into sections, had their place in the processions, and drummed

and blew their best. But the long array was not by any means exclusively military in its character. Room had been found for those musical societies which in Belgium are so numerous, and which on holiday occasions take the place of the more pompous and privileged guilds of mediæval times. These had turned out in great force to swell the famous *Retraite aux Flambeaux*, and their music, and flags, and scarves, did much to augment the show.

There they were in their numbers, the rival societies of the *Orpheon* and of *Saint Cecilia*, patroness of musicians, their heavy banners flaunting aloft. That of the *Orpheon*, I noticed, was of purple velvet, stiff with gold embroidery; while *Saint Cecilia's* votaries made their tuneful march beneath an oriflamme of azure and silver. Of smaller associations there was no lack, and oddly chosen names were often inscribed upon their guidons and ensigns. The *Green Bonnets* were matched by the *Bluecaps*. The *Avenir* contrasted with the *Old Flemings*. The *Lion of Flanders* was followed by the *Fleur de Lys*, and this again by the *Patriotic*, the members of which wore red Phrygian caps and sang the *Marseillaise*. After the *Fanfarons* came the *Black Tulips*. All, however, played well, with manifest enthusiasm, and with creditable skill. And still the cressets flared, and the dancing balls of tinted light hovered high in air, like huge fire-flies on the wing.

The yellow glare of the torches went and came, their smoky gleam giving a weird and strange look to the long and straggling procession. They were of all sorts and sizes, from the humble link to the costly flambeau of white wax, or the flaming brand of solid resin. Very various, too, were the tinted lights, many of which were mere Chinese lanterns of paper, while others were globes of coloured glass, which sparkled like monstrous jewels as they swung to and fro, dangling from tall and slender poles. The march seemed endless. More tunics, more helmets, more breast-plates flashing back the torchlight, the bravery of the dismounted hussar, the more sombre garb of the artilleryman, lancers in white mantles and Polish caps, linesmen, sappers, and pioneers, soldiers and civilians, the civic guard, and the glee clubs, irregularly marshalled, but all entering heartily into the business of the hour. Elsewhere, such a display might have seemed incongruous, but not there—not

on that sandy boulevard, that was a rampart once, patrolled no doubt by steel-capped mercenaries from the Rhine, hired by the good city to keep out their brother free lances in the pay of some one else. The more mediæval it looked, the better it harmonised with that half-seen sea of steep roofs and church towers, and with the broad moat, where the sluggish water flowed so darkly among the wide leaves of the white-petalled lilies. The torches, the many-hued lamps, might just as well have suited with the fourteenth century as with our own, and reminded me of our English King Edward's hesitation as to whether or not to accept Van Artevelde's liberal offer that Flanders, with her myriads of looms and vast wealth, should be annexed for ever to the pastoral, hard-fighting England of that day.

A gallant spectacle it was; the darkness, which on that moonless night had deepened into a solemn chiaroscuro, was just enough to lend an air of mystery and wonder to the procession as it flowed by to the spirit-stirring music of the bands. The faces of those who walked in it looked pale in the fierce glare of the torches, or caught fantastic patches of light from the coloured lanterns. Even the crowd of moving spectators did not produce the effect of marring the picture, consisting, as it mainly did, of peasants from the country, who had lingered for the sight, and who, with some slight allowance for modern innovations, probably looked very like their precursors of the old Plantagenet or Tudor times. There were the coifs and caps and kirtles, the lace and ornaments that old masters transferred to canvas, the sabots of birchwood, the classic blouse that earned for a Roman Emperor his nickname of Caracalla, the coarse red jerkins of Flemish bargemen, and only a few black coats and cylindrical hats to jar with the more appropriate attire of the majority. Even the fact that a couple of brown-robed monks—out by license of their Superior, no doubt—stood at the corner of one of those stone staircases which gave access to the ancient rampart from the low-lying streets beneath, and looked benignly on, seemed to me a happy coincidence, and might have been quite as natural in the times when the House of Burgundy bore sway over the stiff-necked municipalities of the most opulent portion of their dominions.

They were all gone at last, soldiers and peaceful citizens, cresset and torch and

hovering balls of bright colour, music and flags, Orpheon and Saint Cecilia, the eager jostling crowd of gazers, the performers zealous in their duties, clashing cymbals, echoing drums, and resonant brass. I loitered there until the last gleams of emerald green and ruby red had faded out of my vision, and the distant notes of trumpet and trombone came but faintly to my ears, and then lit a fresh cigar and rambled back to my hotel, to muse, and perhaps to dream, of the queer sights, suitable to that time-forgotten place, but to few others, which on that day had forced themselves upon my notice. On the morrow the arrival of my letters set me free to depart, and steam forthwith bore me far away from that sleepy survival of the mediæval past of which I had caught some casual glimpses, and launched me again into the nineteenth century.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. PERCIVAL'S OPPORTUNITY.

THE Marquise did not appear till nearly eleven o'clock, and Mrs. Percival came down about the same time. She had been writing a long letter to the Canon, who, with all his faults, was very fond of his wife, and had not much approved of this expedition. He and River Gate seemed a long way off, and Mrs. Percival sincerely wished herself back again. She did not think herself suited to foreign life or to tragedies.

The weight of Celia's and Vincent's disloyalties, however, rolled off when she came down into the cheerful brilliancy of that morning at La Tour Blanche. The lightness and brightness of everything struck her with amazement: Celia's careless, laughing talk—with M. de Cernay, of all people, who had come to breakfast, as well as two or three other sportsmen, before going off to shoot—Achille's politeness and fine looks, dressed as he was in a linen shooting-coat which would have tried most people. He was telling Vincent and Paul, who were got up in a different style, that before they had walked far they would wish their English clothes back in England. Then, the dining-

room was so pretty, the shutters nearly closed, rays of sunlight falling in on the polished breakfast-table with its silver dishes and heaps of fruit and flowers; and Antoinette, her dark eyes smiling, free from trouble for the moment, as it seemed, sat beside Mrs. Percival and talked to her in a charming little way, begging her to come and see her garden and her chickens.

It was all more French than anything Mrs. Percival had ever seen in France, except long ago, in time spent with Madame de Ferrand. She had felt the fascination of it then; she felt it now; only, behind her involuntary enjoyment lay that feeling of unreality, of dancing on a volcano, of the deception of a dream, which had haunted her ever since she arrived.

After breakfast she went out on the terrace with Antoinette, and watched the sportsmen and their dogs getting ready to start. All the arrangements were very un-English: the men in linen jackets and straw hats, with bags to carry their own game; each man followed by his own dog, and no keepers to be seen. There was immense talking and excitement, and hurrying to and fro. Mrs. Percival did not quite know what it was all about, and found the sun, which was blazing down on the terrace, decidedly too hot. She went back into the cool, dark hall, and turned into the salon. Antoinette, who was playing with the dogs and watching her father, did not follow her. Paul, too, was out there, rather happy and amused. Jack, a dog constant to old associations, had attached himself to him, and would not leave him. Di seemed more to value her privilege of following Monsieur de Montmirail. The Frenchmen very much admired these Clumbers, who were very clever dogs at poking here and there in French fashion, and driving the game out of hedges and gorse thickets, besides being just as happy in the water as on land.

In the salon, which was almost dark—only crossed by lines of light from the shutters—Mrs. Percival found Celia lying back in an armchair, and Vincent standing at a corner of the mantelpiece, looking down at her and talking. Mrs. Percival was quite conscious that he stopped short when she came in.

"You are going to shoot, Vincent, are you not?" she said, and her tone was unusually sharp for the gentle Mrs. Percival.

"Yes, madam," said Vincent, not crossly, but in a resigned sort of way.

"Well—they are ready to start."

"Ob, no, they will chatter for some time yet. I know their little ways," he answered, and he looked at Celia and laughed. "I mean to take it easy, and I don't see the use of getting a sun-stroke to begin with."

"You a soldier, and from India! And as to your manners—" said Mrs. Percival. "I wonder you can endure him, Celia."

Celia sat motionless, smiling lazily, looking down at the fan she was playing with.

"She likes me very much," said Vincent. "Don't you, belle Marquise—belle cousine?—that little ass M. de Cernay is always calling you 'belle voisine.' I wonder how you can stand his impertinence, really."

"Nonsense," said Celia. "Yes, Aunt Flo, you are right; he is unbearable. So utterly unmanageable—but I think it must be partly your fault for bringing him up so badly."

"Ob, no doubt, I dare say it is entirely my fault," answered Mrs. Percival, with a touch of coldness.

She sat down in a low chair beside a little velvet table, on which were some pretty old things—snuff-boxes, Montmirail miniatures, and so on. She began examining these things one by one, with an air of interest, while Celia still played with her fan, and Vincent lounged in his corner.

"Who is this—" Mrs. Percival was beginning, after a minute of silence, when the door was pushed open behind her, and Achille's voice said:

"Is Celia here? Ah! Would you come to me in the library for a moment, mon amie?"

His wife looked round with an air of surprise, lifting her eyebrows; then got up slowly, and walked languidly out of the room.

Vincent immediately, with a sort of sigh, threw himself into the chair she had left. Mrs. Percival looked at him, while she played with the miniatures.

"Isn't this a jolly room?" he said, after a moment. "Fancy you, of all people, finding your way here, and actually bringing Romaine with you. My father was a wise man, I suppose, as usual; he preferred staying at home."

"Fancy you spending your whole life here. That strikes one as still funnier," said Mrs. Percival.

"Well, I don't know any just cause or impediment," said Vincent, staring at her fiercely, but speaking good-humouredly enough. "Celia and I were always good

friends, and now we are better friends still. She made a tremendous mistake once; but it is always possible to make the best of things, you know."

"It is not always either right or possible to escape the consequence of one's mistakes," said Mrs. Percival rather stiffly.

"Very neatly put, my dear mother; but people generally do what they can in that way."

"And, Vincent, as to Celia's mistake—of course you mean her marriage—never was a person more bent on making a mistake of the kind. If you had been at home things might have been different. I can't say—"

"They certainly would."

"Well, I assure you that she seemed perfectly satisfied with what she was doing. But Celia, to me, is incomprehensible. My opinion is, that she has no heart at all. I have told you so before, Vincent. I dare say it amuses her to have you here, but as to caring—if you were to get shot accidentally to-day, for instance," said Mrs. Percival, warming to the subject, "it would be no great trouble to her. She would eat her dinner just as comfortably after it."

Vincent himself had told Celia the same sort of thing often enough, but his mother's saying it made him rather angry.

"You certainly don't understand her," he said. "However, if you were right—would you at this moment, may I ask, prefer that Celia should be desperately in love with me?"

"Prefer! Don't talk in that wicked way, Vincent," said his mother.

"Very well," he said. "Then don't you see what a safe state of things it is? Madame la Marquise—I adore her, there is no one else worth looking at in the world, in my opinion—is absolutely above danger. She has supreme good sense—I grant you, she is a little cold, but so much the better for her. There never lived a woman more able to take care of herself, and to enjoy life a little, too, in spite of her stupid marriage."

"Stupid marriage! He is much, much too good for her."

"Exactly; that's the stupidness of it. Now are you comforted, my dear soul? Do you see that my staying here does no harm to anybody, except myself?"

"No, I don't see," said Mrs. Percival. "If you were not here, people would not talk, and Celia would make herself contented, and Achille de Montmirail would be happy, which I can plainly see he is not. He is

too nice to make himself disagreeable about it, but I can see that you ought to go away—and you know it yourself, too. You talk about being 'good friends' with Celia, but people have eyes, and are quite sharp enough to see the meaning of that."

"Now I should like to know who has been talking to you about it?" began Vincent, in his most obstinate tones. "Some one has put you up to all this; you have not been here long enough to see for yourself. Come, confess; you will have to tell me in the end. Not that little beast De Cernay, in the train yesterday? Or does it all spring out of Romaine's imagination? Scandal was never in your line, so I shan't give you all the credit to yourself."

Mrs. Percival had no time to answer his questions, for just then, much to her relief, Celia came back into the room.

"I wish people wouldn't be tragical," she said, with her pretty smile. "Achille has just wished me good-bye as if he was going off to the wars, and never expected to come back again. Is Vincent gone? Oh, there you are! The room is so dark, I can't see. Well, they are starting now, so you had better wake up and go with them."

Vincent got up, but lingered a moment. The talk with his mother, for whom, after all, he had some respect, had left a shadow on his face.

"You won't be contented till you have got rid of us all," he said. "What are you going to do when we are gone to the wars?"

"We are going to drive to Bois-le-Comte, if Aunt Flo would like it," said Celia.

"Bois-le-Comte! There's a dead rose in the moat somewhere," he murmured, so that Mrs. Percival could hardly hear him.

But she heard Celia's laughing answer:

"Oh, good dog, you are waiting for a bone," and saw her give Vincent the rose she was wearing.

He went out without further farewells; and then Celia turned to her aunt, with her usual matter-of-factness, and began to explain what Bois-le-Comte was, and who lived there, and how the drive was very pretty, though rather long. Mrs. Percival was quite ready to drive anywhere or do anything. Her cheeks were burning with the excitement of talking to Vincent. She was half-frightened now at her own courage in facing him, and yet glad that she had done it. Certainly her son was a more hopeful subject than her niece, though she could not say much for him. He loved his mother in a sort of way, she believed,

and in his more reasonable moments understood her motives; but as for Celia, once more, and this time for good, she gave up any idea of interfering with her in any way. She was far too stately, far too self-satisfied, far too cold, this woman who could come in laughing at her husband's affectionate good-bye. That little touch repelled Mrs. Percival from Celia more than she could have thought possible. Till then, some kind of old superstitious affection, lingering on in spite of all her own convictions, had half kept her from believing what she so often said, that Celia had no heart.

"I should like a drive very much— whenever you like," she said cheerfully, determined not to be oppressed by Celia.

"Very well. At two o'clock, then, please," said the Marquise. "I wonder if Antoinette will come." She went to the window and pulled open the shutters. "Netta! why do you stand out there in the sun, petite, without even a parasol? My aunt and I are going to Bois-le-Comte this afternoon; will you come too?"

Antoinette, who was standing rather dreamily on the terrace, looked round at her, and then walked slowly up to the window. Her usual ready sweetness seemed for once to have deserted her.

"My dear child, you are stupefied with the heat!" cried Celia. "Come in at once. You had better lie down for an hour. What do you say about going with us?"

Antoinette stepped in at the window. She looked pale and odd; her eyes were frightened and confused, and she gazed at her stepmother with a sort of anxiety.

"Do you feel ill, my dear?" said Mrs. Percival kindly, going up to them, and taking the girl's hand.

The friendly human touch seemed to bring Antoinette back to her senses.

"Oh no, madame, thank you; I am very well," she answered politely. "But, maman, if you will excuse me, I should like to stay at home this afternoon."

"You know I only want you to please yourself," said Celia, a little coldly.

"Did papa say anything to you about coming home early?"

"No, not a word."

"Ah! when I wished him good-bye, he said, rather in a hurry, 'I may be at home early, perhaps long before the others. You will arrange;' and then M. de Cernay called to him, and he went off at once. I did not know what he meant."

"If he wants people to attend to his

sentences he should finish them," said Celia, with a slight laugh. "There certainly is nothing for you to arrange; and he would not wish you to stay at home from a drive for him."

"I don't know. I think he did——"

"As to coming home early, that is nonsense. Of course he will stay with his friends. However, petite, please yourself."

"Thank you, maman. I think I will stay at home," said the girl; and without saying any more she went out of the room.

"That poor child has a way of taking up all her father's fancies," said the Marquise. "Now, Aunt Flo, as we have a little light in the room, I should like to show you my tapestry. I really am rather proud of it, and I know you are a good judge. These Frenchwomen work very well, but I don't think they have much notion of colour."

Mrs. Percival was ready to admire anything, and for the next few hours, talking the old art jargon, driving, visiting, seeing new country, and amused by new ways and new people, she meekly followed Celia's lead. Nobody could say that the Marquise de Montmirail's manner to her nice English aunt was not perfection.

At La Tour Blanche the day went on slowly.

At first there were shots to be heard, but they died away gradually in the distance, as the sportsmen strayed farther from home. After the carriage had driven away, Antoinette came out again, and walked down with Suzanne to the village, to pay a visit to the Sisters, and arrange something about church decoration for the following Sunday; she always supplied flowers for the altar of Our Lady.

One of the Sisters, who was old and friendly, and had known Mademoiselle Antoinette for years, hinted a question with respectful smiles:

"Was it true that she was going to leave them all, one of these days?"

"Pas encore!" said Suzanne, shaking her head and laughing.

Antoinette coloured faintly.

"No, ma sœur," she said. "I love the old Tour Blanche far too much to leave it."

She came out with Suzanne from the Sisters' little house, the old one nodding her white cap and smiling at the door, into the sunny village street, where yellow leaves were beginning to fall. It was three o'clock, the Angelus was ringing, and people looked up from their work for a moment. A few women crossed them-

selves; among these were Antoinette and her old nurse, as they came down over the white bridge, where the water rippled and ran, into the golden shade of the avenue.

Later in the afternoon, when the shadows were beginning to lengthen, Antoinette put on her large pinafore tied with red ribbons, and went round to feed her chickens. Her little terrier, Rataplan, went with her, and when this business was done, they came back together and sat down on a bench in a shady corner of the terrace, the only live things to be seen in that great white square of walls and towers, as they lay sleeping in their usual drowsy quietness under the clear stillness of the afternoon sky. Antoinette sat with her hands folded, and a certain wistful wonder in her eyes; she looked childish enough still, her black hair curling under her round, shady hat; but she had learned a good deal since the beginning of that summer, since the day—how well she remembered it—when Vincent Percival first arrived from Paris.

She was still too young to know that there are hurts which are hopeless, and cannot be healed; and even now she thought that the old days, so happy by contrast, might come round again—the days when Celia seemed to find all her happiness at home, with the two who certainly found theirs in her. Well, it was all very strange, and very disappointing; and perhaps even her father's friend, Mr. Romaine, with those kind, wonderful eyes of his, could not do much good. French girls are not usually shy or conscious; Antoinette certainly was not; but she knew what shyness was as she sat there and thought a little of Paul, her eyes drooping at the remembrance of his, a smile trembling about her mouth, though she knew she was doing wrong.

"Mon Dieu! I am very wicked and silly," she sighed to herself at last; and just then Rataplan gave a low growl.

Then he sprang down barking from the bench, and rushed in great excitement down the steps into the courtyard. Then he came back again, barking violently at another dog, which climbed the steps wearily, its tongue hanging out, and came grovelling in spaniel fashion along the terrace, and laid itself down at Antoinette's feet.

"Chut, Rataplan! what is this?" cried the girl wildly, for she saw that the dog was Di, who had gone out with her father.

The poor animal had been shot, for blood was flowing slowly from a wound in its neck, staining all the white satiny curls that were as beautiful as ever. Poor Di lay and panted in a shady place, looking up to Antoinette with her gold-brown eyes, which seemed to speak, to beg for something.

"Oh, my poor dog, who has hurt you? Quelle horreur!" cried the girl. "Lie still then; I must fetch you some water;" and she dashed into the house, screaming for Suzanne. But Suzanne, perhaps asleep after her walk to the village, did not hear.

Antoinette brought Rataplan's little pan of water from the hall, and made Di drink, which she did eagerly, and bathed the wound, which seemed to be only slight, and the poor clotted hair, while the old dog licked her hands and gazed with piteous eyes.

But Antoinette, in all her grief and sympathy, was not prepared for what followed. The dog struggled to her feet, and set off, lame as she was, towards the steps. Antoinette stood watching her with wonder, and then a sudden terror made her heart stand still. Di came back to her, took a corner of the white pinafore in her mouth, and pulled it gently; then running back to the steps again, stopping, looking back, whining suddenly a little, as if to say: "Don't you understand me?"

Antoinette followed her a few yards, and then she ran down the steps, and stood wagging her tail for a moment, looking up with those speaking eyes of hers. So she went on down the courtyard, and by this time Antoinette understood, though in a strange, unconscious way. For she never could remember what she thought, or feared, or felt, or which way they went, or how she scrambled through hedges, jumped ditches, and flew along lanes, in her wild run with Di across country, that silent, terrible afternoon.

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 1027. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

"LANCE is a beggar!—a beggar!" Madge sat in her own room saying the ugly words over and over again. In good truth, for the moment she was incapable of any other thought. The news might be glad tidings enough to the childless Sir Peter, it might thrill other hearts with all sorts of pleasant possibilities. For her it had but one meaning: the man for whose happiness she would gladly, at any moment, lay down her life was no longer to be the favourite of fortune which she had delighted to think him. His sun had set.

Once more she took up the letter, thinking that she would slowly and carefully read it from beginning to end, and see if she could find in it any excuse to doubt the veracity of the writer.

But the task was beyond her. Her hand shook so that she could scarcely hold the thin, crackling paper; and her eyes, in sympathy with her hand, got at the evil sentences in snatches only.

She read a string of names, at the end of the letter, of those persons who were willing to vouch for the credibility of the writer; the address of John Rutherford, the Scotch seaman; then her eyes glanced higher up the page to where the writer made an earnest appeal for an immediate reply. "For," he said, "the lad is strangely disturbed at the thought of having kith and kin of his own in the dear old mother-country, and is in a state of nervous tremor lest his father's people may not see

fit to stretch out the hand of welcome to him." Then away from this her eyes darted to the signature at the foot of the page, "Joshua Parker," and then her hand dropped to her side, and her eyes refused to do further work for the tears that blinded them.

Outside her room in the corridor sounded Lance's voice once more in its cheery and somewhat domineering baritone. What was he saying? Something about "my horses," "my dogs"? Evidently he was giving to his servant a succession of orders to be transmitted to the stable, for presently there came in reply to some question addressed to him by the man, a remark respecting last winter's sleighs. "They were not worth putting in order. I intend to have one—two, perhaps—made on quite another model. The sleigh of the period is far from being what it ought to be."

"A beggar! a beggar!" she repeated bitterly. This man, born and bred in the lap of luxury, was to be bidden to go forth and make his way in the world, or else be bidden to remain in his old home simply to play the steward, or live as a dependent on the bounty of others! Ah! would to Heaven the blow had fallen on her, and not on him. She had been a born pauper; had known how to fill the rôle of protégée, at least not discontentedly! If all the Cohen wealth had disappeared in the night like so much fairy gold, she could have gone back to her early life as one "to the manner born."

And here Madge's conscience gave her as sharp a wound as any its barbed arrows ever dealt. "Oh, you with your fine flourish of words," it seemed to say. "You who would pray to fortune, 'give him my lot and give me his,' why didn't you put your pride and your vanity under a bushel

six months ago when he asked you to marry him? If you had seen fit to do this, your wealth by now might have been his, and this blow, though heavy, would not have been a deadly one."

"If I could but have known! if I could but have known!" she moaned, beating her hands together once more.

Through the gloom of this thought there struggled a faint ray of hope. The "no" she had then spoken was not meant to be final, was not likely to be so unless something very unforeseen occurred between her and Lance—here a passing, a very passing thought was given to Miss Shore and her easel. Very well then, her retraction of that "no" might be hastened somewhat, or even might be volunteered—so in her impetuous longing to be of service to him it seemed to her—without loss of dignity or womanliness.

She and Lance were on the best and easiest of terms, it would be easy for her to say: "Lance, my pride and sensitiveness are ridiculous, and always have been ridiculous. I only wish I knew how to trample them under foot and be done with them for ever." Lance, no doubt, would readily enough see the drift of her confession, and would speak over again the words that he had found so easy to speak before.

Till this was done she resolved that she would communicate to no one the contents of the Australian letter, and she thanked heaven for the fortunate conjunction of circumstances which had made its hateful news known to her before any one else in the house.

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly,"

Was Madge's brief summing up of her long hour of painful thought, as she nerved herself to the doing of a deed that had more than a spice of heroism in it.

She folded the letter, locked it up in her desk, and then still farther to ensure its safe keeping, alipped the key of the desk on to her watch-chain.

She had to pass a looking-glass on her way downstairs. She carefully turned her head away from it. "No," she thought, "if I look in there my courage will be gone, and the words will never be said."

A self-congratulatory thought followed. It was: "I have always said I would give all the Cohen wealth to be really beautiful. Now I would not give up the Cohen wealth for all the beauty under the sun."

And for one brief moment Madge felt

as if she had turned the tables on her fortune.

She searched in vain for Lance in his usual haunts; library, study, smoking-room, gun-room, all were deserted. Then she went on to the billiard-room, hoping for better luck there; it was vacant like the other rooms, cool and pleasant, ruled with bars of light which filtered in through the half-turned venetian shutters. Something else besides those bars of light filtered in through the shutters, the sound of voices from the outside verandah.

Lance's voice first caught her ear:

"Fate—believe in fate! Well, yes, in one way I do. I believe it is possible for a man once in his life to come upon his fate in the shape of a beautiful woman."

A beautiful woman! Madge had no doubt to whom he was speaking. For one brief moment she once more balanced the Cohen wealth against personal beauty. That woman outside there in the sunshine assuredly was what nine men out of every ten would call beautiful; and she here in this darkened room had the town and the country house, the diamonds, and the horses. If Lance were to hold the scales, which way would they incline? A dark cloud overshadowed her. She struggled with her jealousy and her prejudices once more. Of course, the words he had spoken as mere words, were worth nothing. If he had said them to a man, or to a woman old enough to be his mother, they might have been taken as a simple statement of a simple fact. But spoken to a woman young enough to be his wife, and dowered with good looks into the bargain, they would—well, mean just whatever his eyes chose to put into them; and she knew well enough how Lance's blue eyes could double the meanings of his phrases at times.

Madge went back to her room with her heroic deed undone.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR PETER had a relapse. He was sleeping so peacefully one evening, that nurse and doctor, growing confidential over their patient's idiosyncrasies, fell to congratulating themselves that the worst of the illness was over. Sir Peter was always a picture when he was asleep.

"He looks that smiling and child-like," said the nurse.

"It's such a blessing to see him at rest," sighed the doctor.

And lo ! that very minute his head was off his pillow, and he was out of bed before any one could stop him, vowing that he had the cramp in both legs, and must "walk it off."

"He has driven in the rash," said the doctor, trying to explain matters to Lady Judith, "and may think himself lucky if he gets about again in three weeks' time."

Lady Judith heard about one quarter of what the doctor had said. She only gathered that Sir Peter as usual had been lively and insubordinate, and wanted taking in hand.

"I'll go up and talk to him," she said, fanning herself and the doctor very hard. "No one knows how to manage him as I do—"

"No, no, no !" shouted the doctor at her. "He mustn't be worried ; it'll put him into a fever—I mean," he corrected himself, "your fan would give him his death of cold."

Lady Judith fanned harder than ever. She only caught the word "fever."

"Fever !" she repeated. "You told me distinctly it was measles he had. You'll be telling me next it is small-pox, or rheumatic gout, or something else extraordinary."

The doctor tried in vain to explain. Being a short man, he got upon tip-toe in his eagerness to do so.

All in vain ! Lady Judith fanned him out of the room, and through the hall, and out at the front door, all the while expressing her surprise, her "unqualified surprise, that he had not taken more pains to diagnose the case before he had pronounced so decided an opinion in the first instance. But I don't believe it's fever—no. If the whole faculty of medicine were to swear it was fever I wouldn't believe them. Do you think I don't know measles when I see it ? There isn't a disease you could name that I don't know. So I beg, doctor, if you've any respect for yourself or your profession, you won't come near me again with the word 'fever' on your lips."

The doctor mentally registered a vow that he would not.

Before he could get out of ear-shot, however, he heard Lady Judith announce with great emphasis her intention of taking the sick room under her own immediate supervision, and of keeping a steady eye alike on patient, nurse, and doctor.

There followed a rather bad fortnight for all three.

That fortnight came as a reprieve to Madge. It gave her breathing time. It was a weighty secret that she carried about with her. For two whole days she had felt herself almost crushed by it, and had only by dint of vigorous effort preserved an outward appearance of calm. Then she had awakened with a start, saying to herself that there was no time to be lost, and thanking Heaven that she was bound in honour not to communicate the evil news to living soul until Sir Peter had been put into possession of it and had resolved upon his course of action.

Possibly, by dint of vigorous entreaty, he might be induced to keep the secret from Lance till a certain definite provision had been made for him. This she knew, though it had often been talked about, had not as yet been done, Sir Peter always saying that her marriage with Lance should be the signal for setting the lawyers to work upon a handsome settlement for him, so that his income might be something on a par with hers. Madge, no longer anxious to repudiate Sir Peter's mediatorship, was beginning to feel now that this marriage and this settlement could, with a very good grace, be arranged by him before the contents of the Australian letter were proclaimed abroad. Once, however, let Lance know his changed position and she felt sure that his pride would stand in the way of both marriage and settlement.

In the meantime, all she could hope to do, while awaiting Sir Peter's recovery to health, was to try and keep matters between her and Lance on that easy, pleasant footing, against which in her caprice she had rebelled as savouring too much of the familiar bond of a brother and sister.

A terror that can be proclaimed from the house-top sits lightly enough. It is the one that is locked up, wordless within the heart, that feeds "on the pith of life." Madge's secret began to tell on her good looks. Even Lance, though he had seemed of late strangely self-absorbed, noticed it.

"What is it, Madge—headache ?" he asked one morning over the breakfast-table, while Lady Judith, high over their heads, was delivering an oration on the degeneracy of the dairy-maid of the period.

Madge flushed scarlet.

"That means I am looking particularly ugly this morning," she thought, contrasting in her mind's eye her own sallow

complexion with the ideally beautiful colouring of that "girl in grey."

To divert his eyes, as well as his thoughts, she made a sudden, abrupt announcement. It was:

"I think I shall open my house in Belgrave Square this year for the half-season."

Now, that house in Belgrave Square had been a fruitful cause of squabbling between Lance and Madge.

Whenever she had been particularly bent on making herself disagreeable to him, by way of revenge for an unusual amount of teasing, she had been in the habit of tightening her lips, and saying, "I shall open my house in town this year and see a little society."

Whereupon Lance had never failed to reply: "There'll be the mischief to pay if you do, Madge, unless you set up a duenna at the same time. You'll get a mob of impecunious young idiots dangling after you, and I shall be called upon to administer a caning every other week."

To which Madge had never failed to retort, that "she adored boys—impecunious or otherwise—and that she had serious intentions of weeding from her visiting-list every family where the men were over two-and-twenty."

But there was to be no mimic skirmish over the town-house now. Lance had drifted into dreamland, and seemed to get his thoughts back from their travels with difficulty.

"It does seem a pity," he said, a little absently, "that that comfortable house should be shut up, and you have to put up at an hotel whenever you want to run up to town."

"They won't use their arms, my dear, that's what it comes to! And when the butter isn't what it ought to be it's the fault of the butter-worker, or the milk, or the cow, or the clover, or goodness knows what," flowed in the running stream of Lady Judith's talk between the two.

Madge, keeping a steady eye on Lance, saw that not she, nor her town-house, nor yet Lady Judith's typical dairy-maid, had a corner in his thoughts. His eyes were fixed on the garden-picture which the window facing him framed, with what seemed to her an expectant look in them.

"Shall we ride this morning?" she asked suddenly—sharply; determined to awaken him to the fact of the existence of such a person as Madge Cohen, and that she sat at his elbow.

Lance jumped up from the table.

"So sorry, Madge—I have to be down at the kennels in half-an-hour—now Uncle Peter is laid by, I'm bound to see to everything; and when I get back I'm afraid you'll find it too hot for a canter."

But he did not get down to the kennels in half-an-hour's time, for Madge, compelled to a solitary ramble, and standing for a moment at the front door to call her dogs for company, heard his voice in conversation with Miss Shore, who was seated on the terrace at her easel.

Miss Shore's broken English reached her ear first:

"I can't do it," she was saying in a troubled tone. "When I look at these mountains, other mountains rise up before me and shut out these. Grander, gloomier mountains, with one bright evil star shining out of the purple clouds. I could paint these—not these."

"Well, then, why don't you paint them?" said Lance's voice in reply. "They would be bound to be worth looking at. Paint out what is in your eyes, and then you'll be able to see what is outside them."

Then he caught sight of Madge under the stone porch, reiterated the necessity that existed for his presence at the kennels in half-an-hour's time, and departed in all but breathless haste.

This little incident, with a divergence of detail, repeated itself again and again. To her fancy he seemed to be perpetually leaving rooms as she entered them, going out of the house when she came in, and vice versa. When she wanted to talk he appeared to prefer silence, and when she grew thoughtful and reserved, he would suddenly become loquacious and lively, or, worse still, would stimulate Lady Judith's powers of conversation to such an extent, that the room would become intolerable to Madge with her distracting burden of thought.

It was no wonder that Madge, with wits sharpened by the necessity of the case, and prejudices stimulated by her jealousy, speedily fixed upon "that girl in grey" as the likely cause of Lance's eccentric conduct, and was ready to anathematise herself for finding pretext for prolonging the young woman's stay at the Castle, in weak compliance with Lance's wish.

It was no wonder, also, that with eyes once turned in that direction, that "girl in grey" grew to be an object of special attention to Madge. She found herself perpetually watching her, scrutinising her

every action, look, speech, with eager, yet unsympathetic eyes. And the more closely she watched her the more of an enigma she grew to her.

Since the one memorable evening that Miss Shore had exchanged places with Madge at the dinner-table, she had not once sat down with the family to any of their meals. Her breakfast was taken to her in her own room with the morning paper as its invariable corollary. About luncheon-time she would appear outside on the terrace with her easel and painting accessories, and there she would sit, until falling day-light put an end to her work, when she would go back straight to her room, where light supper of some sort was by her orders taken to her.

Madge, looking over Miss Shore's shoulder once, was surprised at the slow progress which the mountain picture was making, in spite of the evident ease and skill with which the artist handled her brushes and colours. Half her time she seemed to be washing off her colours, not washing them in.

That one occasion of looking over Miss Shore's shoulder was made memorable to Madge by the sudden start the girl gave, and the frightened, yet withal, angry look which swept over her face.

"Why do you do it—you startle me? Come in front if you wish to speak to me!" she cried vehemently. And there and then she removed her chair, placing it with its back to the house, and leaving no room for a passer-by.

Madge related this circumstance to Lance, watching his face closely for tell-tale change of expression.

Lance seemed to feel her scrutiny, and tell-tale expression there was none.

"Much ado about nothing, as usual, Madge," he said lightly. "Don't you remember the terrified jumps you used to give if ever I came behind you at your singing and joined in a bar or two?"

"Yes, but I never turned on you furiously as she turned on me, or sat with my chair with its back to the wall so that no one should ever get behind it again!"

"Miss Shore, I dare say, is of a very nervous temperament, and has——"

"A guilty conscience perhaps," interrupted Madge. Then the minute the words were out of her mouth she regretted them. They would just put another stone to the wall that seemed to be building between Lance and herself, and possibly

make that "girl in grey" and her eccentric doings a sealed subject between them.

"Had a great deal of trouble, I was going to say," said Lance, walking away at his last word in order to prevent further parley on the matter.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cohen, for intruding," said Mr. Stubbs's voice at that moment at her elbow, "but I believe one of Sir Peter's letters, which I handed to you the other day, had an Australian post-mark on it."

"Yes, what of it?" asked Madge sharply, her looks at once betraying the fact that this letter was of vivid interest to her.

"I merely wished to say," Mr. Stubbs went on respectfully, "that the Australian mail goes out in three days, and if a provisional answer is necessary——"

"A provisional answer is not necessary," said Madge without a moment's hesitation, giving not so much as a thought to the fragile sensitive lad at the other end of the world, who was in "a state of tremor lest his own kith and kin should not hold out the hand of welcome to him."

CEYLON REDIVIVUS.

THE spicy breezes which, according to the familiar hymn, "blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle," have not of late years been always redolent of the joy which comes from material prosperity to the inhabitants of it. Once upon a time it was customary to speak of Ceylon as one of the brightest jewels in the British crown; but coffee, which in those days spelt wealth, has come in these days to spell ruin, and Ceylon has been noted for one of the most disastrous bank-smashes of modern times, and for the complete prostration of a once prosperous industry. But of late it has come again into prominence on account of a new development or evolution, which is fast redeeming the island from the tribulation under which it has long laboured.

Ceylon, the largest of our Crown colonies, has been a complete British possession for only some seventy years or so.

The ancient land of Taprobane was re-discovered in 1505 by the Portuguese, who occupied portions of the coast in a semi-military sort of fashion for about one hundred and fifty years, till the Dutch disturbed them. By 1656 the Dutch had completely ousted the Portuguese, and after

their usual manner, they made a profitable use of their acquisition, doing a large trade in spices and "jaggery," timber and pearls. In 1795 the Dutch settlements were seized by the British and placed under the East India Company; in 1802 the island was finally ceded to us by the Treaty of Amiens, and constituted a Crown colony. Thus, then, as a British colony Ceylon is just eighty-six years old. But it was not until 1815 that the last King of Kandy was captured and deposed, and the whole island brought actually under our rule.

It was well worth taking. Shaped like a pear, and connected by a ridge of islands—"Adam's Bridge"—with the peninsula of Hindustan, Ceylon is one of the richest spots on earth in the matter of vegetation, and is also remarkably rich in precious stones. It is not upon these last, however, that it has depended for its prosperity, but upon the bounteous yield of its plantations and forests. In area, Ceylon is about one-sixth smaller than Ireland, and comprises nearly sixteen million acres, about one-sixth of which is of a mountainous formation. Its highest point used to be considered Adam's Peak, seven thousand three hundred and fifty-three feet, but a peak called Pidurutalagala has been found to be nearly a thousand feet higher.

In 1796, when we had assumed possession, the population of Ceylon is estimated to have been about three-quarters of a million; now it is estimated at close upon three millions. In 1796 there was not a single practicable road; to-day the island is well supplied with roads and bridges, and has about one hundred and eighty miles of railway, and more in projection.

Although the Dutch made no roads, they constructed a system of canals very suitable for the lagoons of the Ceylon coast. Of late years these canals have been greatly utilised, and there are now about one hundred and seventy miles of them on the island.

Ceylon now boasts of an admirable system of education which dates from the time of the governorship of Sir Hercules Robinson, who started a scheme of Government grants. The people are ahead of the people of India as regards education; that is to say, about ten per cent. of the Singhalese children attend school, while not much more than one per cent. of Indian children do so. It is noteworthy that a

Singhalese gentleman is at present Judge of the Supreme Court, and that the offices of Attorney-General and Solicitor-General are also filled by natives. The penal code is framed upon that of India.

The people are consumers of rice, but the cultivation of rice has never been one of the most profitable industries. The area under rice is estimated to be about six hundred and sixty thousand acres; but a good deal has at times to be imported. The native cultivators probably find that cinnamon or pepper pays them better.

It is said that the old Romans paid equal to eight pounds per pound for genuine Ceylon cinnamon, but in the time of the Dutch the value of the spice ran from eight shillings and twopence to seventeen shillings and eightpence per pound. The greatest export in their time was six hundred thousand pounds weight in 1738; while now the export is about two million pounds annually, valued at from two shillings to three shillings per pound in the London market.

A still more valuable natural product is the cocoa-nut palm, of which Mr. John Ferguson of Colombo—author of several works about Ceylon, to which we are indebted for many of the facts and figures contained in this article—says that "its uses are as numerous as the days of the year." Food, drink, domestic utensils, building and thatching materials, wine, sugar, and oil are all obtained from the cocoa-palm.

Millions of nuts are annually exported, and thousands of tons of coir-fibre—from the husk—and of oil expressed from the kernel.

Cocoa-nut oil is a valuable ingredient in soap-making, as well as for candle-making and other purposes. The export value of the cocoa-palm products is about six hundred thousand pounds sterling annually; the value of the products consumed locally about one million five hundred thousand pounds annually; and the value of the cocoa plantations is estimated at nearly twelve million pounds sterling.

The number of these trees on the island is said to be about thirty millions, and they cover about half a million acres, nearly all owned and managed by natives.

The Palmyra palm is also a valuable tree, yielding good building timber, and also some "jaggery" sugar. The latter, however, is chiefly derived from the Kital palm, which also yields "toddy" wine and sago. The "Areca catechu" yields the

famous areca-nut, which is very largely consumed on the island, and is also exported to the value of upwards of one hundred thousand pounds annually.

But, leaving these and other objects of cultivation natural to the island and chiefly in the hands of natives, we come to what has been its "leading article" until quite recent times. The coffee plant was first introduced by the Arabs, and was being cultivated before the days of the Portuguese; but the Singhalese did not know the virtues of the berry, and merely used the leaves for their curries and the flowers for decorating the shrines of Buddha. The Dutch tried their hands at its cultivation, but not with much success, and even under the British it made small progress for many years.

By the year 1837 the export had not reached thirty thousand hundredweights; but in that year began the great era of Ceylon coffee-planting. The result was that by 1845 the export had grown to two hundred thousand hundredweights, and much money was made.

A check of a few years occurred in consequence of financial troubles in Europe; but in 1855 the industry took a new start, and rapidly became the mainstay of the island. From 1868 to 1870, when the industry was at its highest point of prosperity, the exports ran up to over a million hundredweights annually, of a money value of about four millions sterling.

At that time the area under coffee was some one hundred and seventy-six thousand acres, and the produce gave a profit of from seven pounds to ten pounds an acre, or equal to twenty to twenty-five per cent. on the invested capital every year.

It was too good to last; and it did not last.

In 1870 a minute fungus, unknown to science, suddenly appeared on the coffee leaf, and spread and spread over the plantations until it reduced the marketable product by about four-fifths. Within less than twelve years the coffee industry of Ceylon was crushed.

The disease first appeared in a remote corner of the island, upon one of the newest plantations; but it never stayed until its bright yellow spots—the certain precursors of decay and death—covered the whole of what is known as the "coffee-zone." The effect was not ruin to the planter in the first instance, for the diminished crops raised the price of coffee

over fifty per cent. in Europe and America. The planter was getting so much more for his smaller crops that he extended his area of cultivation with almost feverish haste. The competition for suitable lands became so keen that the price was run up from two pounds to twenty pounds an acre, and some two-and-a-half millions sterling more were sunk in forming new plantations.

But the disease went on spreading with deadly effects; the use of tea in the consuming markets was driving coffee out of favour; the price fell rapidly; and a series of wet seasons and the financial disasters of 1878-9, completed the temporary ruin of Ceylon. Last season, the area under coffee was one hundred thousand acres, instead of two hundred and seventy-five thousand ten years before, and the export had sunk again to about two hundred thousand hundredweights.

The secret of the disease seems to have been much that which caused the devastation of the potatoe crops of Ireland—the limitation of cultivation to one plant.

The coffee-planting of Ceylon is entirely in the hands of Europeans, and while it was prosperous, the money which came into the island gave an impetus to native industries in the cultivation of the cocoa-nut, palmyra, etc. The increased revenue of the colony enabled the Government to spend large sums on irrigation works, on the formation of roads, and on other permanent useful enterprises. The benefit of these is now being felt, so that although the coffee era was transitory, its effects have been on the whole good.

One effect has been to teach the planters that even a better thing than coffee in its best days may be in store for them. There was always a good deal of uncertainty attending the cultivation of this plant, for during the blossoming season, too much or too little rain for a week or two might seriously affect the results of a whole year's labour. Moreover, the plant could only be cultivated within a certain limited area, that is to say at from two thousand five hundred to five thousand feet above the sea-level.

The tea-shrub, on the other hand, is exceedingly hardy, and can flourish up to a height of more than six thousand feet above the sea-level.

Tea was tried by the enterprising Dutch when they were in Ceylon, but they did not persevere with it. There is an indigenous wild plant, "cassia ariculata," allied to the tea-shrub, out of which the Singha-

lese have long made a decoction for themselves; but the China plant was only introduced some forty years ago. Somewhat later the Assam plant was also introduced, yet no great attention was paid to either until the collapse in coffee taught the planters that they must seek some new source of profit. Then they began to realise that the greater portion of the area which they had so long kept under coffee, was much better adapted for tea. It is even better adapted than the tea districts of India, for in the central portions of Ceylon there is never a month in the year without rain, and the heavy showers, the untimely fall of which means ruin to the coffee crops, is beneficial to the tea-plant. Further, the harvesting of the tea-leaf goes on over six or nine months of the year, and thus the returns are almost continuous, instead of being, as in the case of coffee, limited to one critical month.

The conversion was not attained in a day. Planters are a conservative class, and it was not easy to bring them to see that the plantations on which they had lavished so much capital and anxious toil ought to be revolutionised. The progress was very slow at first, but it soon became rapid. In 1873 there were only two hundred and fifty acres under tea. Ten years later there were thirty-five thousand acres; and in 1884 that area was doubled. The extension has gone on each year since; and before the end of 1887 there were one hundred and fifty thousand acres of tea plantations in Ceylon. The result is of course seen in the exports. In 1876 there were just twenty-three pounds of Ceylon-made tea exported, and in 1886 there were nearly eight million pounds exported. The tea-plant takes some three years to be productive, and when the one hundred and fifty thousand acres are in full bearing, it is estimated that the yield available for export—say two years hence—will be quite forty million pounds. There are still large reserves of suitable land for even greater expansion.

The evolution is quite one of the most remarkable incidents in the history of our colonial enterprises. A colony which a few years ago was plunged into the deepest gloom, and was being forsaken by capitalists, as rats leave a sinking ship, has suddenly sprung up again into activity, and seems on the high-road to a prosperity greater than anything it has ever known. The future of Ceylon may be said now to depend on tea, although coffee is not

abandoned, and is becoming moderately profitable again on a smaller scale. On many of the tea plantations the yield per acre is greater than that in India, and the readier access to ports of shipment, and therefore to the consuming markets, which Ceylon has, is an advantage she possesses over Assam and Cachar. The quality of the Ceylon leaf also is excellent, and its peculiar fine flavour and purity are providing for it a growing sale in this country. It will never drive out Indian tea, but India and Ceylon may in time drive out the use of China teas in England. Indian tea has yet to make its way in America, but it is reasonable to hope that that vast market will be conquered in time also.

The following is a description of a Ceylon tea-garden, and the work which goes on there:

“The tea-bushes are planted in lines at regular distances over hundreds of acres of carefully-roads and drained land, which is regularly weeded every month. Once a year the bushes are pruned down to a height of about two feet; and eight weeks after the pruning, the first ‘flush’ of young shoots is ready to be plucked, and during the height of the season the ‘flushes’ re-occur every ten days. Coolies, having a small basket attached to their girdle, then go round and pluck the bud and a couple of the tender, half-developed leaves. At midday, and again in the evening, the leaf is weighed, and taken into the factory. The leaf is at once spread very thinly on trays or shelves to wither. The time which the leaf takes to wither—to become soft and pliable without drying up—varies with the weather; but as a rule the leaf gathered one day will be sufficiently withered the following day. The withered leaf is then placed in the rolling-machine, an ingenious and effective machine, which is driven by water or steam power. The rolling lasts for nearly half-an-hour; at the end of that time the leaf has become a moist mass of twisted and bruised leaves, out of which the expressed juice freely comes, technically called ‘the roll.’ The ‘roll’ is then placed in trays to ferment, or oxidise; during this process it changes from a green to a copper colour. The subsequent strength and flavour of the tea depend to a great extent upon the fermentation—a chemical process, the success of which is not entirely within the control of the planter, but depends greatly on the weather, and takes

a time varying from two to six hours. The next process is the fining. The 'roll' is thinly spread on trays, and placed either over charcoal stoves or in large iron drying-machines, and at the end of half-an-hour it is thoroughly crisp and dried, and has become tea. The tea is then sorted or sized, by being passed through sieves of different meshes, giving the varieties of 'broken Pekoe,' Pekoe, Souchong, Congou, and dust. The broken Pekoe, which consists chiefly of the opening bud of the leaf, gives the strongest tea, perhaps too strong to be infused by itself; and a mixture of Pekoe and Souchong makes the most pleasant-drinking tea."

The difference between the method of preparation in Ceylon and India, and that in China and Japan, is that in the former countries it is all done in factories under the supervision of Europeans, whose chief concern is to preserve quality and purity. In China and Japan, however, the cultivation is in the hands of the peasants, who gather and prepare the tea in their own huts—which are not over cleanly. Moreover, they are adepts in the art of manipulation, and know how to amalgamate clay with tea-dust so as to present the ordinary form of the dried leaf, and also how to face the leaf with Prussian blue and other ingredients so as to secure a pleasing appearance. In short, China and Japan teas are largely adulterated and manipulated, while Ceylon and Indian teas are always perfectly pure when shipped home.

There are now over seven hundred Europeans engaged in the tea-planting industry of Ceylon, which employs some two hundred thousand labourers. The natives are also beginning to plant on their own account by the roadsides in the low country, and in fact, the whole social and commercial atmosphere of Ceylon is now as redolent of tea as it once was of coffee.

Other products are not being neglected, and chinchona, cacao (the cocoa of the breakfast-table), cardamoms, spice, caoutchouc (India-rubber), pepper, nutmeg, croton-oil seeds, etc., are all yielding profits, although in a minor degree. Chinchona and cacao are new products, like tea, and a good deal is expected of them in the future.

As regards the climate and natural attractions of Ceylon, these are familiar probably to most readers, and do not need to be enlarged upon here. Like all tropical countries, the island has its disadvantages, but on the whole presents a genial and

lovely place of residence. Those who have lived long there are not by any means so eager to "come home," as are most Europeans who have had to endure long years of residence in Hindustan.

But, from an Imperial point of view, Ceylon has an attraction of which Mr. Ferguson reminds us. It is the most central and useful station for a reserve garrison which we possess in the East. Colombo is only nine hundred miles from Bombay, six hundred miles from Madras, one thousand four hundred from Calcutta, one thousand two hundred from Rangoon, one thousand six hundred from Singapore, four thousand from Natal, three thousand from Hong Kong, a like number from Western Australia, and two thousand five hundred from Aden.

It offers a centre, therefore, from which troops could be despatched on short notice to any one of our great Eastern possessions in time of need, and its mild climate renders it suitable for a military sanatorium. In one day it is possible to pass from Colombo, with its average temperature of eighty degrees, to the plateau of Nuwara Eliya, where blankets and fires are required, where frost is occasionally experienced, and where the average temperature is the comfortable one of fifty-seven degrees.

There are several other parts where the average temperature is about sixty-five degrees, and these are becoming regular places of resort of winter-hating English people, and of heat-hating Anglo-Indians.

BIRDS AND THEIR NESTS.

BACON, in his essays, has written, "He that builds a fair house upon an ill seat committeth himself to prison."

If you are an observer of nature, a hundred little incidents, particularly in relation to bird life, will bring this truthful adage home to your mind; for you cannot fail to remember how, in the deep woods, you have found wrecked eggs on the ground. These have fallen from an insecurely-built nest.

I have seen nests so tossed by a passing wind, when yet there are no leaves upon the trees, that birds have had to forsake them because, being insecurely fastened, they had yielded, and lay upon their sides. Birds do not understand the art of patching up their nests as human beings do their houses, but begin at once to build

a new home the moment the old one gives way.

There is an illustration of Bacon's remark to be found at the present moment at the Foreign Office in Whitehall, and it is not an infrequent occurrence, for it takes place in breeding-time year after year, and must strike any one who passes through the archways to the large quadrangle.

It has been my daily duty to visit the Government Offices, and, far as they are removed from the woods now ripe in leaf, where the songs of little birds grow more feeble as the summer wanes, I have found the pigeons there full of interest. At least three times a week it has been my pleasure to study the courtship, housebuilding, and wrecking of the home of a proud and strutting blue-rock with a sweet-eyed white and black pigeon. The courtship, at first, was mostly on the lady's side, but her flights were so graceful and her gyrations in the air so coquettish, that after a time she was too much for the great-breasted, cooing gentleman, who at last gave away his heart and began, himself, to show that he also could fly well. When these two had once made up their minds to marry, they began at once to search for bits of stick and straw as materials for their future home.

All was happiness to this point; but, alas! my two pigeons—like many other pigeons in this gay courtyard—did not select a proper site. They, with much brooding and inspection, chose a ledge of the corona of one of the Doric pillars, sheltered from all wind, rain, and sun, but fashioned by the stone-cutter in such a way that it shelved downwards.

Master Blue-rock sought the proper sticks, and, from the pains he took in testing their thickness and brittleness, there could be no doubt but that this was to be in his opinion the most perfect nest of the whole courtyard. Lady Black-and-White fashioned the home, taking the bits of twig one by one from her lord, and placing them to please herself.

About the sixth day from the beginning of this work, I noticed that Mr. Blue-rock was more than usually attentive to his wife, and a few days later I found him despondent. The poor fellow had reason to be, for on the ground at my feet, a mere splash of yellow, lay the first egg of his marriage. It had rolled out of the nest built on an uneven foundation. The second egg met the same

fate a few days later; and yet, never dismayed, my two loving pigeons stuck to the nest, and ten days later, I grieve to say, another egg, which, of course, belonged to the second laying, lay destroyed upon the granite footway.

The pigeon is to the sparrow what the country bumpkin is to the London street Arab. You will rarely find our sparrows making any mistake about the safety of their nests. They even protect themselves from the cats, whose sure-footedness on the tiles and gutters makes them dangerous enemies. Two or three examples of the sparrows' instinct that have come within my knowledge are interesting. Over one of the houses in the Strand, decorating the front, is a plaster mask, the eyes being absent. Waiting for an omnibus a few days since, I noticed a sparrow carrying a very long straw, and, marking his flight, I tracked him to the mask. I saw him vanish through the eye-hole, and the straw was gradually drawn within. Ho! ho! said I, you are building your nest in that head. And so it was; for, having duly placed his straw, he emerged, and, having had a good self-satisfied look around, he went in search of other materials. In the half-hour I watched him he must have made at least ten expeditions, and the cleverness in carrying materials and afterwards leaving no trace outside the mask was remarkable. I once found a sparrow in a very peculiar home, in no other place than in the hand of the great equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington that used to be at Hyde Park Corner. When the workmen were taking this statue to pieces, preparatory to its removal to Aldershot, I had an opportunity of going all over it; in fact, I was inside, having found ingress through the collar of the Duke's tunic, his head having been removed. The right hand of the Duke held a Field Marshal's bâton, it also held in the palm a sparrow's nest with several eggs in it. Of course the workmen, by their presence and hammering at the metal, kept the father and mother away during the day and so destroyed the chance of the eggs' incubation.

But there was a stranger thing than this to be found in the statue, and that was a starling's nest built in the cocked hat, which held three young ones. The parents in this case approached their nest through the interstices of the voluminous plume. When the Duke's head was taken off, the workmen did not disturb the nest, and placed

the head and all its belongings on the ground, where the mother and father came regularly afterwards to feed their young. What eventually came of them I do not know, but it is as likely as not that a prowling cat found his way there.

Of all birds the chaffinch probably shows most knowledge of hiding his nest by matching the colour of its surroundings. If he selects an old plum-tree, he builds his nest with grey lichen to suit the moss on the tree. If in a green wooded rose-bush, he will build his nest with fine, green moss; in every case he chooses a moss which is nearest in colour to that of the bark of the trees he selects to build in. The chaffinch in his wild state is a lonely bird, with his pipe song full of sadness: "Sweet, sweet. Oh, will you not come to me? Sweet, sweet, sweet. I love you."

I am glad to think that boys of the present day are not so harmful to our little birds as they were some twenty years ago, when birds'-nesting was supposed to be one of the great attractions of a day in the country, and a collection of eggs of all birds was far more important than lessons at school. But birds'-nesting had one advantage; it taught a boy the natural history of birds. Twenty years ago, a boy of ten would have told you whether a nest in a tree was that of a mountain thrush or of a singing thrush at a glance—no easy task. He would tell you the peculiarities of the formation of different birds'-nests, the colours, spottings, and sizes of the eggs of each, and when they were likely to be added; when they would be of no use to him for collecting. He would quickly discover where was a likely place for a nest, and the particular trees that certain birds had fancies to build in. No tree was too dangerous for him to climb; no hedge too thorny for him to go through if he saw a strange nest that might yield him a new addition to his egg collection.

The hawthorn, or may, when its buds are shooting, is the home of the hedge sparrow, whose tiny eggs of beautiful blue are a miniature of the singing thrush's eggs. It is a mistake to think that this poor innocent bird is the only victim of the cuckoo, who is the herald of spring, even before the lark, upon our southern coasts, for I have found the young cuckoo in a titlark's nest, and once in a grey linnet's nest in a beech hedge. The titlark's nest I found in the long grass at the root of a furze bush, showing that the cuckoo sometimes lays his eggs upon the ground.

In the alder-tree we find the goldfinch, with its tiny nest of tree lichen and lined with cow-hair, which the birds have been seen taking off the backs of cattle. The nest can hardly be distinguished from the grey wrinkled branches of the alder; but the bird itself will be a signal to a sharp eye and ear, for there is hardly its equal in plaintive crying when its nest or offspring are approached.

The yellowhammer loves the briar, where rough hands will be punished by the thorns. Its nest is formed principally of the roots of skutch grass. Alongside of him may be found a hole in the bank, inhabited by Mr. Tomtit, or Mr. Blackcap. Both these birds lay a monstrous number of eggs for their size, and when the young come out they are the most loving parents imaginable, for they are never tired of coming to and fro with food. I have counted as many as fourteen eggs in one tomtit's nest, a nest so small that it vies for minuteness with that of the golden-crested wren, the smallest of our English birds. The latter loves the cedar, the cypress, and the pine, and their homestead is hard to discover, for it is built of green moss, and hangs down underneath the evergreen branches by four strings of the same material, which is woven into the nest, and looks as if one or two sprays of branches had drooped. The eggs are very small, not much larger than an ordinary pea, and I have found nine in one nest; but usually there are not so many.

The robin, our most beloved bird, is one of the first of all birds to set about building and rearing. He is most often to be found in a nest made of decayed and skeleton leaves among the roots of a large tree in a ditch. His youngsters are ugly little birds, and do not get the cheery red breasts for several months.

Few need be told that the blackbird should be sought for close to the ground, in laurels, large box, or among the roots of thorn hedges; and his rival in song, the thrush, who has a far prettier egg, builds above him in the hedgerows. The singing thrush makes a perfect nest of dry grass, and plasters it inside with droppings from the field, which after a time becomes hard and water-tight; he hatches four to five eggs. The blackbird has seldom more than four.

The mizzle, or mountain thrush, hatches high in poplar, oak, or ash-trees, but has a great preference for beech, especially of

the copper order. His nest is easily found, for if you go near where it is, he will utter his harsh chatter, and flit and fly about you, and try and draw you off by flying close to you and screaming in an adjacent tree.

The magpie probably causes the greatest commotion when one approaches its nest, built of large brambles, lined with mud, in larch and fir-trees. I have often been surrounded by six or seven couples of magpies when climbing to the nest of one, for all the neighbouring birds make common cause against the intruder. I once found a magpie's nest impossible to reach, owing to the slenderness of the shank of the tree it was built at the top of, and, as it was necessary, for the sake of the partridges, whose eggs they suck, to destroy the nest, I tried the efficacy of a gun; but so thickly coated was it inside with mud, that four shots had no effect, for a week later I heard the young birds calling for food. They had passed through such a hot fire that I allowed them to remain.

MEMENTO MORI.

THE change, the mighty mystic change, may come

On any smiling summer morn for Youth;

We from our very cradle learn the truth

That the next step may sink into the tomb.

But when the pulses flag, the hair grows grey,

The "may" is altered to the potent "must."

However lingeringly we hope and trust,

Each hour drags closer to the last dread day.

The fair old world may show as fair a face,

The hand of love clasp warmly yet on ours,

But yet we know the canker in the flowers,

The shadow creeping slowly to our place.

Wisest to press it home on heart and eye,

Remember well—Youth may, but Age must die.

SAINT ALBANS.

THERE are sundry ways of reaching Saint Albans from London. There is the four-horse coach, which rattles over the country roads, and among the quiet villages and roadside inns, past the lodge gates of parks and ancient manors; in short, which passes through a thoroughly English country, in a thoroughly English manner, and with insular disregard to cost per mile. Then it is possible to walk all the way; or the journey may be easily done on bicycle or tricycle. But the way that recommends itself to the average intelligence is just to go by railway, either direct from Saint Pancras or by the North-Western line through Watford. If there is any choice in the matter, take the Watford route in going, and the Midland in

returning. Whichever way you go, you will arrive at a place full of charm and interest.

There was once a little country town called Watford, with a long, straggling high street and a grey old church rising above the tiled roofs; a sort of wayside town, deriving such life as it possessed from the cross country stage-coaches and waggons that passed through. If any ancients survive who remember the town in that condition, they would have difficulty in recognising the Watford of to-day. Houses—streets of them—hotels, banks, shops, have sprung up. Some of the inhabitants have made fortunes in the place, and have built handsome houses in which to enjoy their ease and dignity. Others, with hopes in the same direction, bring themselves into notice with new shop-fronts, new signs, and general advertisement of their concerns.

But where are the old Watfordians? How many of them have risen on the top of the tide, and how many are buried beneath its waves? However, that is a question we have not got to settle; for, hardly have we crossed from the main line to the branch platform, when the guard hurries us into a carriage and gives the word, "Right away!" and right we are for the city of Saint Albans.

It is a quiet, pleasant country, this we are passing through; but, as we pass along, it changes or rather intensifies in character. It is still more quiet and pleasant—an undulating country as compared with the somewhat humpy country between London and Watford. There is all the difference as between the short broken sea of a coast and the long roll of the quiet, deep blue sea. So we have vistas every now and then, with soft distances, and stretches of broad woodlands, and presently the train enters what is suggestive of a forest partially cleared, with green cornfields edged with dark woods, and with here and there a shaded dell. There is one such dell close by the line, with a rude hut couched among the underwood, that might very well be the haunt of some outlaw of old times. And a glance at the ordnance map shows that we are passing through, or rather by the side of, Brickets Wood.

Soon the train arrives at its destination, which is not quite St. Albans, although near enough; for passing forth into the highway, there stands St. Albans in full view. The highway stretches out

in uncompromising directness, till soon it becomes a street, and so rises, without swerving to one side or the other in any weakness for easing off the ascent, right up the face of the hill. And when the street reaches the top it is crossed by another mathematically at right angles as it seems, and there are people moving up and down and to and fro briskly enough, and vehicles crossing the field of view; and there over the house-tops rise the square ruddy tower of the old Abbey Church, and the long ridge of its roof ending in turrets and pinnacles. Then there is a tall building that towers over the houses and trees adjoining, and that is the Abbey gateway. But it is the tower that retains the attention, with its strange hue. The atmosphere is soft and rather gloomy, with snatches of brightness now and then; but no sunshine seems to brighten up the old tower; it glooms in the sunshine and glowers in the shade, and altogether has a strange, weird aspect that excites rather interest than admiration. In fine, here is a place that has something original about it, inspiring wonder and curiosity. And yet we will turn our faces the other way, as if we were about to leave the place unvisited.

We all know that in pilgrimages there is a certain well-understood routine to be gone through. There are stages to be negotiated with a due regard to the distance and perspective of the final object. You don't walk up the High Street of Meccah and ask for the Kaaba. There is the well Zem Zem to be visited, and other formalities to be gone through. So will we visit the shrine of Saint Alban, not by the dusty highway, but in a circuitous manner, enjoying distant views from neighbouring heights, and basking in the surroundings of the place, about which also hover the memories of ancient days.

The road rises steeply up the hill, but it is a pleasant road with green hedges and lofty trees shading the foot-path. At the top of the hill stands a neat little church; perhaps not little as a whole, but an aggregation of lowly roofs of aisles, side chapels, nave, and chancel, all on a limited scale, with a quaint, shingled spire over all.

The church has its name from Saint Stephen, and is one of three originally founded by a Saxon Abbot of Saint Albans, who placed them, as it were, on the arms of a cross, about the central jewel of the Abbey. Saint Stephen's

stands by the crossways, while the intersecting road, whose direction we shall now follow, is no other than ancient Watling Street, which now does duty as a parish highway. At the corner of Watling Street, opposite the church, stands a cosy-looking roadside inn, from which swings the sign of the King's Head, the head being that of bluff King Harry the Eighth, which for its mellow, ancient appearance might even be a contemporary portrait.

Turning sharply round to the right, past the swinging sign, we follow the track of Watling Street along a pleasant country lane, in places overarched with trees, and with a broad margin of turf and green hedgerow. According to our topographical reckoning, we should now be passing

Nigh where the goodly Verlame stood of yore, that is near the site of the Roman city of Verulamium, beneath whose walls the ancient highway must have passed. But so far there is nothing to suggest the site of an ancient city: there are only fields that are green with springing corn, pleasant country houses standing on the ridge with gardens and shrubberies in full luxuriance.

Here and there a gateway opens, and we get a view of the roofs and tower of Saint Albans shining from the opposite hill, or a stile gives access to a foot-path winding through copse and meadow, but always in the same direction. Saint Albans is the Rome of hereabouts, and all the ways seem to bring one sooner or later to the shadow of that mighty tower.

If Watling Street has been lost sight of as a great highway by the world in general, it seems to be still a favourite route for tramps. A gentle stream, or rather an intermittent trickle, of such generally unwelcome tourists, finds a way along Watling Street, which is indeed the most direct route from here to Hyde Park Corner. Stretched out upon the grassy hedge-bank lie a couple of these poor wandering people, man and woman, both young, and not ill-looking, fast asleep. Passing footsteps disturb them not, nor the rustling whisper of the trees that wave above them. Lying at the gate of old Verulam, does the genius of the place whisper in their ears any strange dreams of the city that shares their slumbers?

Verlame I was; what boots it that I was,
Sith now I am but weeds and wasteful grass?

Leaving the wayfarers to their repose, we come to a lane that turns down the hill sharply towards Saint Albans, and a sign-

post directs us to Saint Michael's, which is another station in the pilgrimage. And here we come upon a hamlet, with a green and a smithy, and some stones cropping out that look like the foundations of old buildings. The Church of St. Michael's is a little way up the hill again. There rises its venerable tower, grey and pale with age, and a wicket gate leads into a churchyard, silent and soft with deep grass, and shadowed with fine old trees. Still deeper seems the hush in the shade of the ancient walls, that are yet but young in comparison with the buried foundations of old Verulam. For now we know that we are within the very enceinte of the city, whose buildings stood proudly around :

High towers, fair temples, goodly theatres,
Strong walls, rich porches, princely palaces,
Large streets, brave houses, sacred sepulchres.

And here we have only the sacred sepulchres, where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, reposing among the household gods of a vanished people.

The door of the church swings open noiselessly, and there appears a figure in habit ecclesiastic, all in harmony with the scene, who is locking the door behind him, when he sees the approach of strangers, and courteously offers to be their guide to the interior of his church. There is the narrow Norman nave, with the solid, simple rounded arches of the period ; and our guide points out how, above the pier-arches, have been discovered and brought to light ancient arches framed in Roman tiles, which must have been the clerestory of an earlier Saxon church of still narrower limits.

Then there is the chancel, where the "dim religious light" softly shines upon the marble monument of Francis Bacon, whose body reposes in the vault beneath. There in an arched recess sits the great Lord Keeper in his elbow-chair, with quilted hat, with ruff and silken doublet, his head thrown back in an attitude of meditative repose. It is a fine work, and was placed there by Sir Thomas Meautys, his "friend and servant," who eventually came to be the possessor of the family estate of Gorhambury, he having married Lord Bacon's niece. She, however, survived her husband and married Sir Harbottle Grimston, and his descendants have inherited the estate and the title of Earl of Verulam. And the vault that contains Lord Bacon's remains is still the burial-place of the Lords Verulam.

But time presses, and we must leave this charming ancient church ; and in the quiet churchyard, overshadowed by fine old limes, the talk falls upon ancient Verulam, whose theatre stood adjacent, while perhaps the site of this very church was occupied by a temple to one of the gods or goddesses of the classic mythology. But

They all are gone, and all with them is gone, and we require some ocular evidence that shall enable us to realise the existence and position of the old city. There are fragments and foundations in the Vicarage garden ; but the last upstanding monument of old Verulam is to be found in the city walls, and the Vicar kindly points out the way to reach the most connected fragments. Follow the narrow path that winds among the graves, it joins a field-path, that leads across a couple of arable fields, now green with upstanding corn.

Across the second field runs a well-defined ridge, whose sharp outline plough and harrow have not yet quite obliterated ; and there to the left, rising like a crag out of the centre of a field, is a massive fragment of the Roman wall. But we have been told to follow the path that crosses ours, and leads through a copse upon the slope of the hill to the right. And that copse is bounded by a long stretch of the old wall, its bounding courses of flat tiles, and grouting harder than the hardest rock, bearing witness to the hands that built it. The ravine below, filled with tall trees and underwood, is evidently the outward ditch of the vallum. So we climb to the top of the wall, among brambles and briars, and look down upon the sweep of field, and copse, and luxuriant plantations, where no human being is in sight, and yet there is a voice from the silent fields.

I was that cistle which the garland wore
Of Britaines pride. . . .

Down the hill and along the copse, still under the walls of Verulam come the tramper and his helpmate, refreshed from their noontide repose, and hurrying along for shelter. Great cloud masses are gathering overhead, and rain-drops whizzing among the leaves, like stones from a sling ; all is dark and gloomy, and yet glorious with diffused light breaking over the great minster on the hill, on the great gateway that rises from the lowly roofs around. The little river winds at the foot of the hill, among flat and marshy meadows where cattle are feeding, red and white cattle, sleek and milky mothers of the

herd; and these "marshes ever green" are the remains of the lake that once was spread beneath the walls of old Verulam. And the causeway by which we cross the marsh, and which leads to a bridge over the river, is probably the same which once confined the waters of the lake, and which was cut through by Abbot Elfric in the days of the old Saxon Kings, when he set the mill at work which still stands there just below the bridge, and the clack of whose wheel has been heard for all these centuries.

It is the same causeway, too, which was crossed by Saint Alban, long before, on his way to the place of execution, the hill upon which the Abbey Church now stands. And the lake above, where the cows are now grazing, was once a great resort of pleasure-loving Saxon monarchs, with gay dames, and beautiful young princesses, who paddled about on the lake in their silken-sailed shallops, their songs and gay laughter penetrating to the gloomy choir, where the monks were singing their penitential psalms.

A Saxon palace stood at the other end of the lake near Saint Michael's Bridge, and the name of Kingsbury still is attached to the quarter in evidence of its former state. But, when the waters were drained, there were no more gay frolics about the place, although Kingsbury remained a royal seat till the days of King Stephen, when the Abbot of the period persuaded the King to pull down the last remains of it—a strong tower, whose irregular garrison made themselves obnoxious to the monks.

Well, the Abbey mill is still there, as to which there were fierce disputes between the townspeople and the monks; the former rebelling against the obligation of fulling their coarse cloth and grinding their corn at the Abbey mill, disputes which led to open war between town and gown. It is a silk mill now, and through the open windows we can see the bobbins all in a row; but it is a nice, quiet, old-fashioned-looking mill, such a one as Miss Edgeworth might have brought Harry and Lucy to visit, in the days when a steam-engine was a thing to wonder at. There is a little tavern, too, close by, The Fighting Cocks, which suggests that likely enough here was an alehouse in the days of the Abbey, and that sly old monks, and perhaps young ones, would make an excuse to "go and see the miller" on hot summer afternoons.

The way is now clear before us to the Abbey gate, up a steep lane bordered by

modern cottages, and so beneath the high groined arch set in a building of all kinds of styles, that now leads to nowhere in particular, but that once was the jealously guarded portal of the Abbey precincts. And this brings us to the west front of the Cathedral, as it must now be called in honour of its Bishop, although everybody in the neighbourhood knows it as the "Abbey." Probably this west front was never very imposing—before the restoration of the church, indeed, it was half blocked up and almost ruinous, and the gloss of newness upon the present reproduction tends to chill the sentiment of the place. It is the vast bulk of the church that impresses you, the far-spreading line of roofs, the massive tower, and joined with this the aspect of the materials of which it is built. You cease to wonder what has become of Roman Verulamium. Here it is, built up into an enormous Christian temple. The angles of the great tower are composed entirely of those strong but narrow Roman tiles, which were employed as binding courses for the city walls, and innumerable fragments of every kind of material are used in the construction. It is the same with the enormous nave and the massive transepts; and the countless courses of tiles and bricks, and their varied hues, give a surface and colour to the whole structure which is strangely bewildering and unexpected. Joined to this is the impression that we have fallen upon some mediæval scene, for the Abbey seems actually in the course of building—huge cranes are at work, huge stones swing in mid-air, there is the click of many chisels, the ring of hammer and trowel, and the echo of many voices, about the old walls.

This is on the north side, where the whole transept is in course of vigorous restoration. Round the east end it is quiet enough; although we catch a glimpse of the cheerful High Street and the traffic that is going on, while occasional foot passengers take short cuts through the Abbey precincts. On the south side, where one might expect to find something left of the conventual buildings, there is no trace of such things, neither Abbot's house, refectory, nor anything of the kind; only the mouldings of decorated arches on the outer wall of the church, suggest the arcaded cloisters of other days.

The public entrance to the Abbey is far to the eastward, behind the high altar, indeed, and the famous new reredos now in course of construction. Saints and angels

block the way; there are huge coffers of wood piled up, containing stone-work and statuary. Here we are in the Middle Ages again as a band of workmen, in paper caps, cluster about the effigy of a patriarch, gently edge him this way and that, and finally, with trembling knees, carry him off bodily to take his place in the great screen. Only in place of the shaven face of the monk and his black skullcap, we have a business-like clerk of the works in an embroidered fez. "Those women again!" he exclaims in despair, for the daughters of Eve, he ungallantly says, are always poking their noses in where they have no business; not that their noses would matter if they would only keep their feet out; and that tessellated pavement is not half dry yet!

But now for a quiet walk round the venerable pile. And first to the south transept of massive Norman design, noticeable for the curious Saxon balusters which support the triforium arches, and for some beautiful arcading on the southern wall. This leads to the nave, bare and cold in appearance, but impressive from its length and solidity. Only some half-dozen bays on the north side retain the stern round arches and massive piers of the original construction. The original Norman church, whose details have changed character under the hands of succeeding centuries, we owe, it is said, to Paul of Caen, who, with the model of the Conqueror's noble church of Saint Stephen in his mind, began this church on a still more extended scale. But to an uninstructed eye these rude arches and enormous clumsy piers, almost grotesque in their strength, seem to belong to even an earlier period.

At present the vista is closed by the altar screen of what is practically the parish church of Saint Alban; but no doubt the chancel and new reredos will eventually be brought into view. The flat panelled ceiling, adorned with arms and emblazonments, is interesting in its way, and harmonises excellently well with the original Norman arches. To the eastward of the chancel we come to one of the most interesting parts of the church—the presbytery, which encloses the original shrine of Saint Alban, now recovered from its many hiding-places, pieced together, and complete enough to show its general appearance. Here, too, is the charming Watch gallery, in carved oak—the most perfect thing of its kind—in whose upper niches there was always a vigilant brother on the watch, to protect that noble

shrine, encrusted with gold and precious stones, the gifts of monarchs and great princes, and the still more precious bones in the reliquary within, on which hung the fame and fortunes of the Abbey.

There are certain unkind allusions in Shakespeare's Henry the Sixth to the miracles worked at Saint Alban's shrine; and good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester is represented as something of a sceptic in the matter. But the good Duke was a firm friend to Saint Alban, and was continually the guest of its noble hospitality; and his splendid tomb—within sight of the famous shrine—argues the respect of its occupant for its hallowed associations. By the side of the tomb is a wooden trap-door, with a rusty iron ring, giving access to the royal vault; and the bones of Duke Humphrey were, in the last century, an attractive show, and very profitable to the sexton. But the source of profit dried up—the pickle, that is, in which the royal corpse was preserved—the bones turned to dust, and the Duke is left to his repose, along with the remains of various families of local renown, who found a resting-place in the extensive vault. In the same way, the tombs of the Abbots are shared by many later inmates—jovial squires and buxom dames, and children withered in the bud, lying alongside of those mitred ecclesiastics. In this way the sumptuous shrine of Abbot Ramryge is especially noticeable, some one having, in the seventeenth century, added a fine carved oaken door, with a Latin inscription, and appropriated the monumental honours of the proud prelate.

Many curious shrines, too, and memorials of former days have been discovered in the process of restoration. King Offa shines over a side arch in glowing colours—Offa who made the dyke between England and Wales, and who made amends for cruel deeds by founding this great Abbey. Then there is the tomb of the hermits, Segur and another; the former known as the hermit of Northawe, of whom the story is told that, finding his meditations interrupted by nightingales in the vicinity of his cell, he entreated that they might be removed; since which, no birds of that sweetly disturbing kind have been found within a mile of the spot.

Of the Barons and Knights, who fell in the great battles of the Wars of the Roses, no memorials remain. They were mostly buried—the great ones among them, Somerset, Stafford, Northumberland, John Lord Clifford and many noble Knights—

in what was then the chapel of the Virgin, now an ante-chapel to the later Lady Chapel at the extreme eastern end of the church, an ante-chapel where stood, and now once more stands, the shrine of Amphibolus, the Christian priest who suffered martyrdom in company with Saint Alban. The later Lady Chapel was utilised for several centuries as a grammar school, and a public pathway crossed the burial-place of the mighty men of old; but all is now restored to sacredness.

Coming out of the quiet, shaded interior into the cheerful light of day we take a last look at that wonderful tower that now, against the dark bank of rain clouds, seems to glow with a kind of inner light. Jack-daws scream and flutter, and bells toll solemnly from out of the round-arched windows, and so it has been for centuries, with little change except from day to night, from summer to winter, from rain to shine.

Beyond the Cathedral precincts we find a brisk and pleasant street, with old-fashioned hotels, and big stabling yards running out behind, that recall the days of the great North Road, when coaches and post-chaises were dashing up and down. The street comes uphill, of course halts for a while on the level top, and then goes down again, and there are other cross streets which do the same, while an open market-place crowns the crest of the hill and leads up along the ridge northwards to Saint Peter's, the third of the churches founded by the Saxon Abbot crosswise about his central fane.

Here about Saint Peter's were fought the two battles of Saint Albans in the Wars of the Roses. In the first, the slaughter was the greatest. The streets were encumbered with the dead, and according to tradition the archways of the old clock-tower were piled high with dead and dying. The great men, we have seen, were buried in the Abbey; and Saint Peter's churchyard is full of the bones of the undistinguished crowd who fought and fell that day, shouting their war-cries of "A Warwick! A Somerset!" The second battle was less bloody, for the Yorkists were seized with a sudden panic and hurried off pell-mell. But the town was cruelly treated, and delivered over to plunder by the vindictive Queen Margaret.

Down the flank of the hill to the eastward, runs Holywell Street, which leads to the Midland Station, but whose name recalls the holy well that first gushed forth, it is said, at the command of Saint Alban,

in pity for the thirsty multitude who had come to see him die. It was by this way and through these enclosures and gardens that Warwick led his men and took the Lancastrians in flank, who were engaged with the Duke of York in front, and thus cut off the flower of their army and won the first great battle of Saint Albans.

As the train steams slowly out of the station towards London, we catch sight of some ruined walls standing in a green field at the foot of the hill, and the new road laid out for building close by bears the name of Priory Road. These walls belong to the old Nunnery of Sopwell, or at all events to the mansion into which it was converted after the Reformation. Sopwell recalls its former Prioress, the Lady Julia Berners, whose treatise on hawking, hunting, fishing, and coat armour, reprinted in recent days, was originally printed at the press within the precincts of Saint Albans Abbey, where also in 1480 was printed the "Rhetorica Nova" of that year.

And now we lose sight of Saint Albans tower amid woods and fields, grateful for the spell it has cast upon us, and making pious vows to pay a second pilgrimage to this noble shrine.

SOME REMINISCENCES OF LISZT.

It was in one of the musical afternoon gatherings of the Fräulein Stake, in Weimar, that I first saw, face to face, the great musician and greatest pianist of the century, distinguished even in his lifetime with a fame that had something of the legendary and marvellous—Franz Liszt.

The rooms of the two sisters were filled with all kinds of memorials and relics of celebrated men and women. One met here, on these afternoons, all the musical talent of Weimar. The artists resident in the town gladly lent their services to these kind hostesses, and were generally reinforced by passing visitors to that historic nursery of the arts. Some sang, some recited, some played—violin, 'cello, piano, or flute—singly or in concert. But the great attractive element, the central inspiration of the whole, was the presence of Franz Liszt. Formerly an intimate friend of the father of the house—the well-known author, Adolf Stake—Liszt seldom failed to spend an hour or two at the daughters' gatherings.

I had never seen him before, but I recognised him at once. He was sitting in the middle of the room, in a large old-fashioned arm-chair, surrounded by a circle of admirers, old and young, listening with an expression of patient endurance to the tones of a violoncello. There was no mistaking the white hair falling back from the broad forehead; the clear-cut, vigorous, expressive features; the large, fine mouth with its sarcastic but not unkindly smile; the piercing eyes that shone beneath the bushy eyebrows. It was still the same head which Robert Schumann long ago had called "the head of a Jupiter," though time had turned the hair to snow and furrowed the noble brow.

As I entered, a youth, scarcely more than a boy, was rendering the closing bars of a piece for the violoncello. Then he stood before the Jupiter, who warmly praised and encouraged him, and finally—as was his custom when he was heartily pleased with any effort—kissed him on the forehead. As the young man withdrew, friends and acquaintances surrounded him with congratulations; his eyes sparkled with happiness. That kiss was an assurance and foretaste of future success.

Two young pupils of Liszt next seated themselves at the two pianos, and played the master's Concerto in E flat major, with a taste and brilliancy which I can seldom hope to hear equalled. Alfred Reisenauer and Alexander Siloti were their names; both have since then established their reputation as musicians. When they had finished, they too went up to Liszt and received his well-earned praise. They were succeeded at the piano by a pale young man—"a composer," whispered a friend to me. He played a fugue of his own composition. When he was approaching the end, the Jupiter quietly rose from his chair and stole gently to the door, not to appear again. After the final chord the young man stood up, and looked round in embarrassment. He was quite alone; the guests were talking one to another, each turning uncomfortably away from his agitated glances of enquiry.

That silent, crushing condemnation of Liszt's seemed to me at the moment absolutely cruel; it was only later, when I had the privilege of attending his lessons, that I learnt how ready he was to recognise real merit; that nothing pleased him so much as to be able to praise, and that then he did not confine himself to mere commendation, but did all in his power to

help a promising pupil with advice and influence.

His lessons were given three times a week, from four to six in the afternoon, and were for all pupils in common. Hence it often happened that on the same afternoon one heard, perhaps, an accomplished musician whose education was receiving the final touches from Liszt's judicious criticism, and timid beginners fresh from the Conservatorium, whose performance showed all the restraint and caution of the schoolroom. Still even in these he showed an equal, and at times a greater interest, if he thought he perceived in the character of their playing real talent or improvement. In such cases he would sit by the pupil while he played, and show him with the kindest patience what he would wish altered. But it was a bad sign when during the playing of a piece he went to the other end of the room, or at the conclusion said simply "Good," and no more.

His method of instruction was one to which not every one could adapt himself, and amusing little incidents frequently occurred, especially when foreign students visited him. On one occasion a young American had played a good many false notes. "Das ist schmutzige Wäsche," was Liszt's comment. (That is dirty linen.) The young lady looked up at him with a smile, evidently taking this for a compliment, and went on with renewed vigour. "Ich bin keine Waschanstalt" (I do not keep a laundry), protested the master. She shook her head, he thought for a moment, and then indicating the imperfect passages cried "Laundry! laundry!" "Larndry," he pronounced it. Other expressions which he often used when the rendering of the piece was broken, jumbled, and confused, were "Rühreier!" (battered eggs), or "Das ist eine Leimsiederei!" (gluepot); and if a young player exhibited too much sentimentality or caution, he would exclaim "Jungferchenmusik!" (old-maid-music).

One of his lady pupils brought him once a polonaise and played it without rhythm or vigour, so softly and mincingly, that he really quite lost his temper. At the next lesson she brought one of his own rhapsodies, thinking this would please him better. "Oh, no!" said he, as he hastily gave her back the music. "Oh, no! rest a little longer on your spinach" (Ruhen Sie doch noch ein bisschen auf Ihren Spinat). The sudden substitution of "spinach" for the proverbial "laurels," set every one

laughing, and it was long before the victim ventured on another performance.

It often happened that young musicians asked leave to play before him, that he might give an opinion on their capacities. At times their impertinence and self-importance bordered on the incredible. One day a lady pianiste appeared, and played a piece in a manner on which he pronounced unfavourably. Not in the least intimidated, she began a second, but when she was half-way through this the master beckoned to her to leave the piano and make way for another student. She was so chagrined that, without taking leave, she hurried from the room and banged the door behind her. Liszt looked round a moment in astonishment, then took up her music and carried it out to her, saying very courteously: "You have forgotten this." On his return, he remarked, smiling: "She must come from K——. One always hears that the people there have the worst manners."

As Liszt never took any payment for his teaching, his pupils were eager to show him their gratitude by decorating his room with flowers, of which he was very fond. Roses were special favourites with him, and dark pansies and carnations. Whichever one turned one's eyes in his room, they fell on bouquets of these flowers; the scent was often almost overpowering.

How pleasantly and simply he received these small gifts! Once, when one of his youngest pupils, with a shy courtesy, presented a basket of flowers, in the midst of which lay a great golden pineapple, he stroked her hair, and, after admiring the arrangement of the flowers, said: "Yes, little one, but you must not bring me such expensive presents any more. I cannot allow that." At the next lesson he had not forgotten it. He told us he had found the pineapple as delicious as fruit could be, and repeated: "But you must not be so extravagant again."

At the same time he did not undervalue his teaching; and once, when a stranger awkwardly asked him how much he would have to pay for lessons, the reply was: "Ein Liszt ist unbezahlabar" ("A Liszt cannot be priced").

In the latter years of his life he avoided as much as possible playing in public concerts, and could only be persuaded to do so for some charitable object. Perhaps he felt that he could no longer count on his powers as in his younger days. It was touching to hear him when once, after he

had played, he said to his pupils, several of whom had followed him and now pressed around him with admiring congratulations: "Ah, children! do as I say, not as I do" (thut nach meinen Worten, und nicht nach meinen Werken).

When, however, in his lessons, he chanced to play a piece by way of example, neither hesitation nor exhaustion could be detected, and especially in the quieter passages his playing had still an indescribable charm which his very best pupils were never quite able to make their own. I remember his playing Schubert's "Serenade," the well-known "Leise fliehen meine Lieder." Melting and sweet, but always a little bit coquettish, it sounded more enticing than any rendering I have heard of it by the very best singers.

One of the ablest pupils of his later years—Professor Richard Burmeister of Philadelphia—told me once how Liszt had played him that passage from his "Don Juan Fantasie," in which he interweaves the duet between Zerlina and Don Juan, "Reich mir die Hand"

"It is quite impossible to reproduce the charm which the Meister put into it," he said. "He played it with such wonderful simplicity, one would have thought it was so easy that a child might do it; and just for that reason is it so unspeakably difficult."

All his pupils, young and old—and many a well-known professor with grey temples was to be seen in the summer holidays among them—called him "Meister," "theurer Meister," "lieber Meister," an address which well and naturally expressed the mixture of reverence and affection which he impressed upon all as no other man could.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XIV. LE COIN DU BOIS.

PAUL hardly needed the remembrance of his promise to Antoinette to keep him near her father all that day, for the Marquis seemed to take special care not to be separated from him.

The rest of the party scattered themselves about in their own fashion; and every bank and hedgerow seemed a confusion of dogs and guns.

As Paul joined in the fun he wondered that there were not a few accidents, but nothing happened; with all their apparent wildness these Frenchmen were very careful, and very good shots. There was a great deal of game, especially hares and red-legged partridges; the bags soon promised to be large; and as they worked their way farther away from La Tour Blanche, the country grew much wilder. The great woods which the sportsmen skirted, talking of wild boar and of hunts later in the season, broke into rocky, sandy tracts and scattered fir-trees; the yellow, light soil, the tufts of heather hardly dead, the blocks of crumbly stone, covered with red and green mosses, made Paul think of Surrey. The country, indeed, though much wilder, with its scent of pine-woods, and the wide, shining views from high points here and there, was not unlike some corners of his own Red Towers estate.

Paul, after the first, was rather more inclined to stare about him, and to enjoy his impressions of Anjou—the broom, though out of flower now, waving over his head—than to join in the constant popping and shouting that surrounded him on all sides.

It seemed that M. de Montmirail was aware of his friend's inclinations, for he presently said to him, "Come this way," and they climbed down a sandy bank into a lane, which seemed to lead, in a round-about way, back in the direction of the château. A little further on, this lane sank down between high banks and waving hedges, under the deep shade of which it was pleasant to walk, in the heat of that September afternoon.

"This is jolly," said Paul, looking up into the arching broom and nut-boughs; and Di and Jack trotted cheerfully behind—they, too, were not sorry to be out of the broiling sun.

Achille, as he tramped steadily along, began talking about the Vendéan war, the chief theatre of which, however, had been south of this country. Other wars, too: he pointed out, as they passed it, the traditional site of a battle with the English, very, very long ago. As to the Prussians, they had never come so far.

All the time, as he talked, he had that sort of look Paul had noticed in the morning; something bright and noble, yet solemn.

"Presently I will show you a place that may have been a little stronghold in some of those early wars," said the Mar-

quis. "But first let us sit down on these stones and rest a little. I am not so young as I was, my friend, and a great deal older than you."

"I suppose one may say that you are in the prime of life," said Paul, as they sat down on some large stones, laying their guns on the ground beside them.

"The prime of life," repeated Achille. "No, I think that was some time ago. Are you sure you would rather be here, rather than gaining credit for being the good shot you are—like Monsieur Vincent?"

"Much rather, thank you."

Achille looked at him from head to foot deliberately, with those kind blue eyes of his, and then said:

"It was in this month, how many years ago?—that you and I first met each other, and sat and talked together on that hill, looking down on Sir John Lefroy's park?"

"Five years ago," said Paul.

"Only that. One may live a life in five years, certainly. As to you, your life is not begun yet. No; all your little boyish affairs, and your travels, are nothing. You do not know what life means."

"I think I have some notion," said Paul.

"I think not. In those days you were uneasy; you did not understand yourself, or other people. You were not happy in what seemed to be your happiness—"

"At any rate, I knew what it was to be wretched," said Paul rather shortly, for these were strange allusions.

"Pardon—that you did not know. As a boy, if you like. Well, all that is lived through, and done with. If you ever meet the Lefroys, you may as well give them news of me. Perhaps Lady Lefroy will ask Antoinette to stay with her; but I have not written to them for long." He paused, looking thoughtfully on the ground for a minute; then he looked at Paul again. "Did you ever think that I had injured you, my dear friend?" he said.

For a moment Paul could not answer; he felt himself reddening absurdly, under the clear, strange scrutiny of those eyes.

"I believe I did, and that you thought so," said Achille.

"No, you did not. No," said Paul.

"If I ever thought so, I was unreasonable."

"It never quite appeared so to me, till within the last few weeks," said Achille simply. "However, I am satisfied that you should say that. At the time, perhaps,

I did not consider it enough—it, or anything else. Well, we pass through a piece of our life blindfold, and then somebody tears off the bandage—and then, after all, one remembers that seeing and believing are the same thing in one case, though not in another.”

It must be confessed that this sort of talk was becoming very painful to Paul; not that he could not now look back with very tolerable philosophy, and even a touch of thankfulness; but he was more and more impressed, every moment, with the great change in his companion from the Achille de Montmirail he remembered. That was the very simplest and most straightforward of mortals, loving, hating, believing, in a clear, single-minded sort of way, without any reflecting, or reasoning, or philosophising; capable of strong passions; perfectly open in thought and speech. About this new Achille there was something mysterious, with all his goodness; a hidden trouble moving and sighing uneasily, like a wild beast in a net. Among Paul's fancies about Achille afterwards, was one of a guardian angel leaning over him, a hand touching his lips, keeping him loving and loyal to the woman who had disappointed him, and shedding that curious, unearthly radiance which seemed to shine about his brow and eyes.

As they sat there talking, Paul was aware of the figure of a little girl, who came wandering along the lane, in a close cap and with a ragged frock down to her heels. As she came she was gathering wild flowers, of which she had already a bunch in her hand; and she stared with large black eyes at the Marquis and his friend.

“That child lives at the little farm I was talking of just now,” said M. de Montmirail. “Is your mother at home, petite?”

She shook her head, still staring, especially at Paul; and then she went on more quickly and disappeared round a corner, looking back now and then, or stopping to pull a flower out of the bank.

“Poor little thing, she never speaks,” said the Marquis. “Let us walk on, if you don't mind.”

They followed in the little girl's footsteps, turning off the lane, as she had done, on a wild stretch of barren ground, half marshy in places, with rushes growing tall, and then again a thick carpet of heather. On the further side it was sheltered by a small pine-wood, round which the path,

such as it was, went winding on. It was hardly to be traced at all across this wild little common. The child was not far in advance. When she saw them coming she lingered still more, walking near them, gazing at them, constantly stooping to gather something that attracted her; but the Marquis was talking to his friend and did not notice her any more. As they slowly crossed the common, he said to Paul:

“Do you know that you are the best friend I have?”

“I am glad you think so, and yet I ought not to be, for certainly I am a very useless one,” answered Paul.

“You are an honest man, and you like me, without any particular reason for it.”

Paul smiled.

“And, therefore, I am going to ask you a question, and I want a true answer to it. Now I need not tell you that my wife is—that she is the person I admire most on earth. It never can have been my wish to make her unhappy, and I certainly thought that she married me of her own free will. Do you think it was so?”

“Most certainly, I should say,” Paul answered.

“Well—and at that time I had never even heard of the existence of Vincent Percival. But now I am told that they were attached to each other when they were young. My dear friend—I have not forgotten—this calls up painful recollections for you; but do you think she would have married him, if I had not come forward then?”

Paul hesitated a moment.

“I know Vincent Percival always admired her,” he said; “but I do not think she had ever any intention of marrying him.”

“I am glad,” said the Marquis in a low voice. “It is only that they were cousins, then, and very intimate friends. I have not hindered the happiness of her life.”

“I think you may be pretty sure,” said Paul, “that if she had wished to marry Vincent she could, and would, have done so.”

“Ah, he may have thought himself injured—that is a tendency of his, perhaps. But I don't altogether like M. Vincent. He should not have talked about my wife to my friends. He did so, I assure you, and something of what he said was repeated to me. Don't tell any one this, Romaine. It has made me wish that he would go away; but of course I could say

nothing to him or Celia. She would have been very much hurt, and it was a subject on which I could not speak to him."

"Perhaps he will go back with Mrs. Percival," said Paul. "It is hard, certainly, that you should have him hanging about here when you don't like him."

"I don't know—I may be unreasonable and selfish," said the Marquis, and then he added very low: "It is hard for a woman to live her life away from her native country."

"Not so hard, when she has everything she can possibly wish for," said Paul.

"If you were to marry a foreigner, mon cher, you would find that I am right," said Achille; and then for a few minutes they walked on without speaking.

They turned the corner of the clump of firs, and walked along a sort of lane, more like a ditch or a watercourse, with the high sandy bank of the wood on one side, and on the other a green bank several feet high, sloping up to a hedge, beyond which was a field which seemed to grow, more than anything else, a splendid crop of autumn crocuses. The long trailing briars of the hedge were laden with blackberries, or red hips of wild roses; above waved the long green feathers of broom, with here and there a nut-tree, and a gorse-bush, still in yellow blossom.

All the place was quite still, not a breath stirring; the only sounds were the two men's footsteps, and the eager rustling of the dogs along the hedge. A dozen yards further, the lane seemed to end in a green pond, scattered with yellow leaves; but the path skirted this, on a narrow stone causeway under the hedge, which seemed to suggest that human dwellings were not far away; and, indeed, through the gaps in the hedge, some dark old roofs and walls were visible across the field.

"That is the old farm I told you of, Coin du Bois," said the Marquis. "If you look at its low arches, and loopholes, and the thickness of the walls, you will agree with me that it has seen fighting. Some out-of-the-way corners like this may have more startling stories to tell than the Châteaux and Abbayes of Touraine."

"Yes, no doubt; but one has to make the stories for one's self," said Paul.

"Bien! a man with an imagination, like you!"

While his friend looked at him curiously, smiling, Achille stood still again, looking on the ground, with a grave, puzzled air. Paul wondered if he was going to talk any

more of his family history, and thought it would be better not. So he said: "We seem to have left all the shooting a long way behind."

"No; we shall have some ourselves directly. This is a favourite corner of mine; there are always birds here. But I was thinking of something else just then—of the chief anxiety that I have. Yes, indeed, the chief one."

"It strikes me," said Paul, "you would enjoy your sport more if you left your anxieties at home."

Even as he said this, something reproached him; the words sounded harsh and rude, though he was far enough from meaning them to be so. Afterwards he remembered them with real pain and shame; but he knew that Achille had not taken them unkindly. In fact, he hardly seemed to notice them at all.

"Ah, my dear young fellow, you have plenty of time," he said; and then he laid his hand on Paul's shoulder, looking him straight in the face.

"I wish you were a Catholic and a Frenchman," he said. "I should not then hesitate to propose to you a marriage with my daughter."

Paul answered very quietly, returning the steady look that was fixed upon him: "You would do me too much honour, my dear Marquis. But with those difficulties—must it be out of the question for ever?"

"Antoinette likes you—she told me so—et moi, my little Paul, I love you as if you were my son already," said Achille in his old simple way, his own kind, bright smile lighting up his face.

At that instant there was a commotion in the field beyond the hedge, and the little ragged girl, who was still lingering a few yards in advance, watching men and guns and dogs with what seemed a painful curiosity, threw up her arms and screamed. A covey had risen, with a great whirr and flutter, just under Di's nose on the other side of the hedge.

Achille, with his gun in his hand, began instantly to clamber up the bank. Something hurried and careless in his manner of doing so, made Paul exclaim: "Take care," as he was about to follow him through the same gap in the bushes. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the gun was caught by some strong trailing briars, and at the same moment the Marquis slipped and lost his footing on the dry grass near the top of the bank. He could not at once recover himself,

catching at the bushes with one hand, and pulling his gun with the other. Paul, standing horrified in the lane, saw it all without power to save him. The loud report, the smoke that followed it, kept him for a moment ignorant of what had happened; but then came a great crashing of the bushes, and Achille, now without any effort to save himself, fell and rolled down the bank to the green margin of the lane. There he lay at Paul's feet, unconscious and bleeding, while Di, howling piteously, came scrambling through the hedge. She had been close to her master when the gun went off, and the shots had grazed her neck, but it did not seem to be for herself that she lifted up her head and cried.

It appeared to Paul that nearly the whole charge of the gun had entered Achille's side and shoulder, and in trying as well as he could to stop the bleeding, he felt hopeless from the first, and knew that his friend was fatally hurt. He was in terrible perplexity what to do. He could not leave him to fetch help. The little ragged girl, the only living creature about the place, had disappeared; and when, having bound up the wounds as well as he could with handkerchiefs, and supported Achille, who was unconscious, against the bank, he ran back to the common and shouted at the top of his voice, besides firing off his own gun several times in quick succession, nothing answered him but a mocking echo from some high ground opposite. When he came back he saw that Di too had disappeared, though the other dog was lying dismally in the lane. He thought the poor faithful old dog had probably slunk away to die, thinking, perhaps, that she was the cause of her master's accident. He hurried on to the pond, filled his hat with water, and coming back to Achille, supported him once more in his arms, and bathed his face and head. His eyes were closed, and the breath came in long gasps. As the terrible minutes passed on, no help coming, no human creature passing that way, an utter silence brooding over the woods and lanes of that lonely country, not even a distant shot to mark where their former companions were, Paul's thoughts flew back to Colonel Ward's death-bed, how peaceful it was, and how Di had watched him to the last. Little he thought, dear old man, what would be the after history of his favourite, when he wished to give her to Celia!

Those past scenes came up vividly before

Paul's mind, as he knelt there supporting his dying friend; there was nothing else that could be done for him. Those old stories seemed now like reality, and the present experience like a strange and awful dream. Paul wondered vaguely how long it would last. He felt sure that soon this painful panting, the only sign of life, must cease. He knew enough of surgery to be sure that no doctor could do any good; and this conviction became firmer as the gray shades of death began to gather on his friend's face. Not to move him any more; to make death as easy to him as possible; that, Paul felt, was the only thing he could do. And then, as the shadows lengthened in the lane, and the afternoon wore away, surely some of the people who belonged to that little farm must be coming home from work, or to attend to the animals, if there were any; and then he would get help, and carry his friend into the house, and send or take this news to La Tour Blanche.

How would they receive it? What would Celia feel? That was a question that could not be answered.

It was easier to think of Antoinette—poor, lonely child—the person she loved best in all the world taken from her in this terrible, sudden way, and she herself left in the care of her stepmother. No wonder she was anxious. Paul knew it must have been some presentiment that made her beg him to stay near her father all day; and much good he had done by obeying her!

Then, as if in answer to his thoughts, there came a sudden change in the face that he was watching. Achille opened his eyes, still so blue and kind, though the shadow of death lay upon them, and smiled with a sort of surprise, looking up towards Paul.

"Antoinette!" he said in a whisper.

Then he moved, stretching himself out a little, and whether that movement did any mischief Paul could not know; but suddenly, with a sort of convulsion, the painful breathing ceased, and his life was gone.

Paul felt what had happened, and yet hesitated a moment before he could believe it, the quiet smile on the face was so full of sweetness. However, after a few moments, he laid Achille gently down upon the bank, and rose to his feet, and stood looking at him. Men die every day, he was thinking, but few men like Achille de Montmirail.

It did not surprise him—nothing could—to see something white coming swiftly along in the shadow, over the narrow causeway by the pond; Antoinette, in her large pinafore, her hair, broken loose from its ribbons, flying wildly behind her. Paul strode forward to meet her, to save her from coming on that awful sight unprepared. He did meet her, and caught her two hands in his.

The girl looked at him, trembling from head to foot.

"Good Heaven! what brought you here?" said Paul. "Can you be brave? It was an accident; he was climbing through the hedge. I have been with him to the end, but I could get no help, I could make no one hear."

"But it is not too late now," said Antoinette. "You might fetch the doctor, and M. le Curé. I will stay with him while you go."

"No, dear mademoiselle, wait a moment—"

"I see," she said. "Don't be afraid for me. I am quite brave. Di came and told me that he wanted me."

Paul could say no more.

She walked quietly forward, making the sign of the cross, to where her father lay. The lights and shadows were deepening, and for years afterwards Paul could not be out on a golden September afternoon without that scene before his eyes.

She sat down under the bank, made Paul lay the dead man's head in her lap, stooped forward and gave him one little kiss on the forehead, then covered his face with her handkerchief.

"Now go," she said. "Find some help; go all the way home, if you must. I will take care of him till you come back."

When Paul left her, which seemed to him at first hardly possible, he ran along by the pond, and almost immediately saw the two stone gate-posts leading into the yard of the little, old farm, wild, untidy, heaped with fodder and ling. Low round arches and heavy walls, marks of old defences, had no interest for him now; but he went to the house-door, which looked very much like the entrance to a cow-house, and there, in the full yellow glory of sunlight, in front of a great wide chimney, he found the strange little girl with her wild flowers, standing and staring at him. He spoke to her very gently, and asked if there were any men about the place; probably she

did not understand a word, but she only shook her head, and after one or two attempts he hurried off, and made his way with some difficulty, with a great deal of scrambling and guess-work, across the tract of wild and wooded country that lay between the old farm and the château. His thoughts were so utterly occupied with Antoinette all the time, anxiety for her, and haste to get back to her, that he hardly knew how, or where, or to whom he told the terrible news; he only had a vision of Celia, white as marble, just getting out of a carriage at the terrace steps.

When the people from the château, Paul at their head, reached the place where the Marquis lay, they found Antoinette sitting quite still as he had left her, waiting patiently. She had not been crying. "How could I cry?" she said afterwards; "it would have disturbed him." She was not quite alone; on the other side of the lane sat Jack, the Clumber, and the little ragged girl from the Coin du Bois, still grasping her bunch of flowers. A few yards lower down, Paul discovered Di in a hollow of the bank, but she was dead, perhaps from grief at having returned too late. He came back the next day, and buried her in the little spinney above. There Colonel Ward's old favourite sleeps, far enough away from her first and dearest master, but with the pine music sounding over her head, just as if she had found her last rest in his garden in Surrey.

While Paul was taking Antoinette towards the carriage, which had been sent as far as possible to meet them through the lanes, the strange child followed them a little way, and then suddenly ran up and thrust her fading flowers into Antoinette's hand, with a muttered something like "Adieu!" Then Antoinette's tears came, and blinded her, so that Paul had to lead her gently by the hand through those rough ways.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

ONE way or another, affairs seemed very much at sixes and sevens at the Castle just then.

For one thing, Sir Peter's illness upset all their autumn plans—a trip to Biarritz for Lady Judith and Madge, Lance's grouse shooting on the Scotch moors prior to a fortnight's fishing in Norway. For another, the spirit of Queen Mab herself seemed abroad in the house, and every one appeared to be doing just exactly the particular thing that was to be least expected of them.

Madge, embroidery in hand, sat in her rocking-chair under the "dark-green layers of shade" of the old cedar on the lawn, watching a whole pageant of fantastic white clouds fleeting across a deep-blue sky before a strong current.

"That's us to the life just now," she said to herself emphatically, though ungrammatically. "There's a mermaid—look at her fish-tail!—riding on a tiger! There's a big white cat with a Gainsborough hat on his head. Here I come! There's a huge four-wheeled triumphal-car with nothing but a stupid little swan to draw it. No, that isn't me either. A swan is a very beautiful creature, also I'm not trying to drag anything along at the present moment; no, I only wish I could make one thing stand still—for ever. Here's a great snow mountain just toppling over, and there's a poor little bat stretching out its wings to protect something. What is it? A teacup? a pigeon's egg on

end? That's me to the life—the bat, that is; ugly enough and trying to do impossibilities with its stupid little wings!"

Madge's train of thought had been set going by two little incidents of that day's occurrence, in which the chief actors had conducted themselves as uncharacteristically as could well be imagined.

Incident number one had been a little speech of Lance's, made a propos of nothing at all, so far as she could see.

"Madge," he had said, with a sudden energy which set her thoughts ranging upon wild possibilities, "what an unlucky beggar I am never to have had a profession given to me! Now, supposing I were ever to offend Uncle Peter in any way, and he were to cut me off with a shilling, how on earth could I get my bread and butter? I should have to turn either groom or gamekeeper! 'Pon my life I don't think I'm fit for anything else."

Incident number two had occurred during the reading of Sir Peter's correspondence, to which Madge devoted punctiliously two hours every morning. It cost her a huge effort to do this, and she never broke a seal now without a chill, quaking as to the news that seal might secure. Mr. Stubbs, as a rule, sat a model of respectful attention during the reading of those letters. He never uttered a syllable unless addressed, when his words in reply would be discreet and few. On this particular morning, however, Madge had no sooner taken her place in Sir Peter's chair than he began to talk, and the subject of his talk was himself and his family.

"I have had a letter this morning, Mrs. Cohen," he began, "which has greatly distressed me."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Madge, round-

eyed with a sudden terror lest the subject of the Australian letter might be circulating from other quarters.

"I don't think I ever mentioned the fact to you that I have a son — Roger by name."

Madge drew a long breath of relief; her slight bow, however, in acknowledgment of the communication, expressed but the faintest interest in Roger.

Mr. Stubbs, however, felt sufficiently encouraged to proceed.

"This son, I grieve to say, has been one continual source of anxiety to me. He has had loss upon loss in his profession—that of a ship and insurance broker—and is now threatened with bankruptcy by his creditors unless I can get together a certain amount to meet his present difficulties."

Madge was not disposed to invite further confidences.

"Will a cheque for twenty pounds be of any use to you?" she asked, by way of cutting the matter short.

"It would be of use, and I should be grateful for it, Mrs. Cohen," he replied, drooping his eyelids till the eyes beneath showed not as orbs but as slits. "But I hope you won't mind my saying that a cheque for fifty pounds would be of much greater use, as the sum we have to get together is rather a large one."

If the armed warrior in bronze, who surmounted the clock on the mantelpiece, had suddenly descended from his pedestal and asked her to valse with him, Madge could not have felt more surprised than she did at this unexpected request. It was not made in Mr. Stubbs's usually obsequious fashion, but rather stated bluntly, as a matter of fact that must be patent to all.

She was always inclined to be free-handed with the Cohen gold, but she did not choose to have it demanded of her.

"I will think over your request," she said coldly, as she went back to her letter-reading.

And she did think over his request, as also over Lance's startling tirade on his incapacity for earning his bread and butter; but the only results to her thinking were the fantastic forms she evolved from the clouds—a sort of picture-poem of life at the Castle at the moment.

From where she sat beneath the cedar she could catch a glimpse between the shining laurel leaves of an opaque patch of grey skirt, which at that distance represented Miss Shore at her easel.

That grey skirt was, as it were, a stum-

bling-block to the wheels of her thoughts every time it caught her eye—just, too, when she wanted those thoughts to be working at their hardest and smoothest. So she turned her chair slantwise, shutting it out from her view.

It was too hot to finger her embroidery; her silks, a tangle of soft colours, slipped to her feet on the grass. A faint south wind blowing over the orchard, brought with it the scent of ripening fruits. Overhead, the great, golden, brooding clouds hung low.

Madge, with half-shut eyes, rocked herself backwards and forwards; now the tangled colours of the silks caught her eye, anon the golden, brooding clouds. Now the coloured silks were up in the sky, a many-tinted rainbow; now the full-breasted clouds were at her feet, blotting out the green earth, and transforming the whole garden-picture into a cloud-fresco in carnations and azure, that Murillo might have painted as a background to his ascending Virgin.

Those clouds and the rocking-chair together sent her into dreamland. Her eyes, full of the sky, drooped.

She opened them, as she thought, in a beautiful garden; a garden scarcely to be realised out of fairy-fable, for the light poured down from the sky on it like some great falling rainbow, transfiguring trees, flowers, and green sward, into all sorts of marvellous hues. Lance stood beside her.

"Is this Eden?" in her dream she thought she said to him. But even as she asked the question a dense, grey cloud settled down upon the fairy garden like a great fog, and all the beautiful colours died under it. It came, a misty bulk, between her and Lance, and she saw him no more. Only his voice, far away from out the cloud, came saying, "Madge, Madge, help me!"

Madge awoke with a great start. Yes, there was a voice at her elbow, not Lance's, however, but Mr. Stubbs's; and, instead of begging for her help, he was as usual making apologies for disturbing her.

"But old Donald, the grave-digger," he went on to say, "was here just now gossiping with the gardeners, and he gave me this, thinking it might belong to some one in the house, for there's no such outlandish name as the one marked on it known in the village."

As he finished speaking he held out to her view a lady's pocket-handkerchief. It was trimmed with lace, and had the name "Etelka," embroidered in one corner.

Madge scrutinised the lace. It was unlike anything she had ever seen before—something of an old Greek pattern worked in Mechlin thread.

Mr. Stubbs's face said, "An I would I could!"

His lips said:

"I told Donald that to the best of my knowledge no one at the Castle possessed such a name."

"Where did Donald find it?" queried Madge.

"He said under the yews in the churchyard."

"Leave it with me, I'll try to find its owner," said Madge, always inclined to abridge intercourse with Mr. Stubbs as much as possible.

He bowed and withdrew.

Madge sat staring at the handkerchief with the outlandish name in the corner.

"There's only one person here likely to own to that name," she thought. "And it suits her infinitely better than the plain English name she sees fit to mask under."

She looked towards the corner of the garden where Miss Shore had been seated at the easel. Now should she take the handkerchief to her at once, ask if it were hers, and what could be the object of her solitary rambles in the churchyard?

Miss Shore, however, together with her easel, had disappeared. Second thoughts assured Madge of the uselessness of such a course. A cold expressionless "No," without change of feature, would no doubt be the only result to the plainly-put question, "Is this yours?"

Better keep it awhile; find out a little more about it; ask Donald himself as to the exact "where" and "when" he had found it. She was not disposed to trust Mr. Stubbs implicitly in either small or great matters, and had no wish to show him that the handkerchief had any special interest for her.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cohen," said Mr. Stubbs's voice, at this very moment, "but may I ask if you have had time to think over my request of this morning?"

Madge's reply was a cold and repressive "I have not."

Mr. Stubbs again bowed, and withdrew.

He made half-a-dozen steps down the gravel path and came back again.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cohen," he said respectfully as before, "but perhaps you have forgotten that the Australian mail goes out to-morrow. If the letter

addressed to Sir Peter is of any importance, it might be as well to acknowledge it."

Madge had it in her heart to ask a string of questions, such as: "What is this letter to you? What do you know of its contents? How dare you keep thrusting yourself and your affairs upon my notice!"

She controlled herself with difficulty, saying merely:

"The letter requires no acknowledgment whatever."

CHAPTER XVII.

MADGE had a lonely dinner that night. A message was brought to her that Lady Judith had gone to bed with a bad headache, and that Lance, who had gone out driving in the afternoon, had sent back his dog-cart with the intimation that he should most likely dine with Lady Brabazon—their nearest neighbour—and walk home afterwards.

Madge as much as possible curtailed her solitary meal. It was not a particularly cheerful one, eaten in that big dining-hall, with the "eight-and-twenty Crichtetts looking down" on her.

After dinner she wandered out to her favourite twilight haunt—the terrace, with its grand double landscape of sky and mountain, valley and plain.

The after-glow lingered yet in sheen of mother-o'-pearl athwart a limpid stretch of tender green sky. A veil of night-blue mist was slowly spreading itself over the valley, adding a mystery and poetry to it which in garish sunlight it never knew. Madge, without much stretch of imagination, could have fancied it some land of enchantment sinking slowly—slowly into the earth whence it had been evoked by magician's wand.

Her thoughts, however, in their restless turmoil soon brought her from the poem of shining sky and shadowy valley back to commonplace, hard-featured prose. Lance was the key-note, the beginning, end, and middle of those tumultuous thoughts. The echo of the cry, "Madge, help me!" which she had heard in her dream, seemed to ring in her ears yet. Help him! Why, her heart was all one prayer to be allowed to do so. Years ago she had stood on one side—had thrust herself out of his path as it were—by marrying David Cohen, in order not to mar his future; now should she stand tamely by and see him blight that future with his own hands?

Here it was that Madge no longer

beheld the fading glories of the after-glow, nor the mysterious valley under its night-blue veil seeming to sink slowly into the heart of the earth again. Her eyes instead, for their own torment, conjured up a picture-gallery in which Lance's face and form in endless repetition did duty for a hundred. Now he was standing gazing with surprised admiration at a girl lifting a grey gossamer veil; anon he was seated facing that girl with an intense, eager interest shining out of his eyes. After these came all sorts of scenes in which his face, together with its admiration and interest, had a kindly sympathy and pity written upon it.

At this point Madge's ears became filled with other voices than those of the thrushes among the sycamores, chanting their requiem to the dying day. Lance's voice, in pitiful pleading for the forlorn stranger, rang in them instead.

And coming always as a refrain to these thoughts, persistent as the echo to the hammer on the anvil, was the bitter self-accusation that once, not so very long ago, Lance's fate had been in her hands, and she had had the privilege of making or marring it with a single word.

Here Madge's own society became too much for her. A short sharp walk she felt, before daylight closed in, would be the quickest way of putting an end to that hateful iteration in her ears of "Half your own doing, Madge Cohen, half your own doing."

The handkerchief with the foreign name on it afforded her a pretext for a ramble. Old Donald, the grave-digger, as a rule spent his summer evenings in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, trimming graves or sweeping paths. She would like to put to him direct a question or two as to the finding of this handkerchief. Old Donald had keen eyes and ears; perhaps in addition to answering her questions, he might be able to give her some little information as to when and for what purpose Miss Shore haunted the old burying-place.

It was a walk of about half-an-hour that Madge proposed to herself. She made that half-hour twice its length with the fancies she crowded into it. Like the old Indian, who painted a vivid picture of the little man who stole his venison, together with the bob-tail dog, merely from seeing a foot-print in a dusty road, Madge constructed a whole life history for Miss Shore out of the name embroidered on the pocket-handkerchief, which had not yet been identified as hers.

St. Cuthbert's church was built on a rocky headland about a mile and a half distant from the Castle. It commanded on its western side a magnificent view of the rolling Irish sea, whose rough breezes had battered its grey walls for close upon two hundred winters. On its eastern side it was reached by a steep winding road direct from the valley. The larches, which drooped stately branches here and there over the stony path, had gone to a dusky olive as Madge wound her way upwards. At the end of the road the low, grey stone wall of the church showed bleak and bare from out the deeper grey of shadowy waving grass; above it, the stone tower rose a dark square against the yellow zone which belted the horizon.

The place of tombs looked weird and desolate as Madge entered it. The sea-wind blew over it, ruffling the long grasses on one or two forgotten graves, and setting a group of aspens that over-shadowed the lych-gate whispering and shivering. There was not a sign of old Donald anywhere. Madge wandered in vain down the by-walk which skirted the low grey wall. An owl flew from out the tower with a harsh cry, an old yew—black against a white tombstone—creaked in the sea-breeze. Other sound there was none.

Madge felt that she had had her walk for nothing. Twilight was falling rapidly now; the gold had died out of the yellow zone which belted the horizon; a white ocean-mist—itsself a great silver sea—came surging up behind the church-tower. Overhead here and there in the limpid grey of the sky, a star, like a tiny diamond spark, would catch the eye, twinkle—vanish—shine out again.

Madge turned her face towards the lych-gate, thinking the sooner she got back to the house now the better. She had walked a little of the bitterness out of her thoughts, but somehow—she could not say exactly how—the sadness in them seemed to have deepened. She felt tired—chilled by the mist and the weird loneliness of the place.

"Good times, bad times, all times pass over," she could fancy those voiceless dead were preaching to her from under their grassy mounds.

How still the graveyard seemed to have grown! She could hear the twilt twilt of the bats as they flitted in ghostly fashion round the belfry window. Even the light fall of her step on the gravel seemed to waken echoes from the other end of the long dim walk.

But were those the echoes of her own tread? Madge asked herself, pausing under the shadow of a tall monument, white against the grey of the sky.

The sound of voices which came nearer with the supposed echoes, answered her question in the negative.

Madge, prompted by impulse, rather than by any definite purpose, shrank behind the tall white stone as two long, dark shadows, falling athwart her path, heralded the approach of a man and woman. Their voices came to her clear and distinct through the stillness of the evening air. Madge's ears needed not to be told who were the owners of those voices.

"Lance and that girl in grey!" she said to herself. And after that the dead might have crawled from under their grassy mounds, and in their grave garments have preached their sermon to her, but she would not have heard one word of it.

Lance was evidently in as light-hearted a mood as usual. "We're early," he was saying as he came along. "'There's husbandry in heaven, their candles are'—not yet lighted. Last night we had better luck."

"Last night, last night!" repeated Madge, a great wave of jealous anger sweeping over her. "That was why then he did not come into the drawing-room last night! why he gave short, absent answers to my questions, and looked and walked like one in a dream."

For a moment the dim churchyard and ghostly white tombs grew misty to her. Her ears even refused to perform their work, and Miss Shore's answer was a blank to her.

Not so Lance's next sentence. His voice in nearer approach rang like a clarion in her ear. It was:

"I haven't forgotten a word of what you taught me last night. I know which are the benefic planets and which the malefic ones, and I know that all the malefic planets are setting and all the benefic ones are rising. And that means that those who have hitherto been unlucky will forthwith begin to have a real good time of it, and those who have been in luck before will be luckier than ever."

Miss Shore's voice in reply, by contrast with his light tones, sounded grave to absolute solemnity.

"Why do you laugh in the face of fate as you do? Evil stars are rising, not setting. You may be born to good luck—

I do not know—but others are born to ill-luck—to be evil, to do evil. It is no laughing matter."

There was one behind that tall tombstone, at any rate, who found it no laughing matter.

Lance's tones suddenly changed to an earnestness that sat strangely upon him.

"You are right," he replied, "there is a time to laugh, and a time to weep; and I'm confident if I knew one quarter of the ill-luck you've had to go through, I should feel far more inclined to weep than to laugh over it. But you won't give me the chance! You keep your lips sealed; you reject help; reject sympathy even."

He was standing still in the middle of the path now, facing his companion. Madge could have stretched out her hand and touched him as he stood.

The words themselves expressed naught beyond the kindest sympathy. Madge herself—any Sister of Charity—might have spoken them to any poor, forlorn outcast who came in their way. But they would not have sounded as they did on Lance's lips. He put another soul into them with his eager, heated, impassioned manner. That, not Madge, nor any woman living, could have so much as mimicked.

Miss Shore's pale face flushed into sudden animation under it. Her words came hurriedly, nervously, not with their usual cold, slow emphasis.

"You do not understand," she answered. "My luck is not a thing past and done with. My evil star has risen. In three weeks from to-night it will be at its highest—above the moon, above the star that might bring me good luck. If that day passes over my head in peace I will talk no more of fate, no more of ill-luck. I will look up at the stars and will laugh in their faces."

GEMS OF THE EASTERN SEAS.

To the north-east of the large island of Borneo, there is a chain of little islands running across and forming a link with the important group of the Philippines. This chain separates the Sulu Sea from the Celebes Sea, and is known as the Sulu Archipelago. At least it is so named on the maps; but to say that it is "known," is to use a larger expression than the case warrants. As a matter of fact, these islands are not known at all to the general body of English people, and it is because

of the ignorance, and because of the peculiar claims to interest which they really possess, that we are moved to prepare the present article. It has been suggested by the wonderfully interesting narrative of "The Cruise of the 'Marchesa,'" in which Dr. F. H. H. Guillemard tells many strange things of many unknown, or little known, lands which he visited, but none more attractive than this neglected group of islands, in the Eastern Seas.

Some two hundred miles or so to the north-westward of the Sulu Archipelago, in an isolated position in the Sulu Sea, is the island of Cagayan Sulu, which, although nominally under the authority of the Sultan of Sulu, is practically independent. Admiral Keppel explored it along with Rajah Brooke of Sarawak; but since then it is probable that no European visited its shores until Dr. Guillemard landed there in 1883. And yet it is the most captivating in appearance of all the beautiful islands of these beautiful seas. One traveller has called it a "true gem of the ocean," and Dr. Guillemard says that, "as the boat glided over the coral-gardens, bright with vividly-coloured fish, and landed me, gun and collecting-box in hand, on the snowy sand, I felt as if I could cast off civilisation and European clothes alike, and cultivate my mealie patch and grove of cocoa-nuts with the natives for the remainder of my natural life."

The island of Cagayan Sulu is about five miles in length by four in width, is purely volcanic and highly fertile. The land is low and undulating, rising nowhere to a greater elevation than eleven hundred feet, and yet the remains of several extinct volcanoes are still to be seen, marked with lumps of slag and scoræ.

The natives live in the little valleys and along the sea-shore, where their mat-shed houses, built on piles in Papuan fashion, are placed amid delightful groves of banana, cocoa-nut, and other fruit-bearing trees. They do not cultivate much—why should they, when nature is so lavish in her bounties?—and they are content with growing yam, and sweet potatoe, and tapioca. Mostly they live on fish, with which the smooth waters within the reef which encircles the island abound.

But the great physical distinction and remarkable feature of beauty in Cagayan Sulu is the unique chain of crater-lakes which it possesses. Admiral Keppel discovered, and has described, one of these;

but Dr. Guillemard found others, forming a chain of three. The first is entered by a narrow passage through the barrier reef, and is, therefore, a sea-lake. In point of fact, it is the crater of an extinct volcano, into which the sea has made its way.

"The little lake and its surroundings," says Dr. Guillemard, "were fairy-like in their beauty, but so peculiar in character and so rich in the tropical luxuriance of foliage as to give an almost theatrical effect. Around us the dense jungle overhung the water, completely precluding any attempt to land, and clothed the steep walls of the crater to a height of two hundred feet or more. Giant creepers had sprung from tree to tree, and, choking the struggling vegetable life beneath them with an impenetrable mass of foliage, hung in long trailers towards the margin of the water below—a wealth of green of every imaginable shade."

Divided from this first lake by a knife-like ledge of rock on the eastern side, is the second lake, almost perfectly circular and rather smaller than the first. Although its southern margin is within a few yards of the beach, the sea has not yet found an inlet; indeed, the water seems to be in this case some forty feet above the sea level, the almost perpendicular crater-walls being covered with masses of creepers. Adjoining the second, Dr. Guillemard found a third lake—somewhat smaller than the other two—being two-fifths instead of three-fifths of a mile across, but with a perfectly circular basin, and with fresh water at about the level of the second lake. In this case the sides do not run sheer down to the water, but leave room for a small beach, while dense jungle clothes the precipitous sides.

This gem of the ocean—Cagayan Sulu—we learn, was colonised originally from the Sulu Archipelago, and the language spoken is Sulu; but yet many of the people also speak Malay. Down to about 1863 they suffered much from the Sulu pirates; but now these pests are tolerably well, although not altogether, cleared off the face of the seas. The natives, as has been said, trouble themselves little with cultivation, and their sole export trade is in cocoa-nut oil. The island is healthy, and said to be well adapted to coffee, cacao, and sugar, only no attempt seems to have been made to cultivate either. The population is estimated at something under three thousand,

and the women do what agricultural work there is, while the men attend to the fishing, which they practise both from dug-out canoes and from rafts made of large bamboos lashed together.

From Cagayan Sulu to Sulu proper, the chief island of the Sulu Archipelago, is a short run by steam, but a long one by sail, because of the powerful currents and the many shoals caused by the numerous islets. And Sulu proper is described as a second and almost more beautiful edition of Cagayan Sulu. "A dark mass of jungle-covered mountain, half-hidden in mist and rain-cloud, dimly overlapped the lower slopes, where the bright-greenalang grass was dotted here and there with trees or varied by patches of a deep brownish-red, which marked the plots of cultivated ground. Further to the south, the cone-shaped peak of Mount Tulipan proclaimed itself a volcano, and as the 'Marchesa' rounded the western point and made for the harbour of Meimbun on the south side, the thick plantations of cocoa-nuts and fruit trees that lined the shore spoke of the fertility of the soil. The praus that lay becalmed around us had their sails of the most glowing colours, in stripes of red, and blue, and orange, and seen under the light of an afternoon's sun, with their details softened by the haze, the effect was quite as Venetian as Venice, where, alas! those beauty-spots of the landscape are now no longer common, except upon an artist's canvas."

Meimbun is situated on a little river of the same name, at the mouth of which a cluster of huts, built on seaweed-covered piles, form each a separate island. The floors are within three feet of the level of the water, so storms cannot be frequent in this region. Squatting on the platforms in front of these houses, the adult natives spend most of their time, while the children, innocent even of fig-leaves, take headers into the water, engage in swimming matches and paddling-races in miniature canoes.

The river itself is singularly clear and pure, and close to its banks lies the market-place, "a picturesque jumble of ponies, ripe bananas, red sarongs, palm-leaf stalls, and flashing spears. Beyond, the sea-going praus are hauled up on shore, their unwieldy sterns a mass of quaint carving. Then through a tiny reach bordered by the Nipa palm, whose graceful fronds, thirty or forty feet in length, spring directly from the stream, and we find ourselves in a sort

of upper town, where the houses are built with seeming indifference either in or out of the water. The place is the absolute perfection of beauty and untidiness. Overhead the eye rests on a wealth of verdure—bamboo, banana, durian, jack-fruit, and the snowy betel-palm with its golden egg-like nuts. In these happy climes, man's needs grow at his very door. Cold and hunger, misery and want, are words without a meaning. Civilisation is far off indeed, and for the moment at least we have no desire for it."

Alas! what a contrast with our November fogs and February chills; our Irish peasants; our Scotch crofters; and our shivering skeletons in overcrowded towns! But what says Tennyson? "Better fifty years of Europe, than a cycle of Cathay!" Maybe, but all depends upon your personal standpoint, and at any rate the Sulu Archipelago is not a region towards which those who are in favour of a system of State-aided emigration for our surplus population need turn their gaze. The Malay's Paradise is usually the European's—well, the other place, if not his grave.

The houses of Meimbun are rickety enough constructions, but sufficient apparently for the climate. A little bridge spans the river, formed of a single palm-tree plank with a light bamboo handrail. Beyond the huts, the river-banks are closed in on both sides with a sort of picture-frame of tropical foliage, amid which cockatoos and golden orioles flit, while kingfishers skim the waters. The country is, in short, Paradisiacal; but it is haunted by a demon whose name is man. The "murderous Sulu" is not to be trusted, and to wander unarmed and alone away from the village is a dangerous experiment.

At Meimbun resides the Sultan of Sulu, a potentate in little else but name, keeping up a sort of barbaric splendour in this remote corner of the world. His "palace" is not much to look at—a long, low building with latticed windows, separated from the river by a short stretch of turf.

At the door guard is kept by two Sikhs; although, how they came into this galley who can tell? All sorts of people seem to find their way to the islands of these Eastern Seas. Within the court are a couple of splendid carriages presented by the Spaniards to the late Sultan—useless gifts, seeing that there are no roads in the island, and the carriages are slowly rotting away like the power of the Sulu Sultan himself. The Hall of Audience is a large

apartment, rudely floored, hung with coloured cloths, and ornamented with a large Turkish lamp, an old four-post bedstead, and an enormous divan, fourteen feet square, covered with carpet, and with seats round three sides.

The late Sultan* was a young man about twenty, with a nervous but not unpleasing face, and with a title long enough to serve a dynasty. It is Paduka Baginda yang di per Tuan Maulana Sultan Mohammed Budde-rooddin. There can be no doubt about it, for he had it imprinted on visiting cards—also presented by the Spaniards. He was very much married, and his authority was limited to his harem—if, indeed, it reigned even there. He seems, however, to have had no wishes beyond his domestic circle and opium-pipe. He had six wives, which may account for his lack of ambition.

He received, and presumably his successor will also receive, from the British North Borneo Company an annuity of five thousand dollars in acknowledgement of their occupation of Sandahan on the island of Borneo, a large tract of which was under the sway of his ancestors, and he collected what tribute he could from native chiefs. These last do not seem to have minded him much, but to be concerned only with their own internecine quarrels. The island of Sulu is only some thirty-three miles long by twelve in breadth—less than the Isle of Wight—but it is a land of perpetual feud, and streams from end to end with Sulu blood, shed by Sulu hands. The eastern end is governed by the Maharajah of Loc, and the western end by the Maharajah or Panglima Dammang. These and the other chiefs are always more or less at war with each other, but at one in their hatred of the Spaniards. Human life counts for little among them, and therefore of peaceful industry there is none. It is a land of Ishmaelites.

Near Meimbun is Buat Tulipan, an extinct volcanic cone some two thousand feet high, cultivated in patches almost to the summit. Such diversity of scenery as Sulu affords is seldom seen in a tropical island. The jungle has been for the most part cleared away, but long dark patches of it still exist in the small gullies which cover the sides of the mountains. Nearly everywhere the eye is greeted with what an auctioneer would describe as an "extensive and park-like view." If we stand on one of the many

hills which tend to make the island look far larger than it is, we see before us a stretch of hill and dale covered with bright green grass, and dotted with little spinneys, or solitary well-grown trees; just such a view, indeed, as one might get from a country house in England, were it not for the suspiciously-sharp cone of some volcano cropping up on the horizon. Here and there, and where the soil has been freshly turned up by the rude wooden ploughs employed by the natives, it seems as if some large, ruddy-coloured blanket had been spread out in the sun to dry. Few huts are to be seen. Most of them are buried in little groves of cocos, or around the dark foliage of the durian or Artocarpus, and the warm blue breathings of the hidden heath alone reveal their presence. In these open glades there is but little bird life, but in the other localities there is little difficulty in obtaining specimens. Perhaps commonest, or at least, the most conspicuous, is the scarlet-vested cockatoo (*Cacatua hama-turopygia*), which possesses a single rose-coloured feather for its crest. This species is occasionally tamed by the Sulus, and apparently can be taught to talk, although not readily.

South of Buat Tulipan lives a young Rajah, in a picturesque little village built half-in half-out of a creek running up from the sea. Here the natives catch fish, smoke them, dry them in the sun, and store them away in neat bamboo frames for future use. At the back of the village is a little cemetery. "The carved wooden headstones were closely packed together, some flat, and in the shape of a conventional leaf, others straight, and post-like, carved to represent a series of super-imposed cubes. Overhead the 'Michelia'—the dead man's flower, as the Sulus call it—dropped its deliciously-scented blossoms, and the graves were strewn with the flowers of the Areca palm. Buddhist and Mahomedan alike plant the Champac above their dead. Day after day throughout the year the tree blossoms. Day after day the delicately-creamy corollas fall, entire, upon the grave, retaining both their freshness and their fragrance, unlike any other flower. Here Nature, kindly-hearted and unforgetful, year after year lays her daily offering of Champac blossoms upon each tomb."

Ten or fifteen miles to the westward of Meimbun is Parang, where dwells the Panglima Dammang before mentioned. It

* He has died since Dr. Guillemard's visit.

is a village of some thirty or forty houses, built on piles in the sea, each house being connected with the shore by a separate bridge of palm-stems. The style of building is like that prevalent in New Guinea; but the houses are different—those of Sulu being mere huts, with high-pitched gables, and with walls of roughly-constructed mats of palm-leaves. The people of Parang have rather a bad name, even for Sulu; and the Panglima himself is not a person to trifle with. When Dr. Guillemard visited him, he had just returned from a vicious battle with some Maharajah; and he carried his favourite "parang" (native weapon), with which he is credited with having killed thirty men. This potentate appreciates champagne, and consumed two tumblersful with much gusto.

The country round Parang is not quite so beautiful as in the neighbourhood of Meimbum, but is beautiful all the same, and it has attractions for sportsmen, since pig-hunting is a favourite chase there. The wild pigs are so numerous, that deep ditches have to be dug round the tombs to preserve them from the unclean animals.

Turn we now from these abodes of savagery and of Nature in her primitive loveliness, to the Spanish settlement on the island. Jolo, as it is called, is not more than about fifteen miles by sea, and less by land, from Parang; but what a contrast! In olden days Jolo was the capital of the island and the residence of the Sultan, and when Belcher was there in the "Samarang," it was a town built upon piles running out in three lines into the sea, the piles of the outermost houses being in twenty-four feet of water, so that Her Majesty's ship "Samarang" was moored at the entrance of the main street. Then it was known as Soog, and, in varieties of the spelling, such as Sugh, and Soung, and Soong, it appears in many maps and in many gazetteers to this day. Sometimes, also, it is designated on charts as Sulu, while the natives call it Tiangi—"the market-place." Jolo is the name given to it by the Spaniards, and as Spanish Town it is known in Borneo, so that really it is a place of many titles. Spanish Town it is to all intents and purposes, for scarcely any traces remain of the old native town described by Belcher. This last was destroyed by the Spaniards when they began, in 1878, to form a fortified settlement here. It remains more of a fortification than a settlement—a place of durance rather than a place of residence.

Regarded from the sea, it has a picturesque appearance, with the white houses and grassy spaces of the town clustered about the slopes of *Buat Timantangis*. There is no harbour, but good anchorage in deep water near the shore, protected on the north by a chain of little islands. There is a short wooden pier, with a light-house on the end of it, where a landing is easily effected. The town is surrounded by a loopholed wall, about twenty feet in height, behind which sentries pace to and fro incessantly. On the seaward side, however, there is no wall, but a gunboat is always stationed at the anchorage, and the shores are patrolled by soldiers. The gates are shut at sundown, after which no one is allowed to enter.

This description sounds very like that of a prison, and, in point of fact, Jolo is a prison, where are maintained a large number of convicts sent from Manila and other stations in the Philippines, kept in order by six companies of a Manila native regiment, officered by a Spanish Colonel and some five-and-twenty officers. The Colonel is the Governor of the place, and some of the officers have their families with them. The streets are pretty and well kept, with rows of bananas and cotton trees on each side, and there is a covered market-place or shed, in which the Manila people gather for gossip and cock-fighting—their chief amusement. Besides that, there is a capital regimental band, which discourses on the Plaza every evening, and, *voilà tout!* no one dare leave the town on the land side without a strong escort, unless he desires to form a billet for the spear of a Sulu.

"Here, listening to the band in the evening," says Dr. Guillemard, "sitting in the little creeper-covered arbour in the public gardens, with our excellent friend the Governor, pouring out a string of amusing absurdities between the pieces, we could shut our eyes and fancy ourselves in Nice, or some other like haunt of fashion in far-away Europe. If we opened them, the illusion vanished quickly enough. At the end of the street the sentry paced up and down behind the loopholed walls, and between selections from the 'Nozze' and 'Robert le Diable,' the sergeant of the guard placed the heavy key of the gate in the Governor's hand."

It is doubtful, indeed, if any place in the world can present such curious anomalies as Sulu; with a barbaric court at the south end, held by a Sultan without any

real authority, and a Spanish prison at the other end, outside of which no Spaniard dare show his nose, but within which are cafés, billiard-tables, a band that would not discredit London, fever, dysentery, and prevailing "ennui"!

Midway between the two extremes, lives a German ex-sea-captain, Schück by name, among plantations of cacao, and coffee, and hemp, where he thrives with his family and at peace with the ferocious Sulus, whose respect he gained at the expense of a series of stubborn fights. The rest of the island is divided among some half-dozen petty chiefs, little more than savages, but wholly despots, who are always at war with each other.

The island throughout is as healthy as any within the tropics; but in Jolo the mortality is high from dysentery and fever, to which, no doubt, the isolated and monotonous life lends ready victims.

Readily as the Spaniards assimilated the Philippine islanders, they seem unable to make any progress with those of Sulu; and they appear to be no step further forward than when they assumed the nominal sovereignty in 1878. Not many years ago the natives laid siege to Jolo, and tried to carry it by assault; they failed, but not before killing a number of the garrison. Then, still more recently, a Loc man managed to get inside the walls armed with his "parang," and making his way to the Plaza, commenced to cut down men, women, and children indiscriminately. It is said that before he could be overpowered and despatched he had slain no fewer than seventeen persons. Thus, then, there are excitements at Jolo, if not many pleasures.

From what has been said, it will be seen that the Sulu people are almost amphibious. They are also capital boatmen, and they use two kinds of boats. The dapang is a dug-out canoe, with a free-board heightened by planks, but differing from the usual Malay model in having both bow and stern cigar-shaped, the tops of the ends being bent upwards. These dapangs have large bamboo outriggers on both sides and can stand heavy weather. The praus, or larger vessels, are strongly built; not very neatly, perhaps, but with a good deal of ornamental carving on the sterns. They range from ten to twenty tons burden, and are used for voyages to Borneo and the more distant islands. Mention having been made of carving, it may be added that the Sulus

are very clever and tasteful at this sort of work, which is to be found about their houses and tombstones, as well as on their boats. Pearl-fishing is followed here, as elsewhere in the Malay Archipelago, and the Sulus are said to be the best divers in the world. They think nothing of a depth of seventeen or eighteen fathoms, and will swim straight down to the bottom without any weights to help them. One celebrated pearl-diver is said to have gone down in this way to a depth of no less than twenty-seven fathoms!

The language of the Sulus is allied to the Bisayan language of the Philippine Islands, but it abounds also with Japanese and Malay words, which probably came to the group along with Mohammedanism. Malay, however, is mostly spoken by the coast-dwellers. What writing there is—which is very little—is in Arabic characters.

The only efforts at systematic cultivation were, until lately, those of the enterprising German already mentioned—Captain Schück. As a trader in the Malay Archipelago—often shipwrecked and often captured by pirates—fate once cast him upon Sulu, when the natives were fighting the Spaniards. He espoused the cause of the Sulus, but the Spaniards managed to secure his vessel and to send him a prisoner to Manila. Upon representations to the German Governor, the latter interfered, and got the Captain released with one thousand pounds as solatium. Then he took his wife and family and settled for good in Sulu, where he is admired for his courage, and respected for his strict justice. His plantations are about the centre of the island, and he exports Manila hemp, cacao, and tapioca. Coffee has been tried, but has not been a great success.

Within the last two or three years, however, we understand that experiments have been made towards a new industry in Sulu. The German-Borneo Company sent over a little expedition, which seems to have been struck with the capability of the island for tobacco-growing. They began at once, and the first crop produced two hundred piculs—one picul equals one hundred and thirty-three pounds and one-eighth—valued at ten pounds per picul. The second crop was estimated to run to one hundred thousand pounds; and Chinese labourers from Singapore had been imported to gather and cure it.

The following note on the method of cultivation pursued may interest our readers. In December the felling of the

forest and clearing of the land commences. In April the nurseries are got ready, and the seed, mixed with ashes, is sown on raised beds. The young plants grow rapidly, and early in May—the beginning of the rainy season—they are pricked out in fields of three hundred by twenty yards, each of which is in charge of a coolie. The soil is then banked up round the stalks of the plants, and the leaves are searched for insects. Early in August the tobacco is ready for cutting. This is done an inch or two below the first leaf, and the plants are then hung up heads downwards in the drying-sheds, until the stalks become dry. Then the leaves are cut, packed in bundles, and sent to the fermenting-sheds. Here they are formed into pyramidal heaps, in which white fermentation takes place; the heat is carefully noted by thermometers. When the desired temperature is reached, the pyramids are rebuilt, the outer bundles being placed in the centre. As soon as the leaves are considered ready, they are taken to another shed, where they are sorted, pressed, and made into bales for shipment. The stalks left after the first cutting grow again, and yield two more crops, smaller in quantity, but not deteriorating in quality.

Now, it is worth noting that at Deli, in Sumatra, are grown the wrappers, or outside leaves, for the better qualities of Havana cigars. There are few soils capable of producing them; but it is asserted that the soil of Sulu is even superior to the best soil of Sumatra for the purpose. Thus, then, there may be a prosperous future in store for this anomalous and sanguinary spot in the Eastern Sea.

About five-and-twenty miles to the south-south-west of Sulu lie the islands of Siassi and Lapac, with Tapul and Lugas between them and the first-named. On Siassi a Spanish settlement was formed in 1882, consisting of small barracks for troops, two or three houses for officials, and a dozen or so of native huts. It has a Commandante all to itself. In 1882, however, Siassi had an epidemic of cholera, which carried off about five hundred of the five thousand inhabitants, and spread over to the adjacent island of Lapac. It is remarkable that in the Malay Archipelago Europeans are rarely attacked by this disease, which plays such havoc among the natives. Both Lapac and Siassi are volcanic, but have little forest, and in some parts are very bare, not nearly so attractive as Sulu.

Between thirty and forty miles to the south-west of these is the curiously-shaped island of Tawi-tawi, the second largest of the group. It is almost within hail of Borneo, the southern end of it being only thirty miles or so from the coast of the island. Here another Spanish settlement was founded early in 1883, and is named Tataan, being the first attempt of the Spaniards to gain a footing on Tawi-tawi, the natives of which have a shocking bad name, even for Sulus. Dr. Guillelard, who was at Tataan in the middle of 1883, says it is not at all a "taking" place, and there did not seem any imaginable occupation for the garrison of eighty coloured soldiers, seeing that the jungle closes in the barracks on all sides at a distance of only a hundred and fifty yards. This jungle is a capital cover for the natives to stalk the poor soldiers, which they do on every opportunity, and occasionally bag one or two. Tawi-tawi has been the chosen haunt of pirates from time immemorial, and even to-day the waters surrounding it are dangerous for small sailing vessels weakly manned and unarmed. The strongholds of these ruffians are along the mangrove shores of the south part of the island, which being guarded by a network of reefs and shoals, cannot be approached by any gunboat. This south end otherwise appears to be as beautiful as Sulu, and to have a very fertile soil. Indeed, Tawi-tawi altogether has great natural attractions, and several good harbours, so that it is to be hoped that Spain will manage soon to bring it within the pale of civilisation and active commerce. Unfortunately modern Spain is not a very apt instrument for either purpose.

Although so close to Borneo, the fauna and flora of Tawi-tawi are quite distinct from that island. Borneo, like Java, is Indo-Malayan in its zoological characteristics; while the Sulu Islands, like the Philippines, are Austro-Malayan in general; but with some marked peculiarities of their own.

Politically, also, the Sulu group is more allied to the Philippines. Its history has been one of perpetual civil war, and of long-sustained resistance to the Spaniards, who, ever since they gained ascendancy in the Philippines, have had hankering after the Sulu group. For three centuries that struggle has been going on, and it can hardly be said to be ended yet. In the seventeenth century the Spaniards sent

repeated expeditions to Sulu, but without any result; until, in 1646, they arranged a treaty under which they agreed to leave the large island and betake themselves to Tapul, Siassi, and Pangutarang—the latter being the most northern of the group of any size. In the next century, however, the contest was renewed; for, in 1731, a fleet of thirty Spanish war vessels attacked the place then known as Sugh, now as Jolo. The Sulus actually drove away this fleet after capturing the colours. It was many years later before the Spaniards succeeded in gaining a footing on the island and establishing a garrison.

Down to 1871 little more was done; but in that year a renewed effort was made to obtain possession of the main island, and fourteen gunboats were sent to bombard and destroy the native town on whose site Jolo now stands. Then Jolo was built and the Spanish flag hoisted in 1876. In March, 1885, was concluded the now famous treaty between England, Germany, and Spain, whereby the sovereignty of the latter country is admitted over all the Archipelago islands between Mindanao—the most southern of the Philippine group—and the coast of Borneo. Under this treaty Spain renounces all claim to North Borneo and the island within three miles of its coast, in favour of England. The treaty also established freedom of commerce and navigation in the Sula Archipelago, and stipulates that no export or import duties are to be levied either there or within the territories included in the charter of the British North Borneo Company.

What this commerce may eventually be worth, one can hardly say; but the potentialities are not inconsiderable were the natives weaned from their passion for bloodshed. We have not dwelt on the fauna and flora of these islands—this not being within the scope of our article; but, to all interested in such matters, we can commend the pages of Dr. Guillemard's interesting book.

JASMINE.

THEY bloom again, the fair white flowers,
They wreath the old familiar bowers
Just as they did a year ago:
I touch, but do not pluck, a spray,
How fresh it is! how bright and gay
Its tints of green and snow!

I touch, but do not pluck, ah no!
I gathered, just a year ago,
The last white cluster I shall pull
In all my life from these green boughs
That clothe the dear old rugged house,
And make it beautiful.

I plucked it, I, who used to stand
And watch a well-beloved hand
Pick the first jasmine flower for me
So many summers—but last year
The jasmine bloomed and faded, dear,
Unseen, untouched by thee.

But I, sore weeping in the day
Of desolation, found a spray
That lingered late, and bloomed alone,
I laid it, for the past's dear sake,
The last sad offering love could make,
In thy cold hand, my own.

Oh! is there knowledge where thou art?
Or doth the dim, dread river part
Thee verily from me and mine?
The glad sun shines, the jasmine blooms,
But sorrow all my soul consumes,
Love hungers for a sign.

For one fond look from thee to me,
One pleading word from me to thee,
One, only one, it would suffice,
To feel I kept my olden part
In those new musings of thine heart
At rest in Paradise.

Oh! silence empty of a sign,
Oh! gulf between my life and thine,
Firm fixed till I, myself, shall cross
The tideless waves, and find the shore
By angels guarded evermore—
Till death retrieve life's loss.

Oh! shall I know thee, dear, above,
In God's undreamed-of land of love?
Faith's whisper through the silence breathes:
"One waits thee in those blessed bowers,
And from the wealth of Eden flowers,
Thy fadeless garland wreathes!"

THE ROSE-WEAVERS.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. THE MEETING.

IT was the time of roses; roses in our homely England; roses in classic Italy; roses in lands ice-bound throughout half the year; roses everywhere!

This brief season the rose has made her own, is especially rapturous to inhabitants of the cold North, condemned, like the twin gods of old, to spend half their lives in the upper heaven, and the other half in Pluto's dark and dread domain. Certainly they enjoy a foretaste alike of those islands of the blest, destined for the heroic and the virtuous, and of that gloomy under-world, wherein the wicked expiate their crimes. And magical the transition in both cases from one to another! But yesterday winter covered the world with its icy mantle, and all Nature seemed dead. To-day, quiet rivers flow through pastures emerald green; on the glittering blue sea are seen a hundred sails; all the country folks are busy in the hay-fields; whilst roses have burst into bloom everywhere, making the air heavy with perfume.

In the royal garden of a northern island, maidens were busily weaving roses one midsummer day. They sat scattered in groups about the place, and made a pretty picture, some on the green sward beside the miniature lake, others occupying steps of the marble terrace; others again had chosen shady nooks and corners, where, bare-headed, they sedulously plied their task. Here and there stood baskets filled with cut roses, and as soon as one was empty, it was immediately replaced by the assistant gardeners. These roses, be it remarked, had just come carefully packed from the neighbouring Continent; not a single flower could be spared from the King's gardens just now.

Right merrily the girls went on with their bewitching work. They sang, they laughed, they chatted as unconcerned as if the whole place belonged to them, which indeed it did for that day. Save for upholsterers and decorators, the charming little summer Palace was deserted. The director of the forthcoming ceremonies was good-nature itself, and well pleased to see folks gay, so long as they put their shoulders to the wheel.

In order that to-morrow's fête should prove a success, it was necessary that all under his direction should do this with a vengeance. Girls naturally look their prettiest when thus occupied. Weaving roses is a fairy task, and in light summer dresses, with their fair hair shining in the sun, their cheeks aglow with pleasure, these northern maidens might well challenge criticism. Most of them were daughters of the hardy fishermen of the island, descendants of the sea-kings of old; but their very rusticity lent an added charm. Rich and poor, gentle and simple, to-day consorted together.

There was one girl whom any sudden intruder must at the first glance have singled out as the Queen. She was tall and fair, with all the grace of a Teutonic maiden, and much more besides. A certain air of distinction marked her, too, from the rest, and although gay and animated as any, her face betokened intellect and character quite out of the ordinary way. It was evident that whilst throwing heart and soul into her work, her playful moods alternated with deep seriousness. As zealous a rose-weaver as any, she yet seemed absent from time to time; her thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

Her companion was one of those naïve, artless, seventeen-year-old maidens, fresh

from school, and as far as earnestness and insight are concerned, she might have been fresh from the cradle. In making garlands, as in more weighty undertakings, there must be a head to direct, and the younger and less capable girls had been thus told off to help their elders. The stately Ermengarde was clever enough and resolute enough to have directed far more important affairs than a Court ceremonial. Bertha, by her side, was a giggling little thing, with only will enough to do the simplest thing she was bidden.

A few minutes before, she had giggled when the head gardener came up to chat for two minutes with Ermengarde; she now began to titter afresh as she saw some one else approaching, this time a stranger. There was a constant going to and fro of functionaries, most of whom found time to interchange a word or two with Ermengarde, the brilliant, beautiful daughter of the head forester.

The intruder this time was a stranger, and naturally addressed himself to the most striking girl he caught sight of, as he descended the marble steps leading to the garden.

He was a sunburnt, bearded, handsome fellow, who looked more like a soldier or sea-faring man than a civilian, much less an official of a fastidious little Court. His dress, too, had a careless, rustic look, and his hands showed signs of exposure to all weathers. There was, however, a certain winningness, a bonhomie and candour about him, that made up for these drawbacks; a certain ease, too, betokening the educated gentleman.

"Pardon me, Fräulein," he said, dropping bare-headed into a seat beside the two girls. "Allow me to repose myself an instant. Here is my card: Adolf Christian Neumann, King's-Messenger. I have just ridden from the harbour on a special errand, and had at the same time a sly hint to see how things were getting on. I only hope this King of yours may prove worth all these roses!"

"Was any King that ever lived worth so much?" asked Ermengarde, with more of sorrow than scorn in her beautiful smile.

The young man smiled also, and looked at the speaker penetratingly and with deep and growing admiration. What a glorious creature! he was evidently thinking to himself. This tall, stately, golden-haired girl possessed natural, inborn dignity, and unlike these fisher-maidens, her companions, had seen more of the world than her own

little island. The head forester's daughter was, indeed, an accomplished and well-bred lady.

"You are no courtier, then?" he said, evidently provoked, yet fascinated by her outspokenness. "Your heart is evidently not in your work."

"Whose heart can ever be in such work as this?" she replied. "We flatter Kings, whilst all the time we either hate or despise them."

"This is a free country," the stranger put in. "Why not wear black to-morrow when your King comes, thus protesting in your own person against his iniquities?"

Ermengarde now laughed merrily. The incongruousness of the image thus suggested, appealed to her sense of humour. She wondered what all the loyal islanders would make of it—the head forester's daughter in black when every other maiden had put on white and rose garlands!

"I assure you," she answered, "nothing would please me better had I no one but myself to consider. But I am the head forester's daughter. In all social observances I am tied hand and foot."

"Tell me," the young man went on, settling himself comfortably in the rustic seat, evidently determined to talk as long as he could get her to listen to him; "what are these vilenesses, these desperate sins of your especial monarch, that make you long to cut off all Kings' heads?"

"Nay, history wants no more such martyrs," the girl said; "but since Kings have ceased to be lawgivers, what good purpose do they serve? And they get too much flattery. They live as completely shut out from the real life of the people as if they inhabited the planet Jupiter."

His mood changed from gay to grave.

"These roses, then, are a mere show of loyalty; the festive appearance this island puts on in honour of the Royal visit, means—nothing?"

"What should it mean?" Ermengarde cried again, with a scornful smile. "We are not living in the childhood of history. Even the rude fisher-folk now think for themselves. They know well enough that it is the laws that shield them from harm, not the favour of a King."

"But since these unfortunate beings, Kings, do exist," he went on, with returning sportiveness and good humour, "what would you have them do? How should they behave so as to deserve a real welcome from the people?"

"We are all God's people, Kings must first remember that," was the girl's spirited reply. "Then they should reflect that the honours heaped upon them are one and all unearned, and in most cases undeserved."

"On my word," retorted the other, "to judge from you, this little island must be a very hotbed of sedition."

"By no means. These islanders have enough to do to get bread for their children. They but bide their time. The world will be wiser one day," said the young lady with a toss of her head. Then, as if a sudden thought struck her, she turned round quickly: "One might suppose you were a King yourself, from the lazy way in which you sit looking on, whilst others toil and moil. Please help me to carry these garlands indoors."

The young King's-Messenger jumped from his seat flushed with pleasure, and right heartily laid his hand to the task. Each holding a handle of the basket, they ascended the marble steps, a superb pair to behold; he so winsome and manly, she so graceful and fair! They chatted gaily as they passed down a cool corridor, Ermengarde leading the way.

"Fräulein," he said shyly, when they had deposited their burden, "you seem to be in authority here. Could you order me something to eat and drink? Then I must mount horse and be off."

She conducted him to a small room near the kitchen set apart for the head forester's especial use, and opening a cupboard brought out such homely fare as the island afforded—rye-bread, cheese, whortleberry jam, and light beer.

"I offer you the best I have," she said coolly, "but if you had addressed yourself in the first instance to the house-steward, you would fare better."

"This is excellent; indeed, I desire nothing better," he replied, sitting down with capital appetite.

"When you have done, please close the door. I must go back to my task," added Ermengarde, but under one pretext and another he induced her to stay, making his meal as quickly as possible. Then he rose, hat in hand, prepared to take leave.

"I have one more favour to ask before I go," he said. "I return in the King's train to-morrow. You will honour me with your hand in the dance, will you not?"

"Certainly."

"Certainly, certainly," he exclaimed,

with petulant impatience. "There will be numerous claimants for the privilege. I must have something definite—a promise."

What trifling! her face said, but the thought was not put into words; so winning the stranger's manner, so sympathetic his voice, look, and speech, she could but humour him. And she was a woman after all. In spite of the thoughtfulness and nobility of her character, a character in which there was not a vestige of coquettishness, she recognised his adoring admiration, and the recognition brought joy.

CHAPTER II. THE SURPRISE.

THIS little island of the northern sea had been so far ill-used of fortune; hitherto it could boast of no Royal visit. King after King of the dynasty that sways these realms was crowned and buried; rumours of grand doings reached the fisher-folks from time to time; brilliant Court ceremonials, christenings, bridals, burials. A more stay-at-home folk than these islanders, except, perhaps, their neighbours, the Lapps, hardly existed. They heard of pageants without beholding any. Very rarely, and only on matters of urgent business, they crossed the sea that divided them from the Continent.

Now at last they were to have a pageant of their own; not, perhaps, to be compared to celebrations in the capital, but a great affair for all that. The King was coming!

The good islanders were not more exuberantly loyal than the rest of the workaday world. They were sorely weighed down with taxation. It was as much as they could do to get a frugal living. Sentiment had no hold upon this sturdy, matter-of-fact race. Yet that piece of news, the King was coming, sufficed to awaken universal enthusiasm. The island was about to keep holiday from end to end. From the remotest corners, all who were old enough to toddle and not too old to creep along with the aid of a stick, were flocking to the spectacle.

Capital the island could not be said to possess, nor was the so-called Royal Palace much more than a hunting-lodge or summer pavilion. There was therefore no possibility of carrying out anything to be called a programme indoors, and, as the weather was magnificent, alike the banquet and the ball were to take place in the open air. This arrangement admirably suited the general taste and convenience,

for whilst the little Palace could hardly have held a hundred and fifty guests, the entire population of the island would find more than breathing-room in the park outside. A fine stretch of sward was enclosed for the dancers, and a tent erected for the Royal banquet. Beyond these precincts, all could disport themselves as they pleased. Rows of booths, such as we see at fairs, were to be supplied with refreshments, served to all at the Royal expense. Truth to tell, this visit was a kind of apology on the part of a newly-crowned King for a series of ancestral neglects. The times, too, were critical. It was not a moment when rulers, whether of small States or large, could afford to have sulky subjects.

There were many reasons why Ermengarde, the head forester's daughter, should take a leading part in the day's proceedings. She was the best educated girl of the island, to begin with. She had seen something of life and manners in the great world beyond sea. She would know exactly what to do and say when leading her rose-garlanded maidens to welcome the King. A procession of girls dressed in white and bearing flowers was to await the Royal visitor on the landing-place, and it was Ermengarde's duty to offer a bouquet and make a little speech.

"What a mockery, what mere child's play, it all is!" she said, as she glanced at her white dress and wreath before putting them on. "If some hero were to be welcomed to-day, one who had risked his life for his country, or even saved the lives of half-a-dozen of his fellows, as many of our poor fishermen have done, then no one would prepare for this festival more enthusiastically than myself. But this King! He may wish to do good. He may be free from the vices of his fore-runners. What is he as yet, but a mere name to us?"

She twice adjusted the wreath of crimson roses to her fair head, and twice removed it.

"And no one is bold enough to tell them the truth. Kings live and die without hearing the truth. Could I speak to this one as I did to his messenger yesterday, open my heart to him, speak out as one rational, thinking being is bound to speak out to another, then his visit might not be made in vain."

It must not be supposed that Ermengarde was a young lady imbued with revolutionary doctrines, or that she was wanting

in accurate notions of history. She did not wish to see her island handed over to conspirators against the existing order of things; much less was she of opinion that to do away with Royalty would be to bring about a social millennium. But, young as she was, she had witnessed the horrors of civil war; she realised the havoc made in family life by military conscription; she knew that this long-suffering race of islanders were bowed down by the weight of taxation; and could the most ardent Royalist, the most impartial student of history, aver that dynastic ambition and intrigue had nothing to do with such afflictions?

This little northern kingdom was far from being ideally governed. Even now a Royal yea and nay were far too puissant. However, the King was coming; he must be welcomed. So at last, and with some reluctance, Ermengarde put on her white dress and wreath of crimson roses. A smile rose to her lips as she thought of that genial, impetuous stranger; his manner, she hardly knew why, had pleased her greatly. He was so frank, so generous and manly, and evidently, like herself, had seen something of men and manners on the great Continent. That promised dance with him would be a relief to the stiff ceremonial of the evening.

"Ermengarde, Ermengarde!"

A dozen girlish voices now called her name, for it was time to go. No prettier sight could be imagined than these blonde maidens as they trooped along in their white muslin dresses—silk and satin were unknown on the island, and jewels almost equally so. Few wore other ornaments but roses in their hair and on their bosom. The leader was as simply dressed as any; her pre-eminence—and it was marked enough—consisted in that inborn grace, that stately yet spirited beauty that would have marked her out among a far more brilliant fellowship.

The girls had not taken their place on the terrace a minute too soon. Hardly were they drawn up in proper order when the distant huzzas of the crowd outside the Palace gates, the firing of a salute in the harbour, the clatter of hoofs, and the braying of trumpets announced the Royal cavalcade. There was a general titter and trembling amongst the girls; they craned their necks in order to obtain a first glimpse; they waved their handkerchiefs; they grew crimson and breathless with excitement. Only Ermengarde retained

self-possession. She had her bouquet and little speech in readiness; her curiosity to behold the face of a King was not inordinate, and, it must be added, she could not help wondering all the time if her acquaintance of yesterday was really there.

The event so eagerly longed for was come and gone in a moment. A group of horsemen wearing brilliant uniforms dashed up; one, a little in advance of the others, with a broad ribbon across his breast, was the first to dismount, receiving homage from all sides. Ermengarde's flowers and words of welcome were graciously acknowledged, a few courtesies exchanged, a final huzza raised by the crowd, then the glittering uniforms, the stars and decorations disappeared within the Palace walls.

"What a noble presence!" cried one girl.

"What an engaging smile!" said a second.

"How handsome!" exclaimed a third.

Only the disconcerted Ermengarde had no word at command. In the person of the King she had recognised her new friend of yesterday!

"THE SOULS BEGUILED HER."

It would interest no one to hear what particular studies led my friend Balfour and me to quarter ourselves in a remote Bohemian village. Anyhow, there we were last year for a good many months. The time passed very pleasantly, and we found the Bohemian peasants a simple, deserving folk, hard-headed, but honest, and worthy of their national proverb, "What a Bohemian promises, he performs."

But I do not believe that there exists anywhere a people to be compared to these Bohemian peasants for superstition.

In our village the whole population was staunchly Catholic; and, in addition to the long creed of the Roman Church, piously convinced of a number of local beliefs. There was the protection of the Holy Virgin infallibly to be obtained in a small chapel of "Our Lady of the Valley;" a holy well on the edge of the forest; a "wonder-working" image of Saint Vaclav in the village church; a Christ at the cross roads, which had thrice within the memory of living persons come down from the cross and walked about in the village; and many other marvels—enough, I should have thought, to have satisfied the largest appetite for something to believe. But all

that the Church has provided for him, and all the pious additions to her creed that he has been able to discover for himself, constitute something entirely insufficient for the unbounded capacity of the Bohemian rustic to believe in everything that he cannot see.

Balfour and I were liberal with our tobacco-pouches, and listened with grave faces to everything that we were told; and so we were little by little initiated into a large number of these good people's convictions.

And with what seriousness they related their opinions! I shall never forget the face of an old man, who, having, on the tenth of October, just killed the most harmless of "cripple-backs" at a four-cross road, confided to me the interesting fact, that on the Nativity of our Lady all the snakes have to go underground, and may not come out of their holes again until the feast of Saint George. The rebellious snakes—for there are some—are compelled by an irresistible power to crawl to the four-cross roads, where they invariably get killed. And here was the dead snake to prove it.

It was shortly before Easter that we arrived. The very next Thursday all the girls in the village turned out before day-break to go to wash at a spring-head at sunrise. This was to ensure them health and beauty during the next twelve months. They were very few of them pretty, and by no means all exempt from sickness; but that shook their faith in their ablutions not the least in the world.

Then in Holy Week we had fine doings. On Maunday Thursday there was the baking of the Judas cake—a sort of loaf that is eaten with honey, and secures the eater from being bitten by snakes for one year. On Easter Eve the various householders carefully took home some ashes from the baking of these cakes. Such ashes preserve houses from fire and lightning. At midnight on Easter Eve the people ran out into their gardens, in their night-clothes, to bawl to the trees, "Bear fruit, O trees! If you do not bear fruit we shall cut you down." This was doubtless a serious warning for the trees, and we were assured had a most excellent effect.

So far as we were able to discover, similar rites and ceremonies were going on all the year round. One day there would be a great burning of old brooms as a precaution against witches; the next some sort of incantation to prevent the arrival

of a thunderstorm—which came nevertheless. And I say nothing about the observances that indispensably accompanied births, betrothals, marriages, deaths, burials, seed sowing, harvest, and every other event of human life.

But, after all, these are only the smaller articles of the Bohemian peasant's faith.

Our villagers were to a man firmly convinced that they lived perpetually surrounded not only by ghosts, and witches, and warlocks, and such-like commonplace beings—to say nothing of the devil and all his angels—but also by a host of supernatural creatures, exceedingly poetical in the opinion of our friend the Professor at Prague; but—if what we were told about them was true—about as desirable neighbours as wolves or Bengal tigers.

There were strange beings to whom the village girls were liable to take likings, and, in consequence, to be lured to lose themselves in the forest, or to drown themselves in the river. There were Vilas, supernaturally beautiful young ladies, who wore white gossamer robes, and haunted the rocks and the lonely places in the woods; charming young creatures, but not to be trusted. With these it was a common thing for the Bohemian yokels to fall in love, bewildered by the lustre of their glorious eyes. The yokel being once fairly enamoured, the Vila tortures his soul till his heart ceases to beat. Then he dies—as might be expected.

Then there were Rushalkas, who on midsummer nights danced in the light of the moon around the springs; and wood maidens, who wore long, green dresses, and crowns made of glow-worms, and rode about in the forest on the backs of the stage: all with no other object in life but to bring unwary Bohemians to evil ends.

It was all very poetical no doubt. But I think that the educated people, like our friend the Professor, had all the poetry to themselves, and the poor peasants nothing but fears. And I fancy that any one who will have the patience to read this very simple story will agree with me.

We lodged with the sexton. He was an old grey-headed man, bent with the toil of many years, who occupied a little house near the church, and, with the assistance of his wife, made us very comfortable. Their only daughter had been married some six months before our arrival, and still lived with her parents. She was a fairly handsome young woman for a peasant, with a merry smile and a soft,

clear voice. Balfour and I liked to talk to her. We wanted to learn as much "Czech" as we could, and it was much easier to catch the words in Julie's soft, even speech than in the gruff voices of the villagers. Her husband came and went very irregularly. He was a waterman; one of the many in that neighbourhood who found employment on the great rafts that were floated down the river from the pine forest. Frantishek—that was his name—was well off for a man of his station, and the match had been considered a very good one for Julie. In fact, Julie appeared to be in such luck that the fathers and mothers of the other village lasses shook their heads, and averred that old Tomash, the sexton, had been performing nefarious rites with the egg of a black hen.

But Julie's luck was not of long duration. At the end of September the poor girl was proudly expecting shortly to become a mother, when, one evening, one of Frantishek's mates came in with the news that an accident had happened to one of the rafts, and that Frantishek was drowned.

Julie gave just one shriek, such a shriek as I hope I may never hear again, and dropped senseless on the floor. The poor girl was confined in the course of the night, and the next day her baby died, and old Tomash went to dig its tiny grave in the corner of the churchyard, where, in accordance with the beautiful Catholic custom, all the little children's graves were made together.

The gossips at the village inn nodded their heads gravely. "So much for dealing with the shotek," I heard one say to another. That referred to their suspicions about the black hen's egg.

The evening after the funeral, Balfour, coming in to supper, said:

"What do you think these enlightened people are saying about Frantishek?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Why—the Vodnik took him."

"And who the deuce is the Vodnik?"

"The Vodnik, I am gravely informed," replied Balfour, "is a thing that lives in large ponds and in the deep pools of the river. He mostly makes his appearance in the form of a boy with tousled hair, wearing a green jacket. Sometimes, however, he disguises himself as a huntsman, at others he takes the shape of a beast, often that of a hare. He can be recognised by the water that always drips from his left breast. The consequence of having anything to do with the Vodnik—who has

some very fascinating ways—is drowning. The Vodnik keeps the souls he drowns in his palace under the water in little pots with lids. Happily it is possible to be proof against Vodniks by eating twice baked bread. Frantishek, it seems, neglected this very necessary precaution, and so now his soul is in a little pot at the bottom of the Valtava."

Poor Julie got on very badly. For many days she hung between life and death. I ought to have said that Balfour and I are medical men, and I think we saved her—though, as it turned out, we might just as well have left the local leech to kill her in his own way.

I soon discovered that she had no doubt that the Vodnik had Frantishek's soul. At the same time she was sure that the same soul had, for some of Frantishek's peccadilloes, gone to purgatory. And she was very anxious, poor child, to go to our Lady of the Valley to do something for him. At times she was light-headed, and there were occasions when I fancied that her reason had been affected by the shock she had passed through. But, really, when these good people once began talking about their superstitions, it was impossible to say whether they were in their senses or out of them.

One October evening, when I was sitting a little while with her, she surprised me by asking:

"Do you think, sir, that it really was my little baby that died?"

Unhappily, there could be no doubt about it.

"I don't know," said Julie, shaking her head.

She dropped her voice, and, crossing herself, went on:

"Have you never heard there are wild women in the woods, and they come and steal away the babies from young mothers and put changelings in their places? I think that perhaps it was the changeling baby that father buried, and my baby is alive in the woods. Are there no wild women in the woods in England?"

"None."

"And no Rushalkas, and no Vilas, and no Vodniks?"

"No."

"I should not care to live in England," remarked Julie.

That seemed to me rather illogical. Vilas and Vodniks, so far as I had been able to understand, were anything but blessings. But Julie could not see it.

The first of November came. I had been for a long walk in the afternoon, and as I returned to the village the day was closing. The last gleams of the setting sun tinged with deep hues what remained of the red gold leaves, and the mist came creeping out of the forest, and across the meadows, and along the winding course of the river. Already the lights began to glow in the cottage windows, and from the church tower the deep tones of the Angelus rang out, followed by the sharp high note of the "death-bell," tolling the remembrance of the souls of the faithful departed.

On the village green were a whole crew of little vagabonds amusing themselves with throwing stones at the chestnut-trees, in the midst of which stood the crucifix—"the martyrdom of God," as the Bohemians name it. Informed of the time by the bell, the mothers began to appear at their cottage doors, calling to "Cashpar," and "Marek," and "Jan" to come in, and assuring them that the Klekanice—a bony individual who comes in the evening to carry off children under his long grey cloak—would certainly have the last of them: a threat that ended in a general scamper home as I passed on.

My path lay across the churchyard. The belfry-door stood open, and as I drew nearer I could hear heavy steps descending the winding stair. Tomash rang the bells, and I waited for him to come out. He closed the door, and slowly locked it with the big key that grated in the rusty wards, and then came to me. The old man looked anxious and full of care. He was very unhappy about his daughter.

"How is Julie to-night, Tomash?" I asked.

"She has been light-headed all day, sir," said the old man. "I am afraid for her to-night."

And he looked at his little grandchild's grave.

So far as I could gather, Julie had had some sort of relapse. Evidently her father entertained some special fears for the coming night, though what or why I could not make out. We walked a good part of the short distance in silence. When we reached the house I wished the old man "good-night," telling him to come to me if his daughter should seem really any worse.

Upstairs I found Balfour just come in.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"Smoking a pipe with the priest. It is All Saints' Day it seems."

"Ah, the first of November, yes."

"And to-morrow is All Souls' Day—'Le Jour des Morts.' It appears that all the devilries that go on all the year round are nothing at all to what we may expect to-night. I have been hearing all about it. After midnight the forests will be full of ghosts. There will be people wandering about the streets in their shrouds; men burning with fire; and flittering lights, which are the souls of unbaptized infants. The people put lights in their windows for their dead friends to see, and fill the lamps with butter instead of oil for the souls that escape from the flames to grease their burns. The souls come up out of the graves when the church clock strikes midnight, and do not return to purgatory until cock-crow to-morrow. First of all they stay for a little while in the churchyard, dancing with delight at having escaped from their pains. This is the real 'Danse Macabre.' Then they go round and visit their friends. Finally, they all meet again in the church, and wait there till the cocks crow. Any one who goes out to-night and has the bad luck to meet one of them, or who ventures into the church before day-break, they will lure to his death, and so carry off with them."

"What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff,
That beetles o'er the base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
And draw you into madness?"

I quoted. "How much of all this does the priest himself believe?"

"More, I should say, than he cares to admit."

"I met old Tomash," I remarked, "and he said he was afraid of to-night for Julie. I see what he meant now. I hope they have not been scaring the poor girl with any of this rubbish."

We had our evening meal, and then sat reading awhile. About half-past ten Balfour looked up from his book.

"Listen!" he said. "Is that Julie?"

From below came faint sounds of smothered cries following one another.

And at the same time we heard the sexton's footsteps ascending the stairs.

"If you would be so good as to come down, sir," said the old man; "Julie is taken worse, I fear."

We rose to follow him.

"You have not been frightening her about the souls, Tomash?" asked Balfour.

"No, sir," answered the old man, evi-

dently a little surprised by the question. "We supped off cold milk, and we sprinkled plenty about the room."

"That is for the ghosts in case they come," remarked Balfour to me in English. "A nice way to reassure any one!"

Downstairs we found Julie sitting on the edge of her bed half dressed. She was in a wild, feverish state, with a scared expression on her face. By the hearth was a bowl of milk.

"Oh, father, father, I am afraid!" she cried, wringing her hands, "this is the night of the souls. Oh, sir," she begged, turning to me, "what is the time? Father and mother won't tell me. Is it nearly midnight, sir?"

"No, no, Julie; it is an hour and a half before midnight."

"Oh!" shrieked the poor girl, putting up her hands to the sides of her head, and rocking herself wildly. "Only an hour and a half, and then they will be coming. Father," she ran on, "have you brought in the spade, with which you dig the graves, away from the pick-axe? They will sound together at midnight if you don't. You know they will." Here the old folks began crossing themselves vigorously. "You have told me so yourself."

Tomash went out to fetch the spade, and we tried to get Julie to compose herself and to take a sleeping draught. But she perceived our intention and would take nothing. She was frightened out of her life; but she wanted to see her husband and her baby, and was afraid they would only come to her in her dreams.

"They'll come. I know they will. They do come and see the people they loved when they were alive, don't they, mother? And I know that Frantishek loved me. Only I am afraid! I am afraid!"

"If Frantishek comes, my child," said the old woman, "I have filled the lamp with fresh butter; and Frantishek will be thankful to us—he will be able to cool his burns, and he will not hurt us. Pray to the Mother of God, child, and say an 'Our Father' for the souls. Other people have seen them before now, and no harm came of it."

But the poor, light-headed girl only wailed on: "Oh, I am afraid, mother. I am afraid of the souls."

We remained with her till half-past eleven, trying alike in vain to coax her to take something, and to persuade her parents not to scare her out of her wits. I think we might have done something

if we could have got rid of the mother. As it was, Balfour said, at last, in English: "What is the good of our staying here? We are only making things worse." So we went upstairs again, promising to return presently.

In our own room we read again for a time, and then the church clock struck midnight. For some little while all had been still downstairs.

"Open the door," said Balfour, "and listen. I believe that that poor girl has fallen asleep, after all. She was tired out."

I opened the door and listened. Below, everything was still.

Then the sexton's old clock, a few minutes late, began to strike with a whirring of its rough machinery, and suddenly a wild shriek reached our ears.

"Oh! Father! For Heaven's sake, save me! Oh! Holy Mother of God! Father, father, I hear a rushing noise! The souls are coming. I can hear them dance. I hear the shrouds rustle. I hear their bones rattling. Father, the spade sounded: I heard it! Oh, my God! It is long till cock-crow. My lad and my baby are coming to me. Oh, Holy Mother of God, shield me! Father, I see eyes that gleam. There is a fiery man coming, father. It is not my Frantishek. He will steal my baby's soul. No, no; I see Frantishek. He wants me. He calls me. Oh, what shall I do? My baby is alive out in the woods, and I must go to him. I must, father! I must!"

And with the girl's wild shrieks mingled the sounds of some sort of scuffle, and then a door banged.

"By Jove! but she has bolted out of the house," exclaimed Balfour, starting up.

We ran down the stairs. In the open doorway stood the old couple, crossing themselves wildly, staring into the dark, and not daring to cross the threshold for fear of the souls.

"Which way is she gone?" I asked.

"Heaven knows, sir," answered old Tomash.

Balfour and I stepped out into the night. It was dark as pitch, and the fog hid everything more than two yards distant.

"Look here; this is no go; we can't find our way through this," said Balfour. "Only she cannot have gone very far."

"Who knows? She is raving mad," I answered.

We went as far as we dared, and then

reluctantly turned back. The next morning the poor girl's body was found in the mill-dam. And in the afternoon old Tomash was digging another grave.

Balfour and I attended the funeral. As I was coming away I overheard two old cronies talking at the churchyard gate :

"Ah! death finds out the way, granny! Death finds out the way!" said one.

"Ay, ay, granny," answered the other, crossing herself. "The Mother of God be with us. The souls beguiled her."

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XV. THE SURPRISE.

IN the dusk of a November afternoon, with fog up to the windows, Paul Romaine was sitting alone in his study at Red Towers. For the last two months his life had been curiously lonely and silent; he had helped Mrs. Percival to bring her charges home to England, Vincent having disappeared on the morning after the accident, and then had parted from them all in London without much good-bye, and come down to his own old home, where he shut himself up like a hermit. Though the woods were full of game, he could not be persuaded to take his gun out, or to ask his neighbours to shoot. He spent the daylight hours reading or playing, and towards dusk generally went out for a long walk with the dogs.

The place was really lonely now; for, soon after his return, the Cox family packed up their artistic tools and went back to London—Red Towers and its solitary squire had been, on the whole, something of a disappointment to them.

In those autumn days, Paul often found himself wandering through the old rooms as he used to do when he was a lad, though now they were peopled with a new set of visions, very unlikely ever to become realities. His thoughts were constantly occupied with Achille de Montmirail and their last walk together, and the strange, touching, affectionate wish that had been almost his last word. And from that—was it any wonder?—Paul's thoughts went on to occupy themselves with Antoinette, and he was conscious of a deep longing that she might belong to him, and that he might have the right to take care

of her and make her happy. One look from those sweet eyes, that he remembered, seemed to make it not impossible that she might some day give herself to him; and yet Paul was rather despairing. He thought himself a dull fellow; he was haunted by the difference of country and religion—her father had thought those things drawbacks.

"Is it possible," Paul asked himself, "that she could ever forget it all and be satisfied with me?"

As he paced the drawing-room and the library restlessly—in the midst of their strange medley of new art colours and old shabby furniture—he was entirely wrapped up in plans for Antoinette.

He knew that she was still at River Gate, where Mrs. Percival had taken her and Celia. It had seemed the best plan after the terrible shock to both of them. Paul would, perhaps, have been unable to keep away, if it had not been for Celia's presence there; he could not help shrinking from that. Not that he at all imagined that she would stay there all the winter; the affection between her and her aunt was hardly strong enough, though this great trouble of hers had seemed to draw them together. She was more likely to go back to France, where she had an assured position, and where her husband's many friends were certain to receive her kindly.

But Celia's doings and Antoinette's, present or future, were arranged in Paul's mind on no authority but his own. Nobody wrote to him; nobody told him anything.

Mrs. Percival had only written once since she went home, and that was two months ago. At last, however, on this foggy afternoon, her second letter had made its appearance, and as Paul read it for the second or third time, he felt as if a human friend had come to him in his solitude.

Mrs. Percival began with a great many apologies, which Paul skipped. Then she told him that Vincent was coming in a fortnight to say good-bye before going back to India. Also that Celia, "looking quite herself again," had lately gone to London, and from there on business to Paris, but was coming back to River Gate, she did not quite know when.

"I wish this poor child Antoinette could throw off her grief as Celia does," wrote Mrs. Percival, "and yet I don't. I had no notion a French girl's character

could be so deep, and her affection so strong. However, she is like her poor father, who certainly was different from other Frenchmen. I shall be sorry when the Lefroys come home, and I have to resign her to them. I suppose it will be soon. Could not you come for a few days while we are such a small party? I should like to see you, and so would the poor girl, I feel sure. Her eyes were quite bright yesterday when I mentioned your name, though one would have thought the association painful."

So the young squire of Red Towers sat over his study fire that afternoon, and made up his mind. Of course, time only could show whether his dreams could come true, and his wishes be realised; but he knew that a visit to River Gate now would be a step in this direction.

He had only to wait a few weeks, till Antoinette was gone away to her own relations, and then, in all probability, years or a lifetime might pass without his meeting her again. He was honest enough, and forced himself to think of the objections, of his own ignorance, of her father's words, that it was hard for a woman to live out of her own country. Could he make her happy? Would she be contented with what he could do for her?

In her own country she might marry a man of high rank, and have the friends and society that belonged to her own race. Would it kill the young foreign flower to be transplanted here?

Paul also told himself that he had not any real reason to think that she did more than like him in a very moderate way, or that she had understood the greatness of his admiration, and what it meant. She had always known of him as her father's friend, and most likely thought of him as much older than he was—a sort of uncle, in fact.

Paul could not help smiling at the fire when he reached this point, and then something came and swept all hesitations away. It said:

"Why do you torment yourself with holding back like this? You are alone in the world, and so is she; you have her father's last words to tell you that you are not presumptuous. Besides, you have thought of nobody else for weeks. You love Antoinette with your whole heart and strength. Her father told you that your life had not yet begun; it is beginning now. Twenty-eight is not exactly a great age, after all."

"I will go to River Gate to-morrow!" said Paul, in answer to these remarks.

He telegraphed to Mrs. Percival the next morning, and arrived at Woolsborough in the evening, just in time to dress for dinner, so that he came down to the drawing-room without having seen any one. The world was still wrapped in fog, at its densest here by the river, and Paul had had a damp, cold, unpleasant journey. It was with a feeling of great satisfaction, his new and happy hopes filling all his thoughts, that he opened the door of the delightful old room. With the blazing fire lighting up all its rich colouring and pretty things, it was quite as charming in winter as in summer; it had always been so; and the very sight of it, the touch of the door-handle, the slow moving of the tall, heavy door as he pushed it open, had a way of making Paul feel a boy again. There was only one lamp lighted, and that was near the door; but all the far end of the room was glowing in firelight, and somebody was sitting there, somebody in a long black dress, shadowed by a screen. For a moment Paul felt a little breathless; it must be Antoinette; then he quickly made himself remember that she could not and did not care for him; then he was struck by something strange in the attitude of this lady lying back by the fire. It was too grown-up, too luxurious for Antoinette, who had been brought up differently from an English girl, and still kept her childish habit of sitting upright on a "pouf" or a high chair.

But Paul walked forward into the room, and his doubts were set at rest immediately. The shadowy lady turned her head, with a glimmer of gold about it, held out her left hand in a lazy, regal sort of way, and said, "You here!" in the voice of Celia.

"I have just come. I did not expect to see you," said Paul, quietly. "I thought you were in London."

He was rather fanciful, and the associations of rooms and things were never without their influence on him. This old room—what recollections lived in it! He would have said it was impossible ever to meet Celia there again; at this moment he despised himself, almost forgetting all that had come between, for his new dreams of meeting somebody else. Here, at River Gate, Celia seemed still to have her old influence. It had been different in France; she was not the same woman there. Paul stood on the hearth-rug and looked at his watch, comparing it with Colonel Ward's

old French clock, which was on the chimney-piece. Celia looked at him, her eyes shining and very blue. Perhaps she read his thoughts, for she was clever enough to do what she chose in that way. Whatever her own thoughts may have been, there was a kind of suppressed excitement in her face as she sat there; a little flush was in her cheeks, and her pretty mouth was set in a determined fashion. Her black draperies suited her wonderfully, and Paul knew that she had never looked more lovely in her life.

"In London? No; I wish I was," she said. "I came down last night, unfortunately; but I am going back to-morrow morning."

He looked the question he could not ask; evidently something was wrong.

"Oh yes," she said, "I am a very dreadful person. You had much better not have come to-day; and Aunt Flo would have been nicer if she had put you off. For my own sake I don't care, though I suppose you have not seen any one yet, or heard anything?"

"No," said Paul. "I only got here at 7.20. I don't understand——"

"You soon will," she said. "They will tell you directly after dinner, which will be carried through with that ghastly, cowardly stiffness which belongs to Uncle Tom on occasions like this. He really is a walking example of the Pharisees. Aunt Flo will try to be polite, and choke down her tears. I shall be scornful, and poor Antoinette, being an ignorant child, will think English tempers and manners very funny things. You may be a bright spot, but I am afraid you won't, now that I have told you all this. You will be expecting the shock that is in store for you. And when you know—I suppose—you will be as bad as Uncle Tom himself."

"Why do you say that?" said Paul.

He stood gazing into the fire, for he did not dare to look at Celia. There was something in her voice that seemed to plead with him, to thrill his whole being, to bring back a thousand things better forgotten. How terribly possible it is, after all, to forgive everything to a creature one has once loved. Paul had two natures, like the rest of us. All that was best and strongest and manliest in him had freed itself long ago from Celia: the attraction that had drawn him to Antoinette was honest and real; some day it would govern him completely, with no fear of change. But now, here, in the old River Gate drawing-

room, haunted by Celia, it seemed as if she had only to stretch out her hand, to take her power again.

"Why do I say that?" she said. "Because you are hard, like the rest of the world. You can't make allowances. You like people to be unhappy if you think they ought. Not that I care," she went on with the strangest sob in her voice. "I might have reckoned on losing all my friends; and after all, you are not one of them."

Paul turned round quickly then, and looked at her.

"Yes, I am," he said boyishly. "I don't know what you are talking about; but I suppose the Canon has taken things by the wrong handle somehow. I will do anything in the world for you—only tell me yourself what all this bother is about."

"Oh, Paul, how nice you are!" murmured Celia, with a slight, sad laugh which ended in a sigh. The trouble she was in, whatever it might be—Paul could not guess or understand—was evidently something that moved the depths of her nature. He was reminded of old days, of times when she had said, half passionately, that she was not good enough for him; but especially of that hour in the *Hôtel des Deux Frères*, five years ago, when she had tried to win him back. She was in earnest then, and now.

"I have told my news once," she said, after a little pause, "and really, do you know, I don't feel inclined to do it again. I can see you mean to be kind—thank you—perhaps you won't be so hard upon me; but after all it is no business of yours. And you are rather conventional, and you will be awfully shocked and think me very heartless. That, of course, I am, as the world looks at things. Yes—you, of all people, will think I am made of stone. And yet I fancy somehow that you, of all people, will be the one to understand me."

Paul listened to these rather disjointed remarks, and at the end of them he smiled.

"I think you had better tell me all about it," he said.

"Certainly not," she said quickly, "if you have changed so utterly as to laugh at what I tell you. That is worse than Uncle Tom. My affairs have been no laughing matter, Paul, for some time past."

"Who knows that, if I don't!" he replied gently. "I smiled because I thought what you said was true—that I did understand you. I beg your pardon."

"I believe you are the honestest man in the world," she said, looking at him.

"At present I am the most curious."

"Don't be cynical," she said. Her colour deepened; she leaned back in her chair, her face shaded by a screen. "I will make my confession," she said. "I don't wish to excuse myself—but I will just ask you to try and realise the sort of strain and loneliness that I have been suffering lately."

"Of course—it is only natural," Paul said very low, as she seemed to pause for an answer. He had forgotten, for the moment, in the absorbing interest of herself and her talk, that only two months had passed since her husband was brought home dead. The shadow of the tragedy fell upon him, for the moment, in an almost overwhelming way. "You, of all people, will think that I am made of stone!" Yes, Celia; but what was she driving at? What did she mean? She, watching him keenly, was quite aware of a touch of wonder and coldness in his manner, which had been so friendly just now. Her own voice was harder when she spoke again; the effort, to do her justice, was a really painful one.

"Paul," she said, "I am going to be married again. It may not surprise you very much—to Vincent." She paused, while he stood perfectly silent, staring into the fire. "There goes your friendship," she said lightly, with a laugh which was sadder to him than tears. "Well, you are just like the others, only rather worse, because they stormed. Can't you say something to me, Paul?"

"I can say nothing that you will listen to," he said, after a moment. "It is not me that you are hurting this time."

"I am hurting no one," she said, almost passionately. "No, no one. I cannot be expected to go back to France, to live among all those people who hate me in their hearts. Put yourself in my place, Paul: if anybody ever could, you can. Why should I be condemned to go on living a life like that, just out of respect to what people will say?"

"But you are not alone——"

"You mean Antoinette. She will be better without me. She has been very sweet to me always—but now—well, we don't and can't understand each other."

"She doesn't know?"

"Not yet, no. I can't tell her. I may write to her."

"Perhaps she need not know yet. It would be less painful as time goes on——"

"There is not much time to spare," said Celia. "You understand, don't you? He sails in three weeks, and I am going with him."

It was a moment or two before those words penetrated to Paul's brain, and then he gave no outward sign of sorrow or surprise. He only said, as if speaking to himself: "Is that really possible!" and then his strange talk with Celia was ended, for the door opened, and Mrs. Percival and Antoinette came in together.

Mrs. Percival did not look pretty or attractive; she was pale, and her eyes were red. Antoinette was pale, too, thinner and older than in summer days, but the clear delicacy of her young face, the dark beauty of her eyes, were more remarkable than ever; and she met Paul with a smile that had something of the old happiness in it. He both felt and looked serious enough, and at that moment, perhaps, Celia fell to her very lowest depths in his esteem. There was the width of the world, certainly, between a woman like her and a girl like this; and somehow, with a keen thrill of pain, Paul felt himself unworthy to touch the girl's hand.

Mrs. Percival looked curiously from him to Celia, and then began talking to him, rather absently, about his journey and the fog. Paul, answering her questions, was all the time watching Antoinette. She, quite unknowing of this, had moved forward to the chair in which her stepmother lay motionless, and now, as she stood there, her hand was on Celia's shoulder. After a moment Celia's hand stole up to meet it, held it, pressed it softly against her cheek in a little caress. The thing was all done in the shadow, quickly and silently; but Paul saw it without looking, and thought about it very much afterwards. Perhaps it was as well for Celia that one person did not yet know the worst of her; and yet this person, the most injured, the most insulted, surely ought to know.

Then came dinner, and Canon Percival, who received Paul with gracious dignity, and offered his arm to the Marquise de Montmirail with ceremony worthy of Louis the Fourteenth.

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"LANCE, I'll undertake never to do it again. No—not if I live to be a hundred."

It was Sir Peter's first day downstairs. He was getting a breath of fresh air and "a little exercise," by walking up and down the big inner hall of the house; every one of whose long Gothic windows stood wide open.

Lance, on his way through the hall, had stopped to congratulate the old gentleman on his release from the sick-room.

"No, I dare say you won't do it again—catch the measles I suppose you mean. It would be rather difficult to have them a third time, wouldn't it?" he said, in response to Sir Peter's energetic assertion.

"No, no, no! That goes without saying. I mean get out of bed again in the middle of the night to walk off the cramp. I say, Lance?" this was added in a tone that signalled an interesting communication at hand.

"Yes, what is it?" answered Lance.

Sir Peter walked on tip-toes to the door, looking right and left, came back again and peered out of one of the windows.

"Down at the farm," said Lance, answering the action as well as the look on the old gentleman's face, which said plainly as words could, "Where is she?"

Sir Peter drew a breath of relief.

"Broughton has ordered me away—to 'complete the cure,' he says, and—and— and Lady Judith insists on carrying me off into Devonshire on a visit to some of her people!"

"Oh, well, if she insists, there's no more to be said. Submit, and be carried off."

"But—but I don't intend to be carried off, and, what's more, I won't be carried off. No, I won't—I won't," said Sir Peter irritably, working himself into what Lance was generally pleased to call a "pucker."

"Well, then, I should say you won't, and stick to it if I were you."

"Yes, yes, of course, exactly. That's what I intend to do," said the old gentleman with dignity, as if it were his invariable custom to treat Lady Judith's behests with out-spoken resistance. "And I was thinking, Lance, that a little trip to town with you—say for a week, or ten days—would be far more likely to do me good than a dreary fortnight in the wilds of Devon."

"Town in August! Heugh!"

Sir Peter read his own wishes into that shudder. "Well, of course it would be a little hard on you to ask you to lose a week, or ten days, of Madge's society," he began slyly.

But Lance interrupted him. "Get that notion out of your head at once and for ever, Uncle Peter," he said peremptorily. "I've told you a dozen times over that Madge hasn't the faintest liking for me, and I don't intend to worry her any more on the matter." He broke off for a moment to give time for the sly look to die on Sir Peter's face. Not a bit of it, it remained as steadily fixed on his happy, infantine features as if it had been stereotyped there. "Talk away, my boy," it seemed to say. "But, for all that, I know what I know."

Lance grew more and more exasperated. "Look here, Uncle Peter, listen to reason," he began. Then he checked himself. As well talk logic to the eight-and-twenty Critchetts who smiled down on them from the walls as to Uncle Peter with that wise

look peeping from under his eyelids, and that sugary, benignant smile curving the corners of his mouth. Besides, a sudden idea had at that moment occurred to him. A few days in town alone with Uncle Peter would suit very well a plan that was hatching in his brain.

The notion that he was "an unlucky beggar," because he had never had the chance of a career in life offered him, had not died so soon as he had given utterance to it to Madge. On the contrary, it had been slowly gathering strength. What he had said to Madge he was in effect repeating to himself in one form or another all day long: "Suppose I were to offend Uncle Peter utterly, irretrievably, and he were to cut me off with a shilling, how on earth should I get my bread and butter?" It would be a splendid idea to get Sir Peter all to himself for a day or two, and have a little serious talk with him on one or two matters.

So he mastered his inclination to combat Uncle Peter's wise look and sugary smile, and instead said, a little condescendingly, perhaps, "Make it three days in town, and possibly I may be able to manage it."

Sir Peter rubbed his hands gleefully. "I felt sure you would when you thought it over! You see at the longest we can't be away very long. My birthday, as you know, will be on the twenty-first. Well, I must be home at least a week before that to see that everything is going on all right—people want so much looking after—do you remember last year that tent suddenly giving way at one corner?—that was the only one I hadn't given an eye to while they were driving the pegs in. It's wonderful to me, truly wonderful that—"

"Let's get back to ways and means," interrupted Lance, striding after Sir Peter, who was just completing his thirtieth measurement of the long room, and now stood in the doorway. "Look here, Uncle Peter, let's have a trot together, and arrange affairs while we take our exercise. Now, then! what if Aunt Judy insists on accompanying us?"

But the mere suggestion of such a possibility brought Sir Peter to a standstill at once.

"Not to be thought of for a moment," he said with a fine air of decision. "She would have to be reasoned with. You might do it, Lance—you have great influence, very great influence, I may say, with her. You might explain to her that—that she couldn't very well be away

from Upton just now with so much to arrange for—for the ball on my birthday; that Madge would be lost without her; that her farm just at this time of year requires—"

"I have it!" interrupted Lance. "The farm's the thing! You write to that man in town who keeps her supplied with farm implements, and tell him to send down the latest sweet thing in incubators or butter-workers. And then tell that other man at Carstairs to send over a dozen or two of Houdans and Crève-cœur, and what's that other leggy sort—Brahmas? That'll do it. The poultry will have to be dieted, and the machines will have to be tested. We're all right now, Uncle Peter!"

Lance's suggestions, with modifications, were adopted. Lady Judith's eyes were gladdened one morning by the arrival of a small van-load of farming implements, and before the glow of pleasure caused by their unexpected appearance had time to subside, Lance and Sir Peter had packed their portmanteaux and departed.

"So thoughtful of Lance—Sir Peter tells me it was entirely his idea," said Lady Judith to Madge as she carried her off to the farm to inspect the new purchases. "But there, he is a good fellow at heart—I've always said so—in spite of his heedlessness and want of respect for his elders!"

Madge was disposed to hail this trip of Sir Peter's as arranged by a special interposition of Providence. She had crept out of her hiding-place in the churchyard, and had made her way home through the twilight shadows with but one thought in her mind—that Miss Shore's visit at the Castle must be brought to an end with as little delay as possible. The absence from home of Sir Peter and Lance seemed to render this idea comparatively easy of accomplishment. She would take matters into her own hands as soon as they were gone, tell the young lady that she had altered her mind as to the decoration of her boudoir, pay her handsomely for what pictures she had already done, and speed her heartily on her journey to "the North," whether it were to the region of the Arctic Pole or merely to that of North Britain.

Lance would come home and find that the mysterious guest had departed. "Out of sight out of mind," Madge reasoned hopefully with herself. No love-making so far as she knew had passed between the two, although a very fair prelude to love-making appeared to have been

sounded. She stifled the angry jealousy which threatened to rise up in her heart with the thought that the occasion was not worth it. Once let this mysterious and attractive young woman disappear from the scene, and Lance would return to his former allegiance to herself, and things no doubt, by the help of Sir Peter, would be happily arranged between them.

She had come to the conclusion that, until Sir Peter's return, she would not hand to him the Australian letter. Among Sir Peter's numerous child-like propensities was that of proclaiming aloud in the market-place every secret whispered into his ear. He might promise her a thousand times over that Lance should know nothing of this newly-found heir until matters were satisfactorily arranged, and the Cohen wealth as good as handed over to his keeping; but once give Sir Peter up to Lance's sole influence, as would be the case during a week's stay in town, and his promises would be as nothing. After Lance's future had been definitely arranged, she would, she said to herself, do penance for her subterfuge by making a full confession to Sir Peter, explaining to him the motives of her action.

So Sir Peter came downstairs, fingered his correspondence, sent the study carpet a little farther on its road to ruin, made the house lively with bell-ringing, effected generally a transformation-scene wherever he shed the light of his countenance, and finally departed in company with Lance. And the little key which represented a mighty secret hung still on Madge's watch-chain, and the burden of the untold tidings lay heavy on her heart.

"I hope your sketches are getting on satisfactorily, my dear," said Sir Peter to Madge as he jumped into the dog-cart and took his seat beside Lance. He glanced in the direction in which Miss Shore and her easel were generally established. "Nice young woman that! Nice to look at; nice to speak to! Wish she'd be a little more communicative though—did my best yesterday to draw her out about herself and her people—she must have people of some sort you know—but couldn't succeed—"

"Chickabiddies all right, Aunt Judy?" interrupted Lance, catching sight of Lady Judith's advancing figure. But his eyes, to Madge's fancy, went wandering over "Aunt Judy's" head in the same direction as Sir Peter's.

Sir Peter had another "last word" to say. It was:

"You'll see to my correspondence while I'm away, Madge, and it's bound to be all right. You've a capital head for business, though you won't acknowledge it."

The words stung Madge like so many hornets.

"Why should I be made to do an unworthy thing," she had said to herself two nights before in Saint Cuthbert's churchyard, as she resolutely trampled under foot the burning desire to play the listener a little longer. Yet, as the echo of Sir Peter's words repeated itself in her ears, she felt herself to be doing a very unworthy thing in thus withholding his private correspondence from him.

"For Lance, for Lance," she said to herself, hiding her face in the thick fur of old Roy's tawny coat. "We would die for him—you and I—wouldn't we, Roy?"

Roy, understanding perfectly, licked first her hand inside and out, then her cheek and behind her ear by way of response in the affirmative.

"And we hate her—both of us, don't we, Roy?" she went on. "And we'll do our best to get rid of her! But, oh dear, what if she won't go—cries and says she has no friends, or hangs about the place till Lance comes back, and she can begin her wiles once more!"

Here Roy—like all well-bred dogs, a master of the art of thought-reading—once more expressed canine sympathy.

"Oh for a counsellor!" she sighed. "If I could but turn you into Balaam's ass and get a word of advice out of you, you dear old thing!"

"Speak of an angel and you will hear its wings," says the proverb. Madge's sigh for a counsellor was answered so soon as it was out of her mouth, though not by the rustling of wings—by the slow, soft footsteps of obsequious Mr. Stubbs.

"I am so sorry to disturb you, Mrs. Cohen," he began, after carefully shutting the door behind him. "I merely wished to say that when I handed Sir Peter his letters yesterday morning I did not say a word about the important letter you have to give to him."

An important letter! How did this man know it was important, and what did he know of her motives in keeping it back? Madge wondered, staring at him blankly.

"Yes, that was right," was all she dared to say, however, hoping that he

would consider himself answered and depart.

Not so he. He stood in front of her, surveying her calmly through his half-closed eyes.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cohen," he began, "but have you given a thought to my little request of the other day, respecting my poor boy and his embarrassments?"

Madge was no match for this man, with his effrontery and cunning. Partly from the wish to get rid of him, partly from fear lest he might betray her secret, she rang the bell and desired her maid to bring her cheque-book.

Mr. Stubbs was profuse in his thanks; they flowed in an unctuous stream, like oil from a pierced olive.

"Does he think I am going to give him a thousand pounds?" thought Madge contemptuously. Her pen paused at the figures it was about to write.

"You said!" she queried, looking up at him.

"I said fifty pounds," he replied without a moment's hesitation; "but if you would make it seventy, madam, I should be infinitely obliged to you."

Madge's pen, after a moment's pause, traced the words that transferred seventy pounds from her banking account to Mr. Stubbs's purse.

"There," she thought, "I'm paying him handsomely for keeping my secret for a few days. But I'll take good care that Sir Peter gets rid of him so soon as things are arranged a little."

Mr. Stubbs stood in front of her, cheque in hand, executing a series of profound bows.

"You may count on my deepest gratitude—my life-long gratitude, madam," he said again and again.

Madge's formal bow in acknowledgement was intended as a signal of dismissal. He did not so take it. From thanks he passed on to proffers of service.

"If I can at any moment be of the slightest service, you may rely upon me, madam."

And then he suddenly dropped both thanks and proffers of service, came a step nearer to Madge, gave one furtive glance at the door, and said almost in a whisper:

"Does it not strike you as a very extraordinary thing, madam, that Miss Shore should be invariably so anxious to see the morning papers?"

Madge fixed contemptuous eyes on him. It was easy to read his meaning. It was:

"I am willing enough to do any amount of dirty work for you, provided you keep your cheque-book always handy."

"Why should I be made to do an unworthy thing?" was the indignant cry that once more rose up in her heart. Hard-pressed as she might be for counsellors, it was not to such a creature as this that she would apply for aid.

"I have never given the matter a thought," was her reply, in tones so frigid that Mr. Stubbs could not but feel himself dismissed, and withdrew accordingly.

A VERY BAD INDIAN.

I WAS bound to capture him. He was a veritable "bad Injun," and half the rascalities and atrocities committed during the rebellion lay at his door. Information had reached me that he was in hiding at Saddle Lake, in a small encampment of Crees, who had settled there for their winter quarters; so, leaving behind me a strong force of men to guard the little army of prisoners and witnesses I had already collected, I set out to look for *Papa-mas-so-wit*.

I took with me a sergeant, and a single constable, and François, my servant-interpreter, accompanied us in a buckboard, which carried our tent and little stock of provisions.

We were told, by friendly Indians near the camp, that Saddle Lake was distant only thirty miles; so we expected to make the trip and return the same day. We must have looked oddly picturesque that autumn morning, limned against the sky, as we halted on the hill-ridge for a moment, and waved our good-bye to the camp below us. Our horses looked bigger even than they were, under the huge Mexican saddles, with their double pommels, and broad wooden stirrups; for ourselves, booted and spurred, easy in loose duck jackets, and broad sombreros, we carried our rifles and pistols, and felt secure against almost any contingency.

We rode steadily on till noon, following the beaten trail which wound like a huge serpent before us, and then, hot and tired, we stopped by a pond of brackish water to eat our midday meal. The horses were of course first attended to, and after being dried and rubbed down, were hobbled and turned off to rest. We lay, ourselves, on the shady side of the buckboard, to escape the broiling sun-rays: and while François

was getting out the kettle, and spreading the table, we stretched our cramped legs. A fire was soon lit, and a pot of water scooped from the swamp-pond. But alas! the water was bitter and alkaline as the springs of Mara, coated with a scum of grey, green sedge, and positively alive with water-lice. A towel, with which the sergeant was drying his face, was pressed into service, and did duty as a strainer, for our stomachs rebelled at the water-lice! When the water was fairly cleansed, it was set on the fire, and as it neared the boiling-point, a double handful of tea-leaves was thrown in. Innocent of sugar and milk, and flavoured with the dust and sand which blew into the pot with every gust of wind—this was our prairie tea. Hard tack, in the shape of ship-biscuits dipped in a pan of boiling lard, completed our repast. We had tin plates, and each his knife and fork, and he who desired more tea dipped his pannikin into the boiling pot and helped himself.

Think of it, ye gentle dames who sip your Souchong from dainty cups, over the gossip of the drawing-room, or confidences of the boudoir—think of the prairie trooper, as he drinks his nauseating mixture, and pity him.

We had ridden since daybreak, and conjectured, therefore, that we were close to our journey's end, so we rested long, and beguiled the time with tobacco. At last, rested and refreshed, we extinguished our fire, packed up our plates and tea-pot, and rode off again.

All round us, stretching away to the horizon, was the rolling prairie land. Here and there were little belts of wood, and sun-dried swamps, from which wild rabbits scuttled, and huge owls came flying. The prairie chickens ran past us within easy range, and wild duck came whirring o'er-head all afternoon. At our feet the gophers swarmed, and ever and anon our horses plunged into a network of their little holes and floundered for a moment hopelessly, until a touch of the spurs steadied them and sent them on again, throwing up clouds of dust and dry mould, which blackened us from head to foot.

Hour after hour we travelled on, until the air grew cooler and the sun was setting like a huge red fireball before us. We had ridden fifty miles at least, and as yet there was no sign of the lake. Evidently we had been misinformed as to the distance; we looked vainly in the gathering gloom for

signs of curling smoke, and then, angry and weary, dismounted for another meal.

We did not linger long this time, nor did we lie and smoke when our meal was over; fortunately there was fine moonlight, and we were soon in the saddle again and pushing on.

How still the night was, and how cool and sweet the air, after the awful scorching of the sun. The horses were tired, but strong, and carried us bravely; the sergeant had not long recovered from an attack of mountain fever, and was complaining of exhaustion; while François, driving behind us, carols out some half-breed ditty, which rings out clearly and swells occasionally into a chorus with which the hoof-beats chime. We rode on and on till a glance at my watch told me the witching hour was close at hand, and then we held a council of war and resolved to ride another mile, until we reached a clump of trees seen in the distance, where we would rest for the night.

We reached the trees and found a broad stream running past them, but it was too dark to attempt to cross it, so we dismounted and looked about us for a comfortable spot on which to camp. Jones and François pitched the little tent, while the sergeant and I looked to the horses.

We unhitched the buckboard ponies, and turned to the horses to unsaddle them, but as he neared his own, the sergeant staggered; the long day's journey had told upon him, and he sank fainting at my feet. A dash of cold water and a sip from my brandy-flask restored him, and by-and-by the tent was up, the horses fed and roped, and the little camp hushed and still. What if we had no feather-beds, and if our boots did duty for pillows?

We were stiff and tired, and our blankets soft and warm; the scent of the sweet grasses and the leafy trees was borne to us on every breeze, and we fell asleep to the music of the water as it gurgled gently by.

We slept until the sun was shining brightly next morning, and regretted that the night had passed so soon. François rose first, to light a fire and get breakfast ready, and while he was thus occupied, he emptied our rifles and revolvers of their cartridges and proceeded to clean and oil them, that they might be ready at a moment's notice, should the necessity for using them arise.

Whilst we were thus engaged, we heard voices outside the tent, and looking out

saw a tall, well-built Indian on a pony conversing with François, who had just started a magnificent fire. The stranger informed us that we were within a stone's throw of Saddle Lake, which lay just across the river, and was eighty-five miles distant from the camp we had left the day before. This fully accounted for the long ride we had taken, and for the stiffness of our limbs when the end was reached.

As the Indian was communicative and friendly, I asked him to sit down and eat with us, an invitation which was at once accepted, for the Indian loves tea and would sell his entire family for a handful. In the course of the conversation which followed he was asked his name, and astounded us by telling us that he was Pa-pa-mas-so-wit.

Here, indeed, was a stroke of luck—to have the very man we were pursuing walk quietly into our tent, and to capture him without a shot or struggle. Surely the Fates were kind to us that morning. Our hospitality at once took the form of a leg-iron, attached by a chain to a heavy iron ball, and with this he was, in spite of struggle and protestation, invested. When he found that we were deaf alike to threat and persuasion, he appeared to resign himself to his fate; but never was there a craftier rascal.

Edging himself slowly to where our arms were lying, he seized a revolver, and putting it to his head, snapped the trigger twice in rapid succession. Here was a clear attempt at suicide, which, but for the fact of our guns being empty, would have been highly successful.

After this, I thought it necessary that he should be closely watched, and Jones was specially detailed to guard him. While François busied himself with the camp work, the sergeant and I strolled down to the water to talk over the day's plans. We had not been many minutes there when we were astounded to see Pa-pa-mas-so-wit come cantering towards us on his pony, with his leg-weight supported in one hand. Before we could stop him, he had crossed the stream, and, as he vanished over the brow of the incline beyond, treated us to a war-whoop, the length and ferocity of which I never heard equalled. I ran at once for a horse, and found my own already haltered, having just been ridden to water. Without waiting for coat, or hat, or saddle, I gave chase, and in ten minutes I was up to him and calling on him to stop. This he refused to do, yelling

defiance, and urging his cayense to its utmost speed.

As I came alongside of him he tried to strike me with the chain and weight; but, fortunately, it was too short to be of much service as a weapon, and as he swayed for a moment in the saddle, I caught him by the neck and threw him to the ground. He was humiliated, but not conquered, and it required a couple of sounding kicks to induce him to move towards the tent from which he had so lately fled. Meantime, the sergeant had been seeking an explanation from Jones, and that worthy had urged, by way of excuse, that he had thought it impossible for his prisoner to escape, weighted as he was, and so had been less mindful of him than, perhaps, he ought to have been.

With a caution to be more careful, Jones was again given charge of the Indian, and vowed that he would not let him stir out of his sight again by so much as a single inch.

Finding himself now a prisoner in earnest, Pa-pa-mas-so-wit sought to curry favour with us by informing us that there were two more "bad Injuns" not far away who were equally guilty with himself of crimes charged to him. Getting from him full particulars regarding the men, and the direction of the camp, we prepared to set out and compass their arrest.

I determined on taking François with us as interpreter, and Jones was left behind to watch our crafty prisoner. François being a "non-combatant," had neither arms nor horse, so I gave Jones his choice of rifle or revolver with which to guard his quarry, and when he had chosen the latter, gave François his horse and rifle, and away we rode. In half-an-hour we saw the blue smoke of the Indian teepees, and soon were close upon the camp. As we neared it, a squaw rushed out, and we could hear her call shrilly in the direction of the tents behind her. A moment after, two braves rushed out, and, leaping on their ponies, fired each an arrow in our direction, and galloped off like the wind. Our carried rifles, the broad yellow stripes in our breeches, and our short horse-tails proclaimed us clearly to be police, and the fugitives had no desire to inspect us more than they could possibly help.

Then came a chase in which was all the excitement and exhilaration of a fox-hunt or a steeple-chase. Our oat-fed horses were stronger and swifter than the wiry ponies

of the Indians; but they were heavily weighted, and not as cunning in picking their way as the hardy cayuses, so the race was even.

For forty minutes we tore along, now up to the girths in water, now hidden by the rushes, through bush, and brake, over swamp and sand-hill. To fire at the pace we were going meant only to waste good ammunition, so we rode on silently till the foam flecks spattered us like sea-spray. At last we gained upon them, and diverging so as to form a semi-circle, we surrounded them with rifles levelled, and they surrendered with military honours, being at once unhorsed, but allowed to retain their bows and arrows.

We discovered through François that the prisoners were the men we wanted, so we joggled quietly back with minds at ease in the direction of the wigwams, now lying far behind us.

We made a considerable detour in going back, to gain an easy ford which one of our captives volunteered to show us, and as we neared the water, a magnificent antelope sprang up in front of us and dashed away for dear life. I confess to having had a genuine attack of buck fever just then. I have shot pigeons from traps, and snipe in the marshes, and scored bull's eyes on a target without a tremor; but when this creature flashed before me, I was so dumb-founded that I let him get clear away, and when I did fire, saw the dust rise up a score of yards behind him. Calling to the sergeant to look to his men, and unmindful of the exhausted state of my horse, I dashed in the spurs, and was soon flying in mad pursuit. How long I would have kept up the chase I know not, but I became suddenly conscious of a heavy stagger on the part of my horse, heard a wild sob that told of a desperate effort, and found myself lying on my back in a blind hole about ten feet deep. How the horse saved himself from falling in was a miracle; had he done so he would have crushed my life out in a moment. When I got up, bruised and sore, and hardly able to scramble into the saddle, with my breeches split at the knees, and my spurs twisted like corkscrews, the antelope had disappeared, and I rejoined my companions, blushing like a schoolboy, and feeling desperately foolish.

We arrived in due time at the encampment, and great was the grief of the squaws when they saw that we had caught the runaways.

We left the captured ponies there, and were followed by the entire camp as we marched on with the prisoners towards our own tent. What an odd procession we must have made; first came the sergeant and François on horseback, and between them, with tied hands, walked the captives. Next them I rode, keeping an eye on the quartet, and behind me on foot came a long string of weeping squaws, sympathising braves, and half-naked children, wondering, no doubt, what the end was to be. We reached the hill-top overlooking the stream near which our tent was pitched, and as we stood upon it a fierce oath burst from the sergeant's lips: "Look at him!" was all he said, and a glance was quite sufficient to tell the story. There, on his back, lay Jones fast asleep, his snoring distinctly audible a hundred feet away, and Pa-pa-mas-so-wit was gone. It was all I could do to keep the sergeant from "drawing a bead" on the sleeping wretch, and firing point-blank at him. Even François assured me that "Him woman-man, big squaw, no good."

We awoke the sleeper in manner forcible, and he had not a word to say, of course, in self-defence. I put him under arrest and left him to his own meditations, which I afterwards found he had softened with copious doses from my bottle of "Pain Killer" in lieu of more ardent liquor, which was prohibited in the territory.

Turning to the assembled Indians, I told them of Pa-pa-mas-so-wit's escape, and threatened them with direful penalties if they did not at once assist me to capture him. Soon a hunt was organised, and high and low we sought him; after a few hours we found the chain and leg-iron close to his camp, and we knew that he had picked the lock and gone.

Sorrowfully we turned to our tent and poured out the vials of our wrath upon the bewildered Jones, and then we sat down to a dinner which was tasteless save for the sauce of bitter disappointment. After we had eaten we secured the services of a clever-looking young guide to try to track the fugitive; once more we mounted our horses and followed fast and far our sharp-eyed guide as he galloped along, spying out the trail in places where we would never have thought of looking for it. Through all the hot afternoon we rode until the grey streaks of the fading day fell in about us, and then, worn out and disheartened, we gave up the chase and went back. Money we had none with

which to recompense our scout, for silver and gold is not a plentiful commodity with the police-trooper; but that night we visited the tents of his people and rewarded him with a penknife, a wooden pipe, a plug of tobacco, and a pair of braces; for the squaws we produced a package of tea, which was there and then boiled and drank, and we forgot for the moment, under the smiles of the dark-skinned Houris, the fatigues and disappointments of the day.

At daybreak, next morning, we prepared to start on our homeward trip, and just as our tent was packed we saw our Indian guide come across the stream ford. His face was bright with yellow paint, telling of some victory achieved or about to follow, and behind him came his squaw, carrying his gaudy blanket and his Government rifle. Coming up to me he grasped my hand and told me that I was "white and comely, and big and strong;" but he added, "no pale face has ever pulled me up across a stick, for I have the strength of Manitou the Great Spirit." Tickled with his challenge, I accepted it; a rifle was quickly emptied of its charge, and we sat down feet to feet on the dew-covered grass, grasping the weapon in the middle, each pulling with might and main to raise the other to his feet. Hard and long I strained, but could not move my dusky brother, while he tugged in vain at me. By mutual consent we paused for breath, while the birds above us trilled out a song by way of interlude, and then we commenced again. The Indian offered to wager his squaw that he would pull me up, and the sergeant, always loyal to his superior officer, accepted the bet, and put up his blanket and knife and fork as against the damsel. At it we went in earnest, our prisoners yelling for their companion, and the sergeant and François, and even dejected Jones, for me. Here, in the nineteenth century, was the old race struggle for supremacy being again enacted. Here was a contest fought "for keeps," into which no professional dishonesty entered, and which the best man alone could win.

Jove! what a pull! My arms seemed bursting from their sockets, and my breath came and went in sobs and gasps, while my opponent was wet with perspiration, and his eyes swollen and bloodshot. Again we stopped, and again commenced, this time almost too weak to pull at all. With a desperate effort I threw myself backward

and slowly pulled the Indian almost to his feet. Almost, but that was all. As he sank again the impetus gave him fresh strength, and with a yell that rang through the wood, and floated up to the very heavens, he pulled me up, and with a final mighty heave, sent me flying over his head to measure my length a second time on the prairie sand. I rose defeated, and presented the victor with laurels in the shape of two tallow candles and a piece of pork, which he received with delight and dignity. The sergeant paid over blanket and knife and fork, but insisted on a kiss from the squaw, which she not only granted to him but bestowed on us all. So with the nectar of her kisses on our lips, and the laughter of the Indian in our ears, we rode away; as we reached the hill-top we looked back and saw the squaw still standing where we left her, resplendent in the sergeant's blanket, which the breeze blew round her lithesome form, whilst at her feet sat her lord, illustrating with bent back and outstretched arms how he had vanquished the pale-faced trooper, and saved his darling from captivity.

COLONEL EDWARD MARCUS DESPARD.

THAT a man, who had been thanked by the King and by the Jamaica House of Assembly for the way in which he fortified that island, and who had also received the special thanks of Government for his conduct of the expedition to Yucatan, should, twenty years after, be engaged in a conspiracy to seize the Tower and the Bank, and to shoot, with the big gun in the Park, the King and Queen on their way to open Parliament—his only associates being some thirty soldiers and bricklayers' labourers, his arms and appliances absolutely nil, his preparations none—seems one of the strangest inconsistencies that this world has ever seen.

No wonder his latest biographer, Mr. Morse Stephens, says "the whole plan is so ridiculous that it cannot be regarded seriously."

The poor man was mad; he was convicted on the evidence of so-called accomplices, and, at any other time and with any other judge than Lord Ellenborough, the whole thing would have been quashed, the soldiers implicated would have been handed over to the Provost-Marshal—those were the days of

flogging—and the Colonel's friends would have been bound over to take care of him. Instead of that, the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, the Common Serjeant, another Serjeant, six juniors, and the Solicitor to the Treasury were arrayed against a poor creature, whom almost every word that the approvers alleged showed to be "non compos mentis."

The Despardes were a fighting family. Out of six brothers—of whom Marcus was the youngest—all save the eldest were in the army. His brother John distinguished himself in the American War; he took part in twenty-four engagements, he was thrice shipwrecked, twice made prisoner, and twice had his horse killed under him—a record of service which, had he been a hanger-on of some political leader instead of merely being the son of a Queen's County squire, of old Huguenot stock, would have gained him a worthier reward than the colonelcy of a West India regiment.

Edward Marcus was a born engineer. When only twenty years old he showed his talent in Jamaica; and a few years later the Commander of the San Juan Expedition wrote to the Governor of Jamaica:

"There was scarcely a gun fired but what was pointed by Captain Nelson of the 'Hinchinbrooke,' or by Lieutenant Despard, Chief Engineer, who has exerted himself on every occasion."

Sir J. Dalling, the new Governor, sent him, a few years later, to the Mosquito shore to support our logwood-cutters against the Spaniards; but as soon as the Count de Grasse, with his great fleet, bore down on Jamaica, Despard was hastily recalled to superintend the fortifying of the island. When Rodney's victory had made Jamaica safe, Despard was shunted to the Black River, where, with the help of a few artillerymen, he took possession of all the Spanish settlements. The Jamaica House of Assembly requested the new Governor, Sir Archibald Campbell, to make him a Colonel of Provincials; but Campbell did not like him, and sent him off again to Yucatan, with the title of Superintendent of His Majesty's Affairs, and the miserably inadequate salary of five hundred a year.

He got on very well with the Spaniards, persuading them to give up a small island for a pilot to live on, and also to allow the logwood-cutters to grow vegetables. But before long, quarrels broke out

between the old English settlers and Despard's new men. The settlers were there quite contrary to treaty; for, at the peace of 1783, Yucatan had been opened to the English on condition that they should do nothing but cut logwood. The old settlers, however, some seven hundred in number, had already established themselves in spite of the Spaniards; and the new men, numbering about two thousand, were naturally aggrieved at the difference of their status. They could only grow vegetables on sufferance, while the others were permanent inhabitants.

Despard, anxious to uphold the treaty, sided with his own men, and the old settlers got so discontented that they trumped up a pack of charges against him for vexatiously interfering with them and their "rights."

The House of Assembly dismissed the charges with contempt, and Lord Sydney, Colonial Secretary, pronounced them wholly frivolous; but three years after, Lord Grenville, Sydney's successor, was worried by Despard's enemies into suspending that officer and sending him to England.

For two years Despard was kept dangling about the Secretary of State's office, without being able to get his case looked into. At last, in 1792, he was told what everybody in the Spanish Main and in Jamaica knew already, that there was no real accusation against him. He, of course, asked for arrears of pay, if not for compensation. "No," was the reply; "your post was abolished when you vacated it. But you shan't be forgotten. Something will soon turn up for you."

This was not very satisfactory; but Despard had nothing for it but to wait, year after year, a man with a real grievance, and with vindictive enemies, out of touch, too, with those who were "the channels of preferment." Then came 1798, and very possibly the disappointed man—wary of urging his plea for compensation, sick at heart at seeing incapables put to work for which he had so amply proved his ability—may have said something about misgovernment being at the bottom of that rebellion. Further than that he certainly did not go. His family were Irish "loyalists," his brothers, like himself, in the army, and in the Ireland of that day there was not a trace of sympathy between men of Despard's class—the small squires and country gentry—and the rebels. But Pitt's system, in Ireland,

and just then in England, too, was the spy system; society was as honeycombed with informers as it was in France under the Second Empire. We of to-day rightly look on such a system as un-English, "Continental;" but human nature, even in England, takes only too kindly to it, as the records of the end of the last century abundantly prove. Despard was watched; and probably some hasty word led to his being seized and put into Coldbath Fields Prison. But even in "the good old days when George the Third was King," it was not easy to keep a man imprisoned against whom no charge could possibly be made; so, after a few weeks, he was released; but when, in the autumn of the same year, the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in England as well as in Ireland, he was again seized, and locked up in Tothill Fields Prison till 1800. Not only was nothing proved against him, but no attempt was ever made to connect him with the rebellion, or to bring any other accusation against him. He had been a nuisance; he had no friends in the public offices; and his ill-wishers simply took advantage of the exceptional state of things to get him out of the way.

Soured and embittered, he began to take up with the Socialist ideas which the French revolution had spread even in England. In the country, especially, he found the people very miserable; according to the testimony of travellers, a man could not ride into a village without being surrounded by half-starved beggars. They had no reason to love the Government, or the existing order of things. They were in the case of Romeo's apothecary: "the world had not loved them, nor the world's law." And when an educated gentleman—whose word always goes ten times as far with the poor as that of one of themselves—called them to consider how broken the present Constitution was; how the rogues flourished and honest men drooped; how His Majesty's Ministers might well be named man-eaters; how the House of Commons was a den of thieves—Cobbett, in his "English Grammar," illustrates the use of the two articles in much the same language: "The House of Commons is a pack of thieves"—and how easily fortunes might be equalised, as well as rights, civil, political, and religious; no wonder they listened and cheered, and by their talk and behaviour persuaded the Colonel that he had only to give the signal in order to be followed by thousands.

London then, as now, was Tory; there are too many solid interests at stake for Londoners to dabble in day-dreams; even Parliamentary reform was by-and-by forced on the metropolis by the pressure of the Northern towns. Despard saw that in London he had no chance; it was of the country that he used the words to which one "accomplice" after another swore like a set of parrots, "the people in the country, and in towns like Leeds, and Sheffield, and Birmingham, are ripe." He was a great walker. "I've walked twenty miles to-day," he said, "and the people are everywhere ripe where I've been." And yet, with a madman's inconsistency, he fixed on London for his rising, and actually believed that without any organisation, or any arms, he could take the Tower by a "coup de main," and then turn its guns upon the city. He had talked to a few soldiers, and to three or four discharged soldiers, had given them beer, and had listened to their grievances; and then, straightway, he came to the absurd conclusion that three or four hundred of the men now lying at the Tower had already joined what he called his "Constitution Society." The thing was pure delusion.

From the first he seems to have been got hold of by one of those scoundrels who would sell their mothers for a small reward. Windsor, a private in the Foot Guards, fell in with Despard, and at once thought money could be made out of him. He conferred with one Bownas, of the Transport Office, an army agent, and, advised by him, determined to help found the "Constitution Society," for the sake of by-and-by informing against its members. Indeed he was its most active founder. "Give me a hundred men," he would say, "and I'll get hold of the Tower." But there were others of a different stamp in the background; Lord Ellenborough and the Attorney-General both say so. With these men's eyes Government had long been watching Despard to try to connect him with the rising of 1798, only it was deemed advisable to keep them in the background.

Poor Despard, then, had been going up and down the country, airing his complaints against the War Office and the Colonial Secretary; glad to get a listener, and thinking that every listener was a sympathiser. His brother being Brigadier-General on the staff of the Severn division, he was often on the road to Shrewsbury, and no doubt in passing along he did hear a

good deal of disaffection; but it was never charged against him that he had administered the oath which the "approvers," truly or falsely, charged him with having got printed on cards, to a single person out of London. If he ever said that "the country was ripe," he was content to leave it so, and not to make the slightest effort to bring it over to his supposed projects. The men who were seized with him were chiefly Irish labourers and discharged soldiers. There is always in London a sufficient number of such, ready to talk treasonable nonsense with any one who will treat them. To tell such men that "every parish in the land was to form itself into a committee of fourteen, and then into seven, and that one of every seven was to come into the Parliament house," does not seem like business. Yet that was the sort of talk; the men listened, the "accomplices" egged Despard on, and he enjoyed the talking because he found among such audiences the pretence at least of that sympathy which had been denied to him by his employers.

After having watched Despard long enough, Government laid its hand upon him and his associates—nearly forty of them—at the Oakley Arms, in Lambeth. They had been in the habit of meeting at various obscure public-houses—the Ham and Windmill, in the Haymarket; the Tiger, on Tower Hill; the Flying Horse, Newington; the Bleeding Heart, in Charles Street, Hatton Garden, etc. Everywhere they were dogged by spies, and when in November, 1802, they were seized at the Oakley Arms, the Southwark police were met and assisted by a large body of Bow Street officers. About half of those captured were discharged, the object apparently being only to have enough to connect Despard with a plot of some kind. In February followed the trial, Lord Ellenborough, the Lord Chief Justice, and Justices Thompson, Le Blanc, and Chambré being on the Bench.

In charging the Grand Jury, Lord Ellenborough's aim was to show that "whereas no one can be legally punished except for an overt act of treason, an intention to commit treason is properly an overt act!"

The Grand Jury, composed of men like Lord Onalow, and bankers Glyn and Hankey and Thornton, brought in a true bill, and the trial speedily followed. The account published "from the shorthand of Joseph Gurney and William Brodie

Gurney," gives a list of jurors challenged by the Crown and the prisoner respectively. Why John March, Esq., and merchant, and Isaac Warner, Esq., and coal merchant, should be challenged by the Crown, save for known Liberal opinions, it is hard to say. What searching into the history of families would be needed to find out why the Crown objected to one coal merchant, the prisoner to another. The wonder is that in these cases no one thinks of objecting to the Judge. A man who had shown his bitter feeling as unmistakably as Lord Ellenborough did in his charge to the Grand Jury, was manifestly unfit to preside at the trial; he could not be impartial, nor indeed did he make the least effort to be so.

So Despard and some dozen labouring men were accused of conspiring to seize the Bank and the Tower, and arming themselves with the weapons therein contained, to fight with, kill, and destroy the soldiers of the King, and to stop the mail-coaches as a signal to divers other false traitors dwelling and being in divers parts of this kingdom, as an encouragement to them to raise, levy, and make an insurrection, rebellion, and war, and a cruel and bloody slaughter of the King's liege subjects! All this extensive programme the Attorney-General was to ask a jury to believe would have been carried out by an ex-Colonel of Jamaica Fencibles and a score or so of labourers and soldiers, who for some time had been meeting to drink his health and hear his talk. Government had, no doubt, some justification. In 1780, the streets of London had run with blood during riots got up by another half-mad enthusiast, Lord George Gordon; but there was this great difference: Lord George took up a popular cry and intensified it. "No Popery" would always, since Titus Oates's day, command a pretty big following in London. "No Popery" rioters, too, would be looked on with leniency, if met with approval, by many among what are now called "the classes." The Gordon riots had in them an element of success which was wholly wanting in this affair which was fathered on poor Despard. Nobody was likely to listen to him except field labourers, who might grumble, but who certainly had no intention of "rising;" no one would even drink his beer except a few discharged soldiers and Irish labourers, most of whom probably had friends who had suffered in 1798, and to whom, therefore, the most unpractical talk of revenge was

a consolation. The quaint oath, setting forth among the chief objects "an ample provision for the families of the heroes who shall fall in the contest, and providing a liberal reward for distinguished merit," is enough to stamp the whole thing as an absurdity; as Serjeant Best, who defended Despard, truly said: "The imagination of Cervantes was lame and feeble, compared with the projectors of this scheme. . . . One cannot make it more extravagant than in the way Colonel Despard is represented by one of the witnesses to have acted—that when one man, not so drunk as the rest, suggested a difficulty, he should say: 'If there is no one among this tattered regiment dare attack the King, guarded as he will be, I will break through the horse and foot guards, and do it with my single hand!' It is quite as probable this gentleman should attempt to do it singly, as that he should attempt to do it with the assistance of these persons."

For it was not, according to the evidence, true or concocted, a wild scheme of personal revenge, like Felton's killing of Buckingham, or Bellingham's shooting Prime Minister Percival. "The King must be put to death, and then the people will be at liberty," was the saying attributed to Despard. He looked for nothing for himself, his idea was—i.e. if the whole thing was not a trumped-up affair—to free the country from a system which just then many people thought was dragging England to ruin. "I would do it with my own hand," said Despard, on the testimony of Emblin, a Vauxhall watchmaker, who seems to have frequented the gatherings for amusement. And when some one suggested that shooting two of the horses in the King's coach was not enough, for the guards close to the window would cut any one in pieces who attempted such a thing, the Colonel added: "I have thought over this matter well, and my heart is callous." Who shall say whether or not Colonel Despard used those words, of which first the Attorney and Solicitor-General, and then the Lord Chief Justice, made such unscrupulous use? They were put into Emblin's mouth by the Crown counsel in what, to a reader of the evidence, seems a wholly unjustifiable way; but, if Despard did use them, they sufficiently prove that the poor man was, as his counsel suggested, "a fit inhabitant for Bethlem." Another witness said that when asked what would be done if the big Park gun failed to hit the Royal

carriage, the Colonel replied: "Then I must man-handle him!" (the King).

There is a comic element in all this, and in the playing hide-and-seek with soldiers in the public-houses between Tower Hill and Whitechapel; and witness Emblin seems to have entered into the fun, for he tells, with much reluctance, evidently having the fear of his wife before his eyes, how he gave threepence to the barmaid at the Flying Horse, and told her he would come and get a kiss next time. Serjeant Best's contention was that the evidence was inadmissible, being wholly the evidence of self-styled accomplices, which can only be used to support other evidence, and if used alone may lead to the most cruel miscarriage of justice; and that, even if admitted, it simply proved that Despard was a lunatic. He also strongly insisted that some remnant of the old Rights of Man Society had been trying to tamper with the soldiers, and, finding themselves foiled, had looked around for a scapegoat. Colonel Despard was the very man for their purpose; by accusing him they could shield themselves, and he, being a suspect of 1798, was one who could be accused with impunity. He brought evidence of character—Lord Nelson among others, who said: "We served together on the Spanish Main; we were together in the enemy's trenches, and slept in the same tent. I have lost sight of him for some years; if asked my opinion I should certainly have said: 'If he's alive he is certainly one of the brightest ornaments of the British army.'" Lord Ellenborough cut Nelson's evidence very short; and neither he nor even Sir Evan Nepean, at whose house Despard had often been a guest since his coming to England, could say much about him for the few years immediately before his arrest. Lord Ellenborough summed up heavily against him.

There is almost a personal vindictiveness in his way of explaining how intentions may be "overt acts," and how the evidence of accomplices is first-rate and unimpeachable.

The jury, in less than half an hour, brought in a verdict of guilty, and then his lordship, harping on the word "callous," entreated the poor fellow "to excite, revive, and renew in his mind an ardent and unceasing endeavour and purpose to subdue this insensibility of heart, and, by regaining a softened frame of affections, to work out that salvation which, from the infinite

mercy of God, may even yet be attainable by effectual penitence and prevailing prayers."

I hope judges do not torture a condemned man in that way nowadays. One does not care to pass judgement on past judges; but, to all appearance, anything more palpably unreal and artificial than this speech it is impossible to imagine. Despard simply remarked:

"Nothing has appeared in trial or evidence to prove that I am what you say—the seducer of these men."

One of the Irish labourers, Macnamara, said, with reference to the only evidence that could be considered in any way damaging:

"I am now under sentence of death. I declare before God this moment, and may God never receive me if I ever spoke a word to Windsor since I was born till I was brought into the house where the officer was."

After his sentence, Despard refused to attend chapel or to receive the sacrament, and, on the twenty-first of February, he and six others—Macnamara among them—were drawn on a hurdle to the Newington county jail. He made a long speech, and was loudly cheered by the crowd. They were then hanged for half an hour, cut down, and beheaded; the quartering and disembowelling, etc., "being graciously remitted." Despard's body was handed over to his widow, and was buried in Saint Paul's churchyard, near the north door.

Thus ended the career of a man of whom the proverb was notably true: "Injustice drives wise" (and brave) "men mad."

THE ROSE-WEAVERS.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III. THE DANCE.

A FAIRY LIKE scene was the open-air dance. Splendour could not be conjured up on this island. No wand could transform the flowery little Eden into the semblance of a Court. But the coloured lanterns hanging from the trees, the rose-garlands adorning the Royal tent, the white dresses of the maidens, the brilliant uniforms of the men, worked wonderful transformation. To the minds of the islanders, who had flocked together in a body to greet their King, the spectacle was enchanting, past belief.

If pomp was not to be transplanted to this sea-girt domain, no more was cere-

mony. The King, being as yet a bachelor, had brought no ladies in his train. To the naïve fisher-folk it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should dance with Ermengarde. The head forester was one of the leading personages of the island, and his daughter the fairest and most accomplished girl it could boast of. A burst of applause rose from the assembled crowd as the right royal-looking pair now stepped forth. If kingly the mien of this young man, but lately and unexpectedly called from a sailor's life to wear a crown, queenly also the tall, stately, golden-haired maiden now standing by his side.

Ermengarde had never looked more beautiful. An amount of hauteur, half-playful, half-serious, lent piquancy to her spirited loveliness. She was affronted with the King for the blunder into which he had entrapped her. She was half-inclined to accuse him of a frivolity of character, unsuspected in her guest of the day before.

"You see I am here to redeem my promise," he said, smiling. "I trust you are not displeased to find in me an old acquaintance?"

"Nay," said Ermengarde. "How can I help being displeased? I have lost one who might have been my friend."

"Can a King have no friends, then?" he asked, colouring with vexation, perplexed as well as bewitched by this island beauty. "You will make me wish that I could maintain yesterday's incognito for ever."

Ermengarde slightly blushed. She knew well enough that any breach of etiquette would be more than forgiven just now; all the more, she was determined not to commit any.

"Sire——" she began, intending to apologise for the freedom of the day before, and at the same time to convey a covert reproach.

He stopped her gaily and joyously.

"No ceremonies, no titles to-night, I entreat—I command. For this once, and for you, I am the King's-Messenger. Indeed I must have it so."

"Then," said Ermengarde brightly, "to the King's-Messenger I may openly say what is in my mind. He should not have come here under a false pretence. I might have compromised others beside myself."

The candid brow clouded over; the genial voice had a tone of bitterness in it as he replied:

"You have evidently a poor idea of human nature. Should I stoop to such meanness?"

"Pardon, a thousand times, I ask pardon," Ermengarde said, greatly vexed at the misinterpretation put upon her words. "I but meant to say that I might have given a wholly wrong impression of these good fisher-folk—see how loyal they are!" She smiled gaily, and added: "I believe I am the only malcontent in this part of your Majesty's dominions."

"You are not speaking to the King, remember," he replied. "But let me explain why I made that sudden raid upon you yesterday. You know my story. Who seemed less likely, a year ago, to inherit a crown than myself? One fine morning, I, the sailor Prince, am torn away from my free, careless life, and saluted with the title of King. That of Pope, Prime Minister, or Crown Lawyer would have been equally appropriate!"

"Unfortunately, a crown is not awarded as a premium upon capacity. Had it been put up for competitive examination, you might have escaped," smiled Ermengarde.

"Well, perhaps, for me had it been so," he said, smiling also. Then he went on in a graver tone: "My tastes have ever been in quite other lines. I have always valued my freedom above everything; freedom to roam the world, to lead the life of an explorer, and"—here he looked at her meaningly—"to settle down in a home of my own choosing when fancy willed. I do not pretend to say that my changed prospects are altogether displeasing to me now. Who can help being influenced by his surroundings? I shall, I daresay, gradually grow into a wholly altered being."

"Yes," Ermengarde answered, slowly and sadly. "If ever you visit this island again you will certainly not dance with the head forester's daughter. You will not wish your subjects to forget that you are King then."

There was so much of simple, yet suggestive truth in these words, that for a moment the young man's gaiety vanished. Joyous music filled the little forest world, Ermengarde, in all her beauty, stood beside him, his partner in the dance, yet he was grave and pensive.

"You are right," he said. "I feel that not only my youth, but my nature must be sacrificed to my greatness, that slowly, yet surely and irrevocably, I shall become a

stranger to my former self. Here, for a last brief moment, I snatch a breath of liberty. But it was something more than a mere wild caprice that made me steal a march on my courtiers yesterday." He glanced round and added in an undertone: "Fame had reached me of the head forester's daughter. I wanted to judge for myself if these islanders had boasted too much of their Queen."

A deep blush dyed Ermengarde's cheeks, and once more that remonstrative—"Sire"—rose to her lips.

"Remember our compact," he said. "Surely no hard one to keep for so brief a period. I may not be unhappier than the ordinary run of mortals; I may succeed in stifling the generous impulses of my youth; but no moment of the future can rival this. Do not rob me of what, once lost, can never be replaced."

There was not a vestige of coquetry in Ermengarde's disposition, but she glowed as she listened to these flattering words.

All her old liking for the frank, genial King's-Messenger had come back. There was the feeling of youth, too, which drew them together, the sense of comradeship, sympathy—call it what we will—that leads one human being to open his heart to another.

"You must not dance with me any more, for all that," she said. "You are the King to others, if only his Messenger to me."

"And the last-named personage will not quit this island without bidding you farewell," he answered. "Expect me at the head forester's house before I go."

He led her to a seat, and disappeared amid the crowd of dancers.

Half-a-dozen artless girls were made proud and happy by the Royal invitation to dance. Then the signal was given for the banquet. The King and his courtiers disappeared, and all too quickly for the delighted multitude, alike, dance and banquet came to an end.

CHAPTER IV. AT THE HEAD FORESTER'S.

THE head forester's house was one of the handsomest in the island. It stood by the road-side, on the border of the vast forest almost covering the sea-girt kingdom. Though solitary, the site was full of charm in summer time. Golden the light, penetrating the lofty pine trees; unbroken, save for the notes of birds, the silence that brooded everywhere; fragrant

with a thousand flowers, the breezes stirring the branches. Here and there, bits of pasture or cornland intersected the wood, and meadow and field were carpeted with flowers. Bright-hued butterflies flitted in the sunshine. Sad to reflect that this delicious summer was almost as short-lived as they! From October to April the country lay wrapped in snow; often so intense the frost that all communication with the outer world would be cut off for weeks.

Although Ermengarde had been educated in a brilliant city of the Continent, she clung to her island home. These winters had as yet no terrors for her. Acquaintances contrived to meet at each other's houses by means of the sledge. In her widowed father she had a sympathetic companion. Then there were her tastes and duties: she was not only mistress of the head forester's house, but a guardian angel to the poor; and last, but not least, a passionate musician and devotee of Schiller and Goethe. The wintry hours passed all too quickly.

And like all high-spirited girls, she could but regard this quiet, uneventful existence as an interlude, a preface to what should be life indeed. She hearkened as yet for the unridling of the sphinx.

On the second morning after that forest dance, what was her astonishment to see the King ride up? He had promised to come, it is true, but a few hours before her father had been summoned to meet him in another part of the island. She supposed him to be miles away. She was watering her flowers, not wholly with unconcern, yet not without some fluttering of the heart as she recalled the incidents of the last few days, when a couple of horsemen stopped at the gate, the foremost threw the reins to the other, and she recognised him at once.

"Pardon me, Fräulein," he said, affecting an easy tone in the hearing of the attendant, "I parted company with your respected father an hour ago, and he gave me leave to call here and ask for some refreshment. The rest of my party are regaling at the little restaurant by the shore. Have I your permission to enter?"

Ermengarde turned from red to pale. She saw through the device. He had hit upon this expedient for bidding her farewell.

She bowed low and tried to get out a word of welcome, but speech stayed on her trembling lips. It was as if she were under a spell.

The little household was busy in the hayfield. She suddenly remembered that there was no one to wait upon her Royal guest but herself. As she had done two days before, she now began to set before him the best the larder afforded.

"Once more pardon me," he said, "I have not indeed come merely to eat and drink, although a morsel of bread and a glass of water will be acceptable. But I really came because I had something to say to you."

He looked at her penetratingly, as if fain to read her inmost thoughts.

"Tell me," he said, "are you happy here? This island, so remote, so cut off from the world, is surely no sphere for you."

"I have my father," was the proud yet faltering reply, "and many friends, besides home duties."

"I have been plotting and making plans on your behalf," he went on with an affection of gaiety; she could see all the time that he was anxious and ill at ease. "And I hinted my views to the head forester just now. He is more ambitious for you than you are for yourself. With his full consent would you quit this island for a time?"

Ermengarde looked bewildered and irresponsive. He continued: "In my mother, you would find a sure friend and protector. Your father could have no misgivings about your welfare. Say then that you will at least make the experiment; that you will grace our Court if only for a year."

The prospect thus hinted at was dazzling indeed. A position at Court, the patronage of the Queen-mother; social horizons widening with every year, what else should these things mean but a future to satisfy any woman's aspirations? The King's good faith and single-mindedness were beyond doubt. No suspicion of evil intent could attach itself to his outspoken, manly nature.

"You would be free to go or stay as you pleased," he urged. "As one of the ladies attached to my mother's household, you would be entirely independent. You can have no plausible objection to make."

But the look of doubt in Ermengarde's face had given way to positive negation. The more persuasive he became, the further she drew back.

"Are such friendships as ours made every day?" he said at last. "At least, let me have the privilege of seeing you from time to time."

"My friend was the King's-Messenger, not the King," was the sad reply. "To him the head forester's daughter must henceforth remain a stranger."

"What is my position that it should thus repel you?" he said. "I remain myself. Yet you are right. This crown, this hateful crown, divides us. I am no longer free to love!"

She had divined his secret already, and had he not her own too? All her courage vanished on a sudden. She sat as one stricken by evil fortune.

"We were drawn to each other from the first," he went on, now using the passionate language of an avowed lover, speaking in low, quick undertones. "Oh, Ermengarde, instead of enticing you from your island, could I but share it with you; could I unking myself for your sake!"

Then the honest eyes filled with tears, the frank, naturally joyous voice broke down. He was utterly unmanned, and the sight of his agitation helped to restore her calm. She felt bound to make a great effort in order to regain self-mastery.

"Let us not think of ourselves," she murmured. "You are called to play a great part. You will have no time for vain regrets, and I"—checking her tears, she went on—"I will try to forget the King's-Messenger, and from a distance follow the King's career. If noble, if worthy of him, I shall be consoled."

"Can any human being live nobly without happiness?" he answered, resenting alike his good and evil fortune, feeling all his words alike empty of meaning. It was sweet to sit thus by her side listening, but the future stretched before him bare and colourless. His joy was buried in this little island. And he dared no longer broach the subject of her departure. They loved each other, and in their case love could only mean separation.

"Self-sought happiness is not always the best," she said gently. "You, least of all, can afford to live for yourself."

"I am young. It is hard to learn such lessons so soon," he replied, almost boyishly resentful and despondent.

The glory of summer lay round the earth. They were in the summer of life, yet a weight of despair lay on their young hearts.

"Bid me farewell and go away," Ermengarde said, feeling unable to bear this tension of feeling any longer. "We can do each other no good."

She had hitherto sought to soothe and inspirit him; but now alike her helplessness and love had spoken. He sprang to her side, moved by a desperate decision.

"You love me!" he whispered. "Then away with this crown! Be another's this uncoveted kingdom, for I am not entirely a slave. I can abdicate. Say the word, and I will be nothing else—yours, yours only."

She shook her head, smiling through her tears.

"But it can, it shall be," he added. "What do I care for men's scorn or for the good opinion of the great? Should not a man choose for himself where his whole happiness is concerned? Kings have abdicated before now. A few days' gossip, and the world will forget my existence."

These wild words, wrung in all sincerity from the depth of his passion, only moved Ermengarde so far. She was growing more and more sorry for him and for herself. He might draw a bright picture of the future, might apparently sweep away all obstacles and impossibilities; might insist that things were to be as his fancy painted them. The reality was present to her—hard, cruel, and implacable. One moment was theirs only. To-day they were lovers, drawn as near to each other as human beings can well be by virtue of sympathy and affection. To-morrow they should be less than strangers.

"Go," she said; "we have both been dreaming. Let us dream no more!"

Just then the clatter of hoofs was heard, and a party of horsemen rode up.

"That is surely my father hastening back to take leave of you. He must not be made unhappy too. Be good, be happy, my comrade, my King. Ermengarde's allegiance shall never fail you."

She was about to raise his hand loyally to her lips, but he bent forward, for a moment held her in his arms, and kissed her, lover-like, on the brow. When the head forester entered, both were collected, and apparently cheerful. The bitterness of parting was over.

EPILOGUE.

THAT gallant young King never revisited the little island of the rose-weavers. He wedded, for diplomatic reasons, a neighbouring Princess, and in time grew stout, careworn, and prosaic.

Poetry and romance with Kings, as with

ordinary beings, have their season. We cannot be ever young, and ever in love !

One day, in commemoration of a peace, a splendid pageant took place in the capital. The Sovereign, as he drove carelessly through the gaily-decorated streets, was struck by a little group in a balcony.

It was a beautiful woman, surrounded by her children, three little girls, each a copy of their mother. By her side stood a stalwart, sunburnt, elderly man, whose occupation was evidently of a rural nature.

"Who is that lady?" asked the Sovereign, as the carriage passed at a snail's pace under the window.

"That lady, your Majesty," was the reply, "is the daughter of your Majesty's head forester."

"I remember quite well," said the King quickly, aroused from his lethargic mood. "Berg, of the Island Klô."

"Exactly, your Majesty."

"And who is her husband?"

"A German professor, your Majesty, whose name I don't remember."

The King glanced once at the occupants of the balcony and then sank into a reverie. Every incident of that island visit now came back to him, clearly as if of yesterday. And looking back on the intervening years, he wished that he had done as he said, abdicated for the sake of the beautiful Ermengarde, and let love be lord of all. "Yes, life can be dull, unsatisfactory, hardly worth living for, even to a King," he thought. "I was forced into a marriage against my will. What is a man good for after that?"

"I don't think much of your King, mamma!" cried the eldest girl, the little thirteen-year-old Ermengarde, to her mother. "You said he was so bright and handsome. He looks half asleep, and as if he took no interest in anything."

"And he saw you, mamma," said the second child. "He ought to have stopped and spoken to you, since he knew you on your island."

Thus the children prattled on, and Ermengarde let them say what they would. She had never been dissatisfied with her lot, and had never given way to vain retrospection. But, like her lover, she forgot nothing. Ofttimes in her dreaming hours she was the rose-weaver talking gaily to the King's-Messenger. Her husband was worthy of her; she adored her children; but romance for her had ended on a certain summer day, fifteen years before.

MINERAL WATERS.

READERS of "Vanity Fair" may remember the agonies of Jos Sedley after the rack-punch at Vauxhall. "Soda-water was not invented yet. Small beer—will it be believed?—was the only drink with which unhappy gentlemen soothed the fever of their previous night's potation." After all, we may be allowed to breathe a sigh of regret for the small beer. That small beer of other days was often deliciously cool and refreshing, as when drunk beneath the eaves of some thatched cottage in the country, amid the scent of sweet, homely flowers, and the murmur of bees from the hives close by. There would be a rough wooden board stuck in the hedge by the garden gate with the legend rudely inscribed upon it:

Small beer, sold heer,

to which rustic wit would often have surreptitiously added "very deer." But in point of fact it was not at all dear; a great jugful could be had for a few coppers, and the great jug might be emptied without fear of riotous consequences. But the village "small beer" brewer has passed away, and vanished, too, has the amiable spouse, whose life was divided between maternal duties and the chronicling of small beer.

But to return from this digression among paths which only lead away from our subject—if our familiar friend the soda-water bottle was unknown in the palmy days of Vauxhall and rack-punch, we may conclude that, artificial mineral waters being unknown, there was a much more general use of the natural products of mineral springs. To take the waters—whether at Bath or Tonbridge, Harrogate or Cheltenham, or coming nearer home, at Sadler's Wells, Hampstead, Acton, or Islington—was a practice almost universal, and a visit to some near or distant mineral springs was the ordinary holiday alike of townfolk and countryfolk in days when sea-side watering-places were but little visited. In Yorkshire, indeed, to go a-spåing is still the vernacular for taking a holiday, even if it be spent on coast, or loch, or mountain side.

At all the more famous springs a considerable trade was done in the supply of their appropriate waters in jugs, bottles, or stone jars, for the benefit of those who were unable to travel to the fountain-head, or for visitors who desired to continue

their course of mineral waters after their return to their native fields. It was generally found, however, that the virtues of the waters evaporated in the process, the said virtues being often the result of a lively imagination, and their benefits due as much to change of scene and habits, accompanied by fresh air and exercise, as to any occult medicinal properties.

But the demand for mineral waters set the chemists of the period at work to find out some artificial substitute for the natural product; and soon after the close of the long European war which ended in the downfall of the first Napoleon, a German chemist, Dr. Struve, after careful analysis of the waters of the famous continental springs, established in various continental capitals and at Brighton in England, so many spas, where these mineral waters could be taken, as supplied by chemical processes. As for these strongly aerated waters, so pleasant and refreshing when drunk fresh from the fountain, but which soon became mawkish—their chemical substitutes were found to possess so much more life and potency in their bottled forms, that a demand for them speedily grew up. Dr. Struve's success earned for him the title of the "father of mineral waters." But for all that, it does not appear that he was responsible for the existence of soda-water. Indeed, the actual inventor, or discoverer rather, of this highly popular beverage, has not, so far as we know, been recorded.

Soda-water, no doubt, on its first appearance, was regarded as something medicinal; and its popular use was, as hinted at by the author of "Vanity Fair," to allay the feverish symptoms due to an over-night's potation. As there are many natural mineral waters which principally owe their efficacy to the presence of carbonate of soda, there are medicinal purposes for which our British soda-water may prove equally efficacious as that of famous foreign "sources;" but it should be borne in mind that whenever prescribed medicinally it is advisable to procure the same from the chemist, who is generally supplied by makers who devote themselves specially to the manufacture of mineral waters, according to formulas tested by chemical analysis.

But the wonderfully increased demand for aerated waters which has led to a corresponding development in their manufacture, has really little to do with their medicinal properties. As agreeable, re-

freshing, and generally wholesome drinks, they have taken their place among the necessaries of life in hot weather; and their use is spreading and increasing both among those who are not averse to alcoholic drinks and those who abstain from them. To the former class, a simple aerated water, which may contain a small proportion of carbonate of soda, commends itself as a happy medium for mixing with wine or spirits; while for temperance folk there are carbonated waters flavoured with all kinds of fruit essences and syrups. But it is not generally realised how immense is the trade which has sprung up under these conditions, a trade with organs of its own, "The Mineral Water Trade Journal" and "Review," with associations and alliances for various objects, and which has given rise to many subsidiary industries in the way of machine making, bottle making, box and case making, and the distilling of essences, oils, and syrups of every description.

The mineral water trade is now in full swing, and among the many thousands who are quenching their thirst with these refreshing beverages, perhaps there are a few who are ignorant of the processes which these myriads of bottles and syphons go through before they reach the consumer. Such, indeed, was the case with the writer of this paper when he found himself in Kentish Town on the look-out for a mineral water factory, for which he had an order of admittance. Now, Kentish Town is not a manufacturing neighbourhood, and there are no tall chimneys to mark the site of extensive works; but the manufacture of mineral waters is so free from any kind of noxious elements, that it might be carried on in the midst of Mayfair without affecting the susceptibilities of the daintiest of its denizens. And thus there is only a "porte cochère" to break the line of ordinary middle-class houses, and the name of the firm, "Idris and Co." over the doorway, to attract the notice of passers-by.

The "porte cochère" leads into a paved yard, where a van is waiting to take up a load of goods, all packed in boxes with compartments; and there are piles of cases of empty bottles and packages of various kinds scattered about. A jet of steam is at work about the interior of some barrels, and the regular beat of a steam-engine can be heard from within, the sound varied by an occasional pop as though from a pistol shooting gallery.

The engine-room first claims attention,

where a small steam-engine supplies the requisite power throughout the factory, and works a small dynamo which now and then coruscates in brilliant sparks and flashes. Close at hand is the generating chamber, a strong boiler-like structure, into which carbonate of lime, in the form of whiting, is introduced, while a modicum of sulphuric acid is let in through a supply-pipe. Could we see through the copper casing of the boiler, we should no doubt witness a considerable fizz; and a considerable quantity of carbonic acid gas is produced at each operation, which, after passing through a purifying and filtering process, finally reaches a gasometer—on the same principle as those huge constructions to be seen outside gas-works. From this gas-holder pipes conduct the carbonic acid gas into closed vessels of copper or bronze full of water, where the process of aerating the water is carried on, a process which is rendered more effective by revolving beaters, after the fashion of a churn, which keep the waters within in a constant turmoil. From these charging-chambers the aerated water is carried to the machines which perform the task of bottling and securing the now strongly-aerated and highly-effervescent waters.

All these latter processes are carried on in a large hall or shed lighted from above, and dotted about with machines of various forms, about which are clustered a number of workpeople, both male and female. It is a watery scene. There are the tanks, first of all, in which bottles are washed, where whirling brushes distribute spray around, and jets of water spring forth to irrigate the insides of bottles. In the matter of bottle washing, human ingenuity has been busy with all kinds of labour-saving contrivances, and as different forms of bottles require different modes of treatment, the variety of machinery is very great.

Complicated too and ingenious is the machinery for filling or charging the bottles. There is a machine which only requires to be fed with bottles and corks, and which then turns out a constant supply of bottled soda-water, lemonade, or whatever kind of drink may be required, at the rate of sixty dozen bottles an hour, or a dozen bottles a minute. The machine keeps two girls or more constantly at work, wiring on the corks; these girls, too, work with the rapidity and certainty of machinery: the wires are ready to their hands with the preliminary twirl already made, and more

quickly than the eye can follow the process the wire is affixed and the bottle passed on in a completed form. But there are other machines that outstrip this in speed, those for instance that deal with the new-fangled bottles that contain their own stoppers, in the form of glass balls within the neck of the bottles, and these are filled head downwards and stopper themselves, and are passed on at a rate of speed quite amazing.

Here, too, are machines for filling the syphons, so called, although these do not work on the principle of the syphon, but that of the force-pump. But we have borrowed the name from the French, with whom the "siphon" has for long almost superseded the bottled "eau de Seltz." It is only of late years that there has been any great trade in these syphons in England; but their use is greatly spreading, as a convenient form for the domestic storage of aerated waters. It has often excited our wonder, as to how these syphons were charged, without letting all the fizz escape from them. But now the mystery is solved; here we see how it is done—how the syphon is turned upside down, placed in a cage of wire gauze, and filled through the throat, or discharge-pipe. A gas jet burning behind the gauze cage shows the operator when the syphon is properly filled, which is a matter of a very few seconds. In this, as in the bottle-filling machines, it must be remarked that the "syrup," flavoured with the particular essence required, is supplied by the same automatic process as the aerated water—the exact charge required being pumped into each bottle or syphon with mathematical accuracy.

The wire gauze cages in which the syphons are enclosed, and the eye protectors worn by the young ladies engaged in the wiring process, suggest the cause of the reports, like pistol-shots, that occasionally ring through the building. A dial over each machine shows the pressure of the carbonic acid gas which has been forced into the water. In the case of the syphons it is as high as one hundred and seventy pounds to the square inch, and of the bottles, from one hundred to one hundred and ten pounds. It is not every bottle that will stand this pressure, and even a syphon, though of exceptional strength, may have a weak point somewhere, and hence these arrangements in the way of wire gauze; although accidents are rare, and the men employed rather scorn such precautions. But as for bottles, they will

fly; and it has been calculated that there is a loss of nearly fifteen per cent. of bottles used, by breakages of various kinds, but chiefly in the process of filling.

There is one feature that deserves to be mentioned about the complicated network of pipes, cylinders, and machines of different kinds employed in the bottling of the various aerated waters, many of which have a solvent or mordant influence upon lead and copper. All the pipes are lined with tin, and the copper cylinders are coated with silver internally to ensure the purity of the manufacture.

The next department of the factory to be visited contrasts strangely in its quietude and stillness with the busy scene of gurgling waters and rattling bottles and cases, and of machines working with a certain amount of fizz and splutter. This is the still-room, indeed, as our grandmothers would have called it, devoted to the making and storage of fruit and other essences used in the flavouring of the various beverages in demand. Great vessels of stoneware and alembics of various kinds are in evidence, and there is certainly a delicious fragrance as of tropical and other fruits. Here is the great storehouse and armoury of Madame Temperance, whose wines are the pure juices of fruits unchanged and unperverted by fermentation. This result is obtained by placing the bottled essence, already securely corked, in a bath of hot water, which is raised to a temperature of 180°—a heat which destroys all the germs of fermentation as well contained in the liquid as in the modicum of air which is necessarily included in the bottle. Then if the cork be really air-tight, the fruit essence will keep for almost any length of time. Our guide uncorks a bottle of raspberry essence, which has been bottled a year, but which is as fresh and fragrant as the fruit gathered fresh from the canes. Then there is lemon essence, extracted from the peel of fresh lemons; and lime juice, which is the product of fruit gathered in Demerara in 1885.

Of course all this work is carried on in the fruit season, when many tons of various kinds of fruit are converted into juice. Curiously enough, the residual products of these operations, the skins and pips that is, meet with a ready sale for purposes unknown to the vendor, but which may be guessed at as perhaps having some connection with the cheap jam trade.

From the still-room, to use the grand-

motherly phrase, we pass into the chemical laboratory, with its array of bottles and apparatus devoted to testing and analysing the various products of the factory, and to experimental researches in the field of unfermented beverages. And from the laboratory we are taken into a high place where are rows of tanks made of slate, and containing distilled water mixed with the due proportion of mineral or other salts required for the supply of the artificial mineral waters, such as the seltzer, potash, lithia, and soda waters, which have a distinct medicinal value. And beyond is the distilling apparatus itself, which supplies an ideal aqua pura, that is not an ideal drink taken by itself, as while parting with all taint of its earthy origin, it has lost that brikeness and freshness which earthy matters sometimes afford. However, nobody is expected to drink it in that state, and when duly mixed and aerated it forms the premier crus of the mineral-water dealer.

But after dwelling on the merits of all these refined preparations, it is pleasant to find that the genuine, old-fashioned, homely ginger-beer of our youth, which as far as one knows has no particular virtues of any kind, except that useful one of quenching the thirst, is still in strong demand, and is liberally purveyed by our manufacturers. Here it stands ranged according to age in great stacks or bins; the great difficulty, we are told, is to keep it long enough, for with the first burst of hot weather, stocks are cleared off, and dealers come clamouring for more, and the beverage does not get a fair chance of maturing. But to the disgust of everybody, and especially of mineral-water dealers, the hot weather has been very late in putting in an appearance. The compensation is that ginger-beer is in fine condition.

There is a little chemical lore, too, to be gathered about ginger-beer. Ginger, it seems, supplies its own ferment, in the form of a kind of mould or fungoid growth which has the properties of good yeast. Hence if care is taken not to raise the temperature of the infusion to a height which destroys the germ, ginger-beer can be made to advantage without the introduction of any artificial ferment.

And so, after a modest quencher of this most excellent beverage, we are strengthened to ascend once more to regions where another kind of manufacture is carried on. Our guide throws open a door looking out upon an inner courtyard, and reveals piles

of cases filled with glass vessels all of one size and shape. These are the vases which are to form the syphons of the future—they all come from abroad, from France or Germany; for some reason or other English glass-works cannot produce them. But while the vases themselves are imported, all the fittings that go to make the complete syphon are made on the premises, cast from tin—the collars, the screwtops, the taps and levers, cast, and bored, and turned, and polished. Syphons whose fittings contain lead should be avoided, as if the aerated water has remained long in the syphon, it is likely to become more or less impregnated with lead. As a refinement upon ordinary syphons, some are made with silver-plated fittings; and here comes in the dynamo which we saw at the beginning of our perambulations. But into the mysteries of electro-plating we will not enter.

Here, too, are made the seltzogenes—which syphons have rather put into the shade, but which are still useful, and used in regions beyond the range of mineral-water carts. And these seltzogenes bring us, as it were, to the infancy of the manufacture. For most people can remember strange and weird specimens of earlier contrivances of the kind, some cased in leather bands, others enclosed in wicker-work, found in country houses and old-fashioned abodes; but the secret of manipulating which was generally lost. The writer remembers a very ancient specimen of the kind which must have been one of the forefathers of the seltzogene—a glass vessel of many curious parts, into which were introduced pounded marble and sulphuric acid, the result being a slightly acidulated and slightly aerated drink, which was hardly worth the trouble of all the elaborate preparations which were made for its manufacture.

Altogether, we have been agreeably surprised at the variety and interest attaching to the manufacture of mineral waters, and now curiosity is aroused as to the possibility of estimating the general movement of a trade which is taking such a wide development. But where shall we look for the statistics on which to base any general estimate? Here our host suggests a rough way of making a guess at the general trade of London. It has been estimated that six thousand horses are employed, in London alone, in what is called mineral-water vanning. For each horse at work it may be fairly

calculated that three people are employed—men, women, and girls—and that would give a total of eighteen thousand persons, whose livelihoods are dependent on the success of the trade. Six thousand horses, too, would imply that about two thousand vans are drawn about—and at a good pace—by the said horses, and it is generally estimated in the trade that a van, to do any good, must carry out a thousand pounds' worth of stuff in the year. Two thousand by a thousand gives two millions, which is probably not very far from the mark; that is, mineral waters to the value of two millions of pounds are sold in London every year.

RED TOWERS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVI. A SONNET.

THERE was, no doubt, a great deal of truth and justice in all that Canon Percival said to Paul after dinner, to which Paul listened with his head bent down, silent, because of a most strange, unreasonable feeling that he could not speak without defending Celia. And then the Canon would have thought him either wicked or mad, for how could any right-thinking man defend or even excuse her? Besides, the Canon was not at all in a state for argument, if anything of the kind had been decently possible.

He had never been so shocked in his life. Celia's conduct was unheard-of, scandalous. To be sure, she had been badly brought up; her father and mother had been poor sort of examples to her; but there had been a time when certainly there were better hopes of her.

However, the Canon had never approved of that French marriage; and he could feel no more respect for a woman who could change her religion, like a pair of gloves, in order to make life in a foreign country less troublesome. But all that, of course, was nothing to her present doings. Her extraordinary disrespect for her husband's memory, her utter want of feeling, even of decency, were only equalled by her astounding coolness and insolence. She had again changed her religion, returning to the Church of England. This was news to Paul.

"A most valuable recovery!" said the

Canon, who was seldom goaded into sarcasm, being a good-tempered man.

The wonder was, in his opinion, that she had not proposed a gay wedding in Woolsborough Cathedral, with anthems and wedding marches. However, it was almost as bad to invite her uncle and aunt to a quiet marriage in London, actually asking him, Canon Percival, to degrade himself by performing the ceremony. Of course he had flatly refused; nothing would induce him or Mrs. Percival to have anything more to do with her. He flattered himself that she thoroughly understood his feeling on the subject, and his hope that he should see and hear as little more of her as possible. That she was to be his daughter-in-law was of course a terrible addition to the grief of it all; and the poor Canon went on to speak very bitterly of Vincent.

"That woman," he said, "has been the ruin of him. Mrs. Percival tells me that the attachment is one of long standing; and she thinks it was at the bottom of Celia's breaking off with you. You had a fortunate escape, Paul. But why, in Heaven's name, did she not marry him then? What was the object of marrying that Frenchman, poor fellow, if she did not care for him?"

"How should I know? I suppose she had her reasons," said Paul.

"Bad reasons—bad, like everything else about her," said the Canon.

Paul escaped as soon as he could, and went into the drawing-room, which he found empty. After dreaming over the fire for some time, he went to the piano, and sat there playing wild, melancholy music, which took him back to the woods and the heathery wastes of Anjou.

Once more he was walking with Achille de Montmirail, and listening to his kind voice as he talked, and watching the brightness in his face, as there looked out a soul whose judgements were different, larger, more generous than those of ordinary men. Even then, it had struck Paul's fancy as very strange that the Marquis's last trouble of mind should be—not that his wife did not love him as he loved her—but the fear that he had in any way hindered the happiness of her life.

Such a feeling, no doubt, such an almost exaggerated generosity was more to be expected from a very spiritual woman's nature than from any man. It was a wonderful thing to exist in a simple, cheer-

ful, straightforward Frenchman, like Achille de Montmirail.

And what would he say now, this poor soul, forgotten and outraged by the woman whose happiness had been his one anxiety? Other people might be angry for him; it was right that they should be; but what would he say, if he knew? Would he find it an unpardonable sin, if she chose to take her happiness in her own way? Somehow Paul suspected that he would judge his wife more tenderly than any one else did. Perhaps, he thought, some day he might be able to make Antoinette understand this, and forgive Celia, for whom she always seemed to feel something of her father's generous love.

Paul went on playing softly, till Mrs. Percival came into the room, when he stopped, and got up from the piano.

"What were you playing, Paul?" she said.

"Just then," he answered, "I was playing a sonnet of Shakespeare's—you know it—'No longer mourn for me when I am dead.' And, do you know, I was thinking of somebody who might have given that sonnet to his wife, and meant every word of it. I was thinking that he would not have wanted her friends to be too hard on her. Of course I could not say so to the Canon."

"Of course not, you odd boy!" said Mrs. Percival, smiling, though her eyes were full of tears. "Well, I dare say you may be partly right; he was rather like a saint, or a poet, or something of that sort. But whatever he may have been, however forgiving and beautiful—I should call it rather unnatural, not exactly human—"

"Supernatural, superhuman," murmured Paul.

"Well, I don't know—we are human, after all, and it is better to be what we are. Anyhow, it does not alter right and wrong. She is behaving most abominably. So is Vincent, but she has led him on; and, after all, he has cared about her for years."

"That may be her excuse, too," said Paul. "I think—it would have been better if she had married him a long time ago."

Mrs. Percival sighed. "What is the use of looking back!" she said. "Come and sit by the fire. Nobody will interrupt us. She has gone to her room, and Antoinette is with her. That poor child is rather puzzled at her stepmother's proceedings. How she is to be told, I don't know."

"It won't be so hard, because she is very noble, and can bear things," said Paul.

He followed Mrs. Percival to the fire and sat down opposite to her, leaning forward with his head upon his hands.

"It all seems like a bad dream," he said. "I suppose we shall wake some day. In five more years you will have them coming home from India, and it will be all quite natural. Do you think they will be happy?"

"Few people ever deserved it less," said Mrs. Percival. "No, Paul; as you ask me, I don't. I know them both too well."

"Poor Celia! Then that will be punishment enough for her."

"I don't pity her in the least," said Mrs. Percival. "She has arranged things all along to please herself. It is impossible, except for two or three foolish men, to pity or love a nature like Celia. As to Vincent, of course I am sorry for him; he is my own child."

Paul did not make much answer to this. "Two or three foolish men!" he repeated to himself, smiling a little. "You did not always think it such foolishness, did you?"

"I always had my misgivings; she was always a strange girl," said Mrs. Percival. "Don't reproach me now, Paul."

"I didn't dream of reproaching you. I was wondering whether I should venture to tell you about something else—because I should rather like to know your opinion—though it may never come to anything, and certainly won't for a long time, till all this affair has blown over. But I have been thinking of nothing else, all these last weeks, and I came here to-day with only one idea. Your letter rather encouraged me. Are you too much bothered to listen to me now?"

Mrs. Percival's face brightened; her sympathy, as Paul knew, was always ready, and she had a power of throwing off unpleasant thoughts, which most people might have envied her.

"My dear," she said, "I shall be very glad if you will give me something nice to think about."

Paul then went on to talk about Antoinette de Montmirail, as he might have talked to his mother. His manner was quiet, grave, and restrained; but Mrs. Percival saw that a great change had come over him since that day in the summer when he told her he had lost his faith in women. This gentle French girl, almost a child still, with the beauty of a pure and truthful soul shining in her face, with the

grief that she had borne so heroically, with her lonely place in the world, and now her desertion by the one person who would have been likely to take care of her; this child, born for happiness, over whose life for five years the half-seen clouds had been gathering, had most unconsciously proved her womanhood by making a conquest of Paul. One might say that he had come out of Armida's garden, and then, after walking across a desert, found himself unexpectedly at the gate of Paradise. He told Mrs. Percival the story from the beginning—his meeting Antoinette in Roche's shop at Tours, that day, and then her father's words to him, which made the thing seem possible, and then the tragedy, and the days after it, and the journey home, and all his doubts, and thoughts, and broodings since. Mrs. Percival listened, smiling, her brown eyes shining as she asked little questions now and then; those eyes of hers smiled Paul's most secret confidences out of him now, as they always did long ago.

"No, I should not feel anxious about her," she said. "She is very affectionate, and so perfectly simple in all her ideas. I must say for Celia that she has not spoiled that child; she has very wisely kept her innocent and young. She knows nothing of the world; but that doesn't matter. Yes, I think you can make her happy if you choose, Paul."

But Mrs. Percival did not speak very positively, and she sighed.

"Why do you sigh?" said Paul.

"I don't know—I am a little afraid of foreign connections, perhaps. I am not sure that it is the wisest thing for you—so many different ideas."

Paul went on to point out that different ideas mattered absolutely nothing at all, if people cared for each other.

"Perhaps they don't, for a few months," said Mrs. Percival. "But life is not tuned to that pitch for ever, my dear Paul."

"Well, all that is not the question now," he said, a little impatiently. "Tell me, do you think I am a lunatic? Do you think she has the smallest liking at all for me?"

"I think she likes you very much indeed," said Mrs. Percival. "Partly because her father did, you understand. As to the sort of liking you want, I need hardly say that she doesn't know what it is. And I am a little afraid that this behaviour of Celia's will make her hate everything and everybody English."

Paul thought over these remarks without making any reply. He thought perhaps, in one thing, he was wiser than Mrs. Percival, remembering certain looks from those "sweetest eyes," which had answered his own.

"Celia told me something she had done for Antoinette," Mrs. Percival went on presently. "She was in Paris the other day, you know. I could not understand what she went for; but it seems that she went on purpose to settle this business. The poor old Tour Blanche belonged to her; she has made some arrangement, some alteration, and gives it up to Antoinette. Perfectly right and fair, and a comfort to herself, I should think, for she could never wish to go there again. Most of the furniture is hers, I believe; but that could easily— Well, Paul, it is getting late, and I don't think you are listening to me."

"Indeed I am. Does Mademoiselle de Montmirail know of this?"

"No, she knows nothing—nothing. Nor will she know anything, I suppose, till this dreadful marriage is over."

"And, now that I have told you, do you mind my staying a few days?"

"Stay by all means if you like. But don't make the complications worse by saying anything now."

"You may trust me, Mrs. Percival."

"Very well. Remember that I do."

There was a train to London from Woolsborough before eight o'clock, generally known as "the early train," and regarded as a tormenting monster by all the good people of Woolsborough Close. It was a fast train, arriving in London before twelve, so that convenience often got the better of comfort, and filled its carriages with dignified clergy and their families, even in such months as November and December. Paul found that Celia was going to London by this train; he also found that Canon and Mrs. Percival had given no orders to be called earlier than usual; and on the whole it seemed that he must see Celia off. So he left the house quietly in the first glimmer of morn-

ing, and walked down in a cold, frosty fog to the station, and was standing there on the steps when Canon Percival's carriage drove up, with Madame de Montmirail, her maid, and quantities of luggage. It looked as if Celia was leaving River Gate, never to return; though, strange contradiction, she was about to marry the only son of the house.

Celia was very much wrapped up, and her long black veil was down; she shivered with the cold, even her voice trembling a little as she said to Paul:

"This is kind of you!"

"Have you seen nobody else?" Paul could not help asking, as they paced together up and down the cold, dark, dreary platform.

None of the chapter, it appeared, were going to town that morning.

"Aunt Flo came to her door and kissed me," Celia answered. "She is not so vicious, poor old dear, if the Canon would let her alone, and of course she is devoted to—to Vincent. I made a mistake in coming down here myself to break it to them. He ought to have come; he would have managed his mother. I saw nobody else—except poor Netta, of course. She was down; she likes getting up early, even in weather like this, and she is also foolish enough to be rather fond of me. *Pauvre petite!* I wonder what will become of her!"

Paul said nothing.

"You said last night," she went on, "that you would do anything in the world for me—but perhaps you don't mean it this morning?"

Paul felt himself flushing with a sudden surprise. Perhaps not unnaturally, he thought she was going to say something about Antoinette.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I do mean it. I will do anything in the world for you."

"You are very trusting," she said. "I don't think you have altered for the worse. Well—will you come to my wedding?"

He could answer nothing but: "I will."

It was a difficulty from which there was only one way out; a tolerably bad one, but straight forward.

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHY should I be made to do an unworthy thing? Why cannot this thing, in itself right and expedient, be accomplished by honest, straightforward means?" reasoned Madge with herself on the day following Sir Peter's departure, as she thought over her emphatic rejection of Mr. Stubbs's obsequiously-offered services.

She had risen that morning strong in her resolve, not only to further what she conceived to be Lance's best interests in life, but to do so by means which consorted with her own honesty of purpose and integrity of heart. Miss Shore should be told simply and plainly that her services as an artist were no longer required, and that it would be esteemed a favour by herself and Lady Judith if she would as soon as possible continue her journey to the North.

Lady Judith must of course be previously consulted on the matter; so Madge adverted to it across the breakfast-table.

Her remark, however, fell literally on deaf ears. Lady Judith had come down to breakfast with no fewer than five telegrams in her hand, and a tirade against Lance on her lips. She had quite forgotten that "he was a good fellow at heart, and that she had always said it," and now remembered only his "heedlessness and want of respect for his elders." Four out of the five telegrams had been despatched at different stages of Sir Peter's journey to town, and simply reported that he was "getting along all right;" the

fifth had been sent the first thing that morning, just to show that he was up and doing. As, however, the first four had arrived at Lower Upton overnight too late for delivery, the whole five had been brought in a batch to the Castle the first thing that morning.

Lady Judith tossed them all contemptuously across the table to Madge.

"You may read just whichever you like first, my dear," she said. "It doesn't in the least matter which. One properly-worded telegram would have done for the whole lot. Will you tell me that that young man ever lifts his little finger to keep Sir Peter from making himself ridiculous? It's my belief if Sir Peter ever settles down quietly for ten minutes, he isn't happy till he has set him going again. And now that they're both away together, with no one to look after them, what will happen goodness only knows!" And so forth.

Madge, so soon as a pause occurred, tried to bring the talk round to Miss Shore.

All in vain. Lady Judith, bent on Sir Peter's misdoings, continued her harangue.

"He'll be sixty-three on the twenty-first of this month, and will you tell me he has one whit more sense than a boy of sixteen? Philanthropy do you call it?" (Madge, by way of diversion, had remarked that the veal-and-ham pie on the table was particularly good.) "A nice sort of philanthropy that is, which lays burthens upon other people's shoulders, and straightway forgets all about them! Now I wonder how many incapables he'll pick up in London streets this time to bring back with him. I can only hope that the waggonette will be big enough to seat them all."

And once upon the topic of protégés, Lady Judith did not let it go until the whole army of Sir Peter's waifs and strays had been passed in review. The squinting stable-boy, the bow-legged gardener's lad, the poultry-maid who would have been "in her right place picking oakum in a model prison, instead of tending prize-bred poultry on a model farm." And last, but not least, there was that young woman "who sat all day long in front of an easel doing, so far as any one could see, just nothing at all, who occupied one of the best bedrooms—and I shall want every one of the bedrooms on the west side of the house for the twenty-first—and who won't condescend to give any account of herself or her belongings, but conducts herself as if she were an Empress with her pedigree before the world. But I do think, my dear, now that Sir Peter is away and not likely to make a fuss on the matter, that you might just put a question or two to the young lady as to the length of time her sketches will be likely to occupy. I would interrogate her myself, but she mumbles so I can't hear a word she says. Is she Irish or Welsh, do you think?—ah, be so good as to open that window, the room is stifling!"

Madge rose with alacrity from the table. "I will go this very minute and speak to Miss Shore about her sketches, and if she is not down I will go to her room," she said, scarcely crediting the fortunate chance that made Lady Judith's wishes so thoroughly at one with her own.

At the door, however, leading into the hall, she was intercepted by Mr. Stubbs, who instead of his usual look of carefully-achieved expressionlessness, had "important information to give," plainly written upon his features.

"May I speak with you, madam?" he said. His manner emphasized his request; it seemed to add: "At once and in private?"

Madge led the way to Sir Peter's study. Mr. Stubbs carefully shut the door behind him. "It's about Miss Shore," he began.

Madge slightly bowed but remained standing. "Whatever this man has to tell shall be told quickly and be done with it," she said to herself.

Mr. Stubbs noted her wish for conciseness, and fell in with it.

"I drew your attention, madam, to Miss Shore's eagerness to get the morning papers so soon as they came into the house. Today I have discovered the reasons for this eagerness," he said.

"Stop," said Madge, "let me ask a question. Do these reasons in any way concern me? If they do not, I must ask you to refrain from communicating to me whatever you may have discovered. I take no interest in Miss Shore or her private affairs."

Mr. Stubbs did not reply immediately. It required a good deal of courage to answer this question point-blank, and nothing but a point-blank answer would suit his purpose.

Presently he got together sufficient courage for the reply.

"It concerns you, madam, so far as the happiness of Mr. Clive concerns you. It is easy to see that he takes the deepest interest in Miss Shore."

Madge flushed scarlet. How she would have enjoyed ordering this man out of the room! But all she said was "Go on," in a low, nervous tone.

Mr. Stubbs went on:

"Since Miss Shore has taken to reading the papers so assiduously, I have taken care to have duplicates of every one sent to the house. All the same I send up every morning to her for the preceding day's papers, telling her that I file them for reference. This morning the papers were sent down to me with one torn at one of the corners, together with the message, that Miss Shore regretted very much that she had torn the paper accidentally. Naturally I refer to my copy of the paper that Miss Shore had torn 'accidentally,' and in the torn column I find this paragraph."

Here he unfolded a newspaper which he held in his hand, and spread it before Madge on the table, indicating a paragraph.

Madge read as follows:

"The little fishing village of Santa Maura, on the coast of Corsica, has been thrown into a state of excitement by a singular attempt at murder. The intended victim was a Count Palliardini, who was staying at a little chalet he owned among the mountains. The murder must have been attempted by some one well acquainted with the Count's habit of sleeping during the early part of the evening. While he thus slept, it seems the wine which stood beside him on a small table had poison put into it, and on awakening and drinking it he was seized with all the symptoms of narcotic poisoning. Thanks, however, possibly to the insufficiency of the dose and to the promptness of the remedies administered, he recovered. The strangest part of the story remains

to tell. The Countess Palliardini—the Count's mother—was seated just within the door of the house with her back to the light. She had not lighted the lamps, she stated at the judicial inquiry, because it was too hot to do anything but fan herself and eat sweetmeats. As she sat thus in the twilight, she chanced to lift her eyes to a mirror which hung over the stoveplace facing the door. To her great surprise she saw reflected in it, not only the shadowy trees of the garden, but also the face and figure of a woman, who must have been standing immediately outside the door. For the moment she was too startled to move. When she recovered herself and went out into the garden, the woman was gone. Up to the present moment the police have been unsuccessful in their endeavours to discover the perpetrator of the crime."

"It is monstrous! incredible!" she said, not addressing Mr. Stubbs, but uttering her own thoughts, and moving towards the door as she spoke with the newspaper in her hand.

Mr. Stubbs stood between her and the door.

"May I ask what you intend to do, madam?" he said.

"Do!" replied Madge hotly, "there is only one thing to do. Go straight to her, tell her we have found out who she is, and advise her to get out of the house as quickly as possible."

Madge had a fine reputation in the county for a kind heart and a generous temper; but if at that moment she could by "lettres de cachet" have consigned that "girl in grey" to a cellar-prison, there was little doubt but what she would gladly have exchanged that reputation of hers for that of the Pompadour.

"Pardon me, madam, if I suggest a more prudent course. We know who she is—you and I, that is—but it would be difficult to impress other people with our convictions as matters stand at present."

How the "you and I" grated upon Madge's ear even in that moment of excitement!

"What do you propose doing, then?" she asked curtly.

"I propose to make the young lady convict herself, and of her own free will take flight from the house and keep out of our way—out of Mr. Clive's way," this was said with a furtive but keen look into Madge's face, which once more sent the blood mounting to her brow.

"You see it is just this," Mr. Stubbs

went on after a moment's pause. "I have farther evidence to produce; but all the same it is not evidence that cannot be disputed, and if we make a martyr of the young lady, and other persons"—here another keen look into Madge's face—"choose to constitute themselves her champions and contest that evidence, we simply put ourselves in an ugly light and the young lady into a favourable one."

Again that odious "We!"

"But there is no room for doubt on the matter," Madge cried. "She comes into the house under an assumed name; she refuses to give an account of herself; she dares not look into a mirror; she is eager for the daily papers; she tears out a paragraph that might criminate her. No one in their senses could refuse to believe such evidence!"

"Is a man in love ever in his senses?" said Mr. Stubbs coolly, and now looking Madge full in the face.

Madge winced at his words, but dared not grow furious at them.

"My dear madam," Mr. Stubbs went on when he saw that his words and look combined had done satisfactory work, "every one of the circumstances you have mentioned could be explained, by any romantic, pitiful story the young lady might choose to concoct. You might suggest our handing her over to the police on the strength of our suspicions. That would be simply to make stronger still her claim to sympathy. It is more than likely that the police could not substantiate any charge against her, for there is nothing said in this paragraph as to the Countess Palliardini's power to identify the face she saw. No, no, my dear madam, take my advice: you want this young lady turned out of the house as soon as possible, as quietly as possible, as finally as possible. Let us make her eject herself. I have a plan to propose——"

Madge here cut short his sentences with the abruptly-put question: "What is the other evidence of which you spoke just now?"

Mr. Stubbs drew from his pocket a roll of card-board which he spread before Madge on the table.

On it was sketched in water-colours, slightly and roughly, a mountain, at the base of which was a small country house. A gloomy sky had been lightly washed in, and high over one of the mountain peaks shone out a bright star. The foreground of the picture was unfinished.

Mr. Stubbs watched the changes in Madge's face as she looked at the sketch.

"Do you remember, madam," he asked, "that Mr. Clive on one occasion advised Miss Shore to paint out what was in her eyes so that she might be able to see what was outside them?"

Madge stared at him. "It was said in my presence," she answered, "but you were not there."

"I was just behind the venetian blinds in the billiard-room, and could not help hearing the remark."

Madge, remembering a certain occasion on which she had been an unwilling listener behind those self-same blinds, could say nothing to this.

"Miss Shore followed Mr. Clive's advice. Two days afterwards I found this sketch among some others in a less advanced stage in a waste-paper basket which a housemaid was bringing across the gallery from Miss Shore's room."

"Across the gallery from Miss Shore's room!" repeated Madge, almost dumfounded at the deliberate system of espionage which these words revealed.

"In the course of my chequered career, madam, I have occasionally found waste-paper baskets to be mines of hidden treasures," said Mr. Stubbs, answering the thought written on her face.

Madge wondered whether, "in the course of his chequered career," he had served his time in a private enquiry office, but did not express the wonder.

"You will observe, madam," he went on to say, "that this sketch was torn in half, and that I have pieced it together at the back. No doubt, after Miss Shore, in pursuance of Mr. Clive's advice, had made two or three such sketches, she found herself able to paint not what was in her mind, but what was before her. She had no other object than this in making these sketches, and consequently destroyed them when finished. Now, if you will be good enough to turn your attention once more to the paragraph we have just been reading, you will see that in it are mentioned mountains, ravines, and a small country house—all are in this picture. The time given for the attempt at murder is the early evening, in other words, the twilight. This is a twilight scene—look at the star fully painted out, though the picture in other parts is merely outlined."

"Yet," cried Madge, "in the face of all this you tell me we have not evidence sufficient to convict this young woman of

an attempt at murder, to the minds of people who have a fair amount of common-sense."

"Has a young man of seven-and-twenty, supposing that he has eyes in his head, much common-sense at command in the presence of a beautiful, mysterious, and forlorn young woman?"

Madge winced again; yet her common-sense was forced to admit the truth of Mr. Stubbs's remark. Beauty, mystery, forlornness, had been the three-fold cord that had drawn Lance to the side of "that girl in grey."

"Let me repeat," said Mr. Stubbs, noting how the allusions to Lance hit the mark, "that the most effectual way of finally getting rid of this young lady will be to make her eject herself. If you can spare me another quarter of an hour I will fully explain my plan to you. It is the result of careful thought, and I trust it may meet with your approval."

But Mr. Stubbs must have miscalculated the lengthiness of the project he had to unfold, or else he and Madge must have had other subjects of conversation, for not fifteen minutes, no, nor even fifty, saw the end of their interview.

It was close upon luncheon-time when Madge came out of the study. She looked downcast and thoughtful. If Lady Judith, as they sat at luncheon together, had used her eyes with as much energy as she did her tongue, she might have seen that Madge ate next to nothing, and that she toyed incessantly with a small key that hung upon her watch-chain as if its presence there were an irritation to her.

At the end of the meal she had a communication to make which not a little surprised Lady Judith. It was:

"I have been thinking again over the matter; and, if you don't mind, I should like Miss Shore to finish the water-colours she has begun for my little room. She can't be much longer now over them; a fortnight, I should say, would see them finished."

A VISIT TO THE GREAT SAINT BERNARD HOSPICE.

FROM early childhood most of us have been familiar with pictures and stories in which the Saint Bernard Monks and dogs, and their isolated mountain home, are the fascinating objects of interest. Thus, when

the opportunity offered to visit the far-famed Hospice, it seemed no strange place for which we were bound, but rather, that acquaintance with a well-known spot was about to be renewed.

We started from hot, mosquito-haunted Martigny in bright, unclouded weather, and our spirits lightened at the thought that we were again ascending the heights; for the Rhone Valley is a saddening exchange from peaks, glaciers, and snow-fields.

At Bourg Saint Pierre, the last village on our journey, records of both far-off and near historical events are to be seen. An ancient Roman milestone by the wayside reminds us that the Pass was known nearly two thousand years ago to the people of that then world-wide Empire; and also that their Emperor Constantine improved the road A.D. 339. The inn where we lunched at this place, by its name Hôtel Déjeuner de Napoléon, supplies the modern incident, causing us to remember that Napoleon's memorable crossing of the Alps was by this route.

Saint Pierre, with respect to an all-pervading uninvitingness of appearance, was no exception to the other villages through which we had passed; and wayfarers' comments in the visitors' book at the hotel bore much on the absence of that virtue which is considered to rank next to godliness. Some tourists, who had passed the night in this place, evidently had not found the solitude it was natural to expect during the silent hours of darkness; there had been, it seemed, far too much society in the form of a varied and vivacious assortment of insect life. Plentiful remarks, scattered through the book, upon the subject of dirty and unpalatable food, caused us many ominous forebodings relative to our own luncheon then preparing. Probably these fears predisposed us to deem the meal more tolerable than we might otherwise have considered it; and its unexpected passability apparently induced one of our number to take a most favourable view of affairs generally, and of our unworthy selves particularly. For after we had inscribed our names in the complaining visitors' book, she added the information that our entertainment had afforded us entire satisfaction, because we happily possessed good spirits, good tempers, and good digestions. This assertion was a trifle too optimistic in tone to suit the uncompromising member of our party, and she wrote the one signifi-

cant word, "sometimes," after the egotistical eulogium.

Our next halt was at a deserted-looking inn, named the Cantine de Proz. Here the carriage road ends, and the journey has to be concluded on mules or on foot. We chose the former mode of locomotion; although, as we surveyed the ill-fitting, sorry saddles, and the rotten straps tied together with odd pieces of string, in which we had to place our trust, we wondered how long it would be, after we were mounted, before we might find ourselves abruptly and ignominiously deposited on the stony path, or in a water-course. But there was no pretext, on this occasion, for travellers' tales of hairbreadth escapes from dangers by flood and field; and we reached our goal in safety, if not altogether in comfort.

In the neighbourhood of the Hospice, the scenery is intensely drear, and sad, and sombre in character. At an altitude which is too great for the growth of trees or shrubs of any description, we are apt to expect an extensive panorama of lower-lying land to present itself to our gaze; but this highest winter habitation is surrounded solely by snow-streaked mountain summits, and during most of the time of our sojourn, even these were invisible, for we were in cloud-land, and therefore "viewed the mist and missed the view." The dull, yellowish greenish-coloured lake adjacent to the Monastery is, I should imagine, the least lovely of mountain tarns; its chief claim to interest being that the boundary column of Switzerland and Italy, with the names of these countries graven on opposite sides, is situated on the bank.

The beneficent work for which the Saint Bernard Monks are noted, probably inclines us to think of their abode as not altogether unsimilar in appearance to the ancient religious houses of our own land; and, forgetful of the representation in pictures, we were perhaps scarcely prepared to find a building so entirely like a fortress or barrack. When, however, we consider the climatic conditions of this region, we know that the style of structure suited to the sheltered spots mostly occupied by our old Abbeys, would hardly be desirable here, where great solidity is necessary to exclude the excessive cold, and also, as far as possible, to render the edifice avalanche-proof, for, from time to time, in the winter months, news arrives that the Hospice has been partially buried beneath masses of

snow which descended from the overshadowing peaks.

A second, smaller, but substantial building is used as a store-house, or, if necessary, for the reception of poor travellers. But, without doubt, the essential need for its presence is the shelter it would afford in the event of a fire occurring in the Monastery; which, should it happen during the winter months, would probably cause death, from exposure, to the occupants.

A third building, of stone, and rather hut-like in form, with a cross upon it, we found to be the celebrated "Morgue," where are deposited the bodies of those wayfarers whose death-bed has been the snow. The interior presents a ghastly sight. The bodies are clad in winding-sheets, with the faces and hands left uncovered; they are stood up against the walls, in all kinds of attitudes, and at all kinds of angles—there has been no attempt to compose the limbs. The low temperature and dryness of the atmosphere prevents decay, and retards decomposition. Annoyance to the olfactory nerves is consequently very slight; but there was enough, combined with the gruesomeness of the spectacle, to cause my allowing most of the dishes to pass at dinner, which meal happened to follow close upon our inspection of this grim exhibition.

The dead wayfarers are thus located, we are told, that friends may be enabled to recognise the remains; and this is considered possible when so long a time as three years have elapsed after death.

When the bodies fall to pieces the bones are gathered up and deposited in a vault at the rear of the dead-house: separate graves could not easily be excavated in the rocky ground of the Great Saint Bernard. Indeed, in most of the stony, mountainous parts of Switzerland, where cultivable ground is necessarily precious, there seems a difficulty in sparing adequate space for burial, and in these districts it is very usual to find a charnel-house in the churchyard containing a pile of skulls and bones which have been taken from graves to make room for fresh arrivals.

We were somewhat surprised to find that the dogs at the Hospice are of the smooth, short-haired breed, as in pictures they are almost invariably represented as belonging to the rough-coated variety. This latter species, however, I understand was originally employed by the monks, and the remains of the famous "Barry,"

exhibited in the Natural History Museum at Berne, appears to prove this inference. The change seems to have been occasioned by the tendency of the heavy, long hair to absorb the snow.

Many are the anecdotes—possibly more or less apocryphal—relating to the wonderful acts of these remarkably sagacious animals. One of their number, we read, was individually instrumental in saving twenty-two lives, and died in harness through the fall of an avalanche; another, it is narrated, rescued forty strayed or stupefied travellers, among them being a little lad whom this faithful friend of man restored to consciousness by caressing and licking his face and hands; and then the child, so the story runs, climbed upon his deliverer's back, and, clinging round his neck, was thus carried in triumph to the sheltering Hospice. When we look into "Baedeker" for a really authoritative statement, we find "Barry" alone referred to in the brief remark that he "is said to have saved the lives of fifteen persons." But, surely, this is no mean record of work nobly done, and we can extend our hero-worship to "Barry" and his successors; with the latter of whom we felt it an honour to become personally acquainted. And that sense of homage has deepened since we have heard that during the past winter they have been the saviours of six human beings, on whom the shadow of the dark valley had fallen.

The health of the monks, it is stated, suffers greatly through the rigorous temperature of their solitary dwelling; and, after a residence there of about fifteen years, they have to seek a milder air to prolong their shattered lives. The saying "nine months winter, and three months cold," which is, perhaps exaggeratedly, quoted by the natives when referring to the climate of another elevated portion of Switzerland, appears precisely to describe the weather on the Great Saint Bernard, where we found patches of snow lying about our path, although we had been mosquito-bitten in the morning at Martigny. After dinner we should doubtless have gladly accepted the offer of a fire being lighted for our special benefit, had we not been aware that payment for our fare and board was optional, and also that fuel is so valuable a commodity in those regions that as many as twenty horses, or mules, are employed daily, during the three summer months, in bringing wood from a valley twelve miles distant.

Some fellow-sojourners at the Hospice spoke of a narrow escape from a probably fatal accident, which they had experienced on their journey thither by the same route as ourselves. A mule, that was either blind, or had been frightened, came rushing down the road along which they were driving; it blundered against the startled horses, who backed in their fear; and, before the driver had time to dismount and seize the bridle, the near hind wheel of the carriage was over the edge of a precipice. Evidently those people who find a "suspçon" of danger an agreeable variety in life need not despair of meeting with it if they chance to travel by the Great Saint Bernard Pass; notwithstanding the fact that its scenery is, for the greater part, wanting in grandeur and sublimity.

The interior of the Hospice, and the general management, we considered much to resemble an ordinary Swiss hotel, a little out of the beaten track. Tales of cells warmed with braziers, and the presence of other mediæval paraphernalia, may be at once dismissed as entirely fabulous. There is, however, no fabrication with regard to the statement that nothing approaching a demand is made for payment. We had to enquire where we should find the box, mentioned by Baedeker, in which to place our indemnities; and this part of the arrangements is so little emphasized that the customary receptacle for offerings in the church was employed for the purpose. Baedeker sternly refers to the circumstance that these contributions are not at all commensurate with the number of guests entertained: it was therefore a relief to discover through the visitors' book that a very small proportion of the names were English. We had determined, after our signatures therein, to record some remark to the effect that we esteemed it a privilege to be allowed to visit such a deeply interesting place. But this desire lessened, and then quite passed away, as we perused the panegyrics of our countrymen, and especially of our countrywomen. We felt we could never hope to surpass, or even to equal, such a sentence as "Many, many thanks to the dear, good, pious monks of Saint Bernard, for etc., etc., etc."

The library and museum of the Monastery would not, I think, be considered of much note if it were situated in a more commonplace spot; but interest is attached to a small portion of the contents, and also to various

objects in other parts of the building, on account of their being the gifts of visitors. Amongst these presents there are a piano, an harmonium, and several pictures. Many of the donors are notabilities, and it is gratifying to our insular patriotism to find that the greater number appear to be dwellers in our sea-girt home. We may abuse our country, its institutions and its inhabitants, for eleven months out of the twelve; but we are intensely English during the one month we are on foreign soil, and oftentimes feel we should rather like to hear any one speak slightingly of our native land, that we might have an opportunity of utterly disproving their assertions, by our unanswerable statements respecting its perfections.

In the early morning, before leaving our comfortable beds, we heard the monks chanting their matins. As we listened, and remembered the historic roof under which we had awakened, we thought of Longfellow's beautiful, though hackneyed, words:

At break of day as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air,
Excelsior!

SIR HUMPHREY DAVY.

TEN years ago there was a great stir in Penzance. That was nothing unusual. The plucky little town at the end of all things feels bound to assert its vitality by an amount of concerts, and readings, and exhibitions, and such like, which would startle most inland towns. But the 1878 affair was something out of the common. It was Davy's centenary, and Davy was Penzance's most famous—her only very famous—townsman. So, in the prim-looking Saint John's Hall, where granite is displayed in unadorned solidity, were collected machines of all kinds, safety lamps of course, and, besides, electric apparatus, chemical ditto, everything down to the telephone and the microphone, then in their robust babyhood. Moreover, there was a statue to be unveiled at the head of Marketjew Street—puzzling name. "Thursday Market" seems the common-sense interpretation. How it was altered to Marazion—which Kingsley absurdly explained as "the bitterness of Zion," and fathered on an imaginary Jewish colony, forced to work in the tin-mines—is an etymological riddle. Altogether,

Penance was "off its head" for a week or more; and no one can say that Sir Humphrey did not deserve it all.

There have been other Davys. One Adam Davy was a poet-prophet, such as there were many of in the Middle Ages. He was rash enough to prophesy, when Edward the Second was very young, that that weakest of Kings should become Emperor of Christendom. Other poems he wrote, popular in their day, for he says: "I am well-known both at Stratford at Bow, where I am marshal, and everywhere." All the other Davys are quite modern; the Suffolk antiquary died less than forty years ago; the composer, author of the "Bay of Biscay," Braham's famous song, died in 1824. This Davy is an instance of how "patronage"—now a thing of the past—often worked for good. Son of a poor girl, by an unnamed father, he so profited by the lessons of her brother—the harmonious blacksmith of Upton Helions, near Exeter—that before he was five he could play any tune after once or twice hearing it. He astonished Carrington, the rector, by hanging up an octave of horseshoes, and with an iron rod playing the Crediton chimes. Carrington set him down to the harpsichord, and introduced him to the Reverend R. Eastcott, an Exeter amateur, who articulated him to Jackson, the cathedral organist. He would probably have succeeded Jackson had he not become stage-stricken, and moved to London. Here, for a quarter of a century, he supplied the theatres with the light English opera music then in fashion; writing also songs—"May we ne'er want a Friend," "Just like Love," etc.—all forgotten, except the immortal "Bay of Biscay;" and alas! drinking so hard, that he died penniless in a wretched lodging.

A possible relation of his was Davy, the Exeter grocer, who turned lawyer, defended the woman who was going to be hanged through Elizabeth Canning's perjury, got a man acquitted whom the Duke of Marlborough charged with felony under the infamous "Black Act," and rescued the negro Sommersett from slavery, using the well-known words: "It has been said this air is too pure for a slave to breathe it. I trust I shall here have proof of this assertion." "No lawyer," he was a first-rate cross-examiner, and good, too, at a retort. Thus, when Lord Mansfield said: "If this is law, I must burn all my books." "Your lordship had better read them first," replied Davy.

And again, when the same Judge wanted to hold a sitting on Good Friday, Davy shut him up by suggesting: "No Judge has done so since Pontius Pilate."

Cynically greedy, he was accused of taking silver, and thereby disgracing the profession.

"Yes," he replied, "I took silver because I could not get gold; but I took every farthing the fellow had in the world, and I hope you don't call that disgracing the profession."

Less famous, but a great man in Cambridge in his day, was the Norfolk Davy, Master of Caius College, whose bitter partisanship in vetoing the setting up by the university of a statue to Pitt, led to the foundation of the Pitt scholarships, and the building of the Pitt Press. Pitt's friends, finding the university would not raise a statue, subscribed so largely that there was money enough for the statue, and the scholarship, and the grand building into the bargain. One more Davy must be mentioned before we come to the great man of the name, the Tavistock man who, after taking his B.A. at Balliol, Oxford, in 1766, lived nearly sixty years curate of Lustleigh at forty pounds a year. He was as choice a sample in one way of the shameful unfairness of Church patronage, as his namesake the Norfolk physician was in another. The latter, while Master of Caius College, was made Rector of the golden living of Cottenham and Prebendary of Chichester, simply for political services, by the very men who in 1827 were fighting (as they said) the battle of reform against jobbery. The poor curate was afflicted with a desire to print his voluminous "System of Divinity." He got a long list of subscribers for his first six volumes, but so many forgot to pay their subscriptions that he found himself over a hundred pounds in debt to his printer. Besides, the manuscript had grown to twenty-six volumes! So Davy made a new kind of press after a design of his own, bought some old type, printed a specimen volume of three hundred and thirty pages, and sent copies to the university libraries, the reviews, etc. Scarcely any one even acknowledged his present, though the "British Critic" gave him a very honourable notice. Archbishop Moore, Bishop Porteous of London, and three successive Bishops of Exeter—Ross, Buller, Courtenay—declined to accept a dedication. Bishop Buller would not even look at his specimen volume. But Davy

was not to be discouraged. He taught his servant-girl to "compose" the types, and, having fourteen copies left of his specimen volume, he actually printed fourteen of each of the remaining twenty-five volumes of five hundred pages each; a complete set of which, Sir R. H. Inglis says, is one of the most interesting specimens of typography in the British Museum. It shows what skill, industry, and perseverance, continued through nearly twenty years, could accomplish. Davy printed in the same way a volume of extracts from his "Magnum Opus," and got it published at Exeter; and at last patronage came. Bishop Pelham gave him, in 1825, the vicarage of Winkleigh; but Davy was eighty-three, and only held his benefice five months. He was as great in his way as Sir Humphrey was in his. Besides making a printing press, he invented the plan of a diving bell for raising the property out of the Royal George, and took it to Portsmouth. It was adopted and successfully used by Government; but Davy never got a penny, not even his travelling expenses.

And now for Humphrey, son of Robert Davy, a Penzance wood-carver, who owned a little family estate at Ludgvan. Robert's wife was one of the old Millett family, through whom her kinsman, Tonkin, a retired Penzance surgeon, took little Humphrey under his charge. He was a precocious boy, fond of reading, fonder still of gathering a crowd of his schoolfellows and giving them lectures—on "The Pilgrim's Progress," or on the ballads of the district—from a cart in the market-place. He got punished for neglecting his tasks; but, as he says in his magniloquent way, "the applause of my companions was my recompense."

Humphrey developed quite early the invaluable faculty of picking other men's brains. Quaker Dunkin, a Penzance saddler, who had made himself an electrical machine and voltaic piles, etc., turned the pliant boy from folk-lore to science. The two used to take walks, versatile Davy giving half his mind to making love-verses—he was sweet seventeen—and the other half to discussing the materiality of heat so doggedly that Dunkin once cried out: "I tell thee what, Humphrey, thou art the most quibbling hand in a dispute I ever met with." By-and-by, when he was a great man, Davy reproduced at the Royal Institution some of the experiments he had learned from Dunkin, that for instance which showed heat generated by motion

from rubbing together two plates of ice, the plates freezing into one as soon as the motion was stopped.

Meanwhile Tonkin, who had adopted his orphaned mother and her sisters—the parents both died in one day of malignant fever—determined that the boy should follow his profession, and apprenticed him on his father's death to Borlase, the chief Penzance surgeon. He soon began to meet scientific people—Dr. Edwards, Chemical Lecturer at Saint Bartholomew's, who had a house at Hayle; James Watt's son, who, wintering at Penzance for his health, lodged with Mrs. Davy; and Dr. Beddoes, of the "Pneumatic Institution," at Bristol, who offered to make him superintendent of his laboratory. Davies Gilbert it was who had shown Beddoes Davy's "Young Man's Researches on Heat and Light." But Tonkin said: "No; you're on a groove, you'll be a fool if you strike off from it;" and when Davy determined to go, his disappointed benefactor altered his will. "I still mean to go to Edinburgh and take my M.D., by-and-by," pleaded Davy; but he never went.

His "Researches," published in the "West Country Collections," excited much attention; and after working hard with Beddoes at Bristol, and so nearly killing himself by trying to breathe carburetted hydrogen, that after some hours in the open air he could only faintly whisper, "I don't think I shall die," and injuring his mucous membrane by inhaling dose after dose of laughing gas, he was called to London to the "Institution for Diffusing Knowledge"—the "Royal"—founded in 1799 by Count Rumford. Dr. Garnett, the first lecturer, broke down in health; and Secretary Rumford offered Davy the assistant lectureship, and the run of the laboratory, and a hundred pounds a year. This was the turning-point in his life. His lectures—among them, in 1802, one on "making profiles by the agency of light on nitrate of silver, J. Wedgwood's invention," the germ of photography—became the rage. Everybody thronged to them, the laughing gas being an extra attraction.

Versatile, as usual, Davy "wrote off in two hours" a prologue to Tobin's "Honeymoon," just to show that science had not quenched his love of poetry. Very soon the Royal Society made him a Fellow, and the Dublin Society followed suit, and his salary at the Institution was raised to four hundred pounds. He now went largely in for galvanism, trying to decompose phos-

phorus, and succeeding (1806) in decomposing soda and potash, thus discovering the two "metals" sodium and potassium. But J. G. Children, a famous scientist in his day—though not on the line that leads to fortune—had a bigger battery than that of the Institution. Davy's managers, therefore, raised money and formed a monster battery of two hundred piles, each of ten double plates in porcelain cells, each plate containing thirty-two square inches. With this Davy proved that chlorine is an element, and that by mixture with hydrogen it makes muriatic acid; and was, in consequence, fiercely attacked by the whole chemical world. In 1807 the French Institute awarded him the three thousand francs prize for galvanic experiments, founded by First Consul Napoleon; but he failed to decompose nitrogen, which he "hoped to show as a complete wreck, torn to pieces in different ways," and he nearly died of malaria caught in attempting to disinfect Newgate. He failed, too, in ventilating the House of Lords; but his failure was no check to his fame. He was straightway knighted by the Prince Regent, and netted nearly two thousand pounds by three courses of lectures in Dublin.

His marriage followed (1812), with the widow of poor young Shuckburgh Apreece, who died before his father, Sir Hussey Apreece. She was heiress of Kerr of Kelso, "a Kerr cousin of mine," as Sir Walter Scott expressed it, and had been for her five years of widowhood a society queen in Edinburgh. Young, wealthy, fresh from the Continent—where she had known Madame de Staël, and was said to be the original of "Corinne"—she had all the literary lions at her feet, "a venerable professor stooping in the street to tie her bootlace." In London she met Davy, and was married at her mother's house in Portland Place by the Bishop of Carlisle. On Davy's side it was a love match. Two months after he dedicated to her his "Elements of Chemical Philosophy," "as a pledge that he should under her auspices continue to pursue science with unabated ardour."

But he didn't. The lady was an aristocrat, and objected to trade, and Davy had to write some very unworthy letters, protesting that his connection with the "Ramhurst Gunpowder Company," in which he, and Children, and Burton, were partners, was simply that of a scientist giving gratuitous advice.

The pair soon went abroad, taking

Faraday, whose genius Davy had found out, and whom he had installed as assistant in the Institution laboratory. But Lady Davy made Faraday's life a burden to him. She, the idol of lairds, and law-lords, and professors, to have to consort with a quite common fellow! He ought to have his meals with the courier. Snubbing Faraday—whose simple nature could not wholly shield him—became her sport. "Her temper," he says, "made it oftentimes go wrong with me, with herself, and with Sir Humphrey." For Davy, however, the journey was a success. "The Philomaths" met in full force to welcome the great scientist—Ampère, Chevreuil, Cuvier, and Humboldt amongst them; and during the dinner, Ampère told Davy how Courtois had just discovered iodine, and gave him a specimen. He was made a member of the Imperial Institute, and, when he got to Italy, was admitted to the laboratory of the Academia del Cimento. At Pavia, Volta—of the voltaic pile—met him in gorgeous Court dress. When he saw a dusty, travel-stained Englishman in an old overcoat, he could not believe it was the great man, and forgot all the speech that he had prepared for the occasion.

On Davy's return (1815), Dr. Gray asked him to see if he could not do something to prevent the loss of life in coal-mines. He got a sample of fire-damp, and found "it would not explode in tubes of a small diameter." Now wire gauze is an assemblage of very short tubes; therefore Davy put wire gauze round his lamp, with the result that the explosive gas passed in through the wires and exploded inside, while the explosion could not pass out. Here again Davy's lucky star helped him. His lamp is not a bit better, in several respects worse, than those of Dr. Clanny and George Stephenson; but everybody cried up the Davy lamp, and in 1816 the coal-owners raised one thousand eight hundred pounds and a service of plate, "to show distinctly the real opinion of the coal trade as to the merit of the invention." One would like to have the real opinion of the miners on the point. It would perhaps be too much to say that the Davy lamp has increased the number of accidents; it has certainly not minimised them. Any one who has tried to do any work by such a lamp must feel that it is at once condemned. Of all the fifty or more kinds exhibited at the Penzance Centenary, it shows the least amount of light. The workman, unless

he has owl's eyes, is obliged every now and then to open the wire and so throw a little light on the subject. This is the history of many an explosion. The use of the lamp threw the men off their guard; and then some one bared his flame, forgetting that there was no charm in the lamp when divested of its wire gauze casing. The coal-owners took it as a boon, for the simple reason that it saved their pockets. It is very much cheaper to insist on every man carrying a Davy lamp, even if you have to buy it yourself, than it is to thoroughly ventilate your mine, and light it with electric light, and thereby to make fire-damp explosions almost impossible.

The lamp won Davy a baronetcy, and the Rumford Medals of the Royal Society. This was his last famous work; his attempt, on a second visit to Italy, to unroll Herculanean papyri was a failure. He did a little partial unrolling; but he and his fellow-workers did not get on well, and he pronounced the work "a waste of public money, and a compromise of our own character."

In 1820 Sir Joseph Banks died, and Davy succeeded him as President of the Royal Society. He was much worried by quarrels between the Royal Institution and the Society, and most of his scientific work on the condensation of gases, the relation between electricity and magnetism established by Oersted, devolved on Faraday. Davy, however, had to investigate a subject on which Government appealed to the Royal Society. The copper sheathing of our ships decayed with terrible rapidity; could science find out any means of stopping the waste? Davy's mind had been turned to the subject when he was quite a lad by the condition of the Hayle flood-gates, where the copper and iron corroded rapidly under the action of sea water—galvanic, though Davy then knew nothing of that. Davy's remedy for the ships was a series of zinc studs. It was found that a bit of zinc as big as a pea preserved a surface of forty to fifty square inches. But the remedy turned out worse than the disease; the bottoms, thus saved from oxidising, became far more than before "fouled" with shell-fish of all kinds, to the detriment of their sailing powers. So a compromise was made; the zinc protectors were used in harbour, and taken out when the ships sailed; till in 1828, to Davy's great disgust, the plan was wholly abandoned.

His health suffered. The sheathing business worried him. He had a stroke, and was sent to Italy to winter. He stayed abroad a full year, at Ravenna till April, and then among the Alps. Returning to Park Street, he soon complained of want of power, and began longing for "the fresh air of the mountains." However, he found energy to put together his "Salmonia; or, Days of Fly-fishing," a work by which he is more widely known than by any of his scientific treatises. The next spring he left England, never to return. In February, 1829, he writes from Rome: "Would I were better; but here I am wearing away the winter, a ruin among ruins."

He did not, however, give up work, experimenting on the torpedo (not our torpedo, but the electric eel), and also writing his "Consolations in Travel; or, the Last Days of a Philosopher." His brother, John, the army doctor, who wrote "An Account of the Interior of Ceylon," and also "The Angler and His Friends" (for he was as keen a fisher as Humphrey), and who had been with him through most of his sojourns abroad, says the book was finished just as the power of writing left him. He then dictated a letter on the torpedo, and one to John: "I am dying, come as quickly as you can." John was in time, and saw his brother next day deeply interested in dissecting a torpedo. He suggested mountain air, and they left Rome on the twentieth of April, and took five weeks getting to Geneva. But the journey was too much; Davy died the day after his arrival. His wife was with him. She had come to Rome at the end of March. Her own life was prolonged to 1855, by which time the lively brunette, whom Sydney Smith called "as brown as a dry toast," had become "haggard and dried up," though she kept to the last her great physical activity and her love of London gaiety. Humphrey and John were deeply attached. The service of plate given by the coal-owners was left to John, "if he is in a condition to use it;" if not, it was to be sold to found a prize medal. To this purpose John Davy devoted it, and the Royal Society's prize for the best chemical discovery in Europe or America was founded with the proceeds. "He was not only one of the greatest but one of the most benevolent and amiable of men," is the verdict on Sir Humphrey of one who knew him well, and was not given to flatter. We may better describe

him as a courtly man, helped much by what for lack of a better name we call "luck," which threw him in the way of powerful friends, and thus gave him an advantage over men not less gifted than himself.

"THE NORWAY SHEEP."

THE fierce wind breaking from his bonds comes roaring from the west ;
On every long, deep rolling wave the white horse shows his crest
As if a million mighty steeds had burst their masters' hold ;
For the wild white sheep of Norway are coming to the fold.

The storm-drum shows its warning sign ; the seagulls swoop and cry ;
The fleecy clouds are driven fast across the stormy sky ;
Along the sands the fresh foam-gouts in ghastly sport are rolled ;
For the wild white sheep of Norway are coming to the fold.

Wistful the fisher seaward looks, out from the great stone pier,
Wistful he stands, the breakers' call along the cliffs to hear ;
To hear across the flowing tide, the ceaseless rock-bell tolled,
While fast and fierce the Norway sheep are coming to the fold.

"The wife and bairns will get no bread from yonder sea," he thinks,
As his idle coble by the staithe strains at its cable's links ;
Small use to bait the lines, or see the broad brown sails unrolled,
When the wild white sheep of Norway are coming to the fold.

"God guard the ships at sea to-night," the stern old sailors say,
Straining keen eyes across the waste of heaving, tossing spray,
Recalling many a bitter night of storm and dread of old,
When the wild white sheep of Norway were coming to the fold.

Oh ! there is many an aching heart, here in the red-roofed tower,
As wives and mothers hear the blast come wailing from the down ;
Who knows what tale of death or wreck to-morrow may be told ?
For the wild white sheep of Norway are coming to the fold.

A SEPTEMBER GHOST.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"My good woman," I said, struggling hard to control my temper, "these letters are of the greatest importance ; they must be taken to Walthamthwait Manor to-night."

But, although I spoke in my most autocratic manner, in my heart of hearts I knew that she, not I, was the mistress of

the situation. I think she knew it too, judging by the gentle, deprecating way in which she smiled ; a woman never looks so like a reed as when possessed of power, and bent on using it.

"These letters must be taken to Walthamthwait Manor to-night," I repeated emphatically.

"Certainly, sir ; I make sure when the master comes home he will lend you the mare," the farmer's wife replied gently. She was a Berkshire woman, and her soft Southern accent came to me as a welcome relief, after a day spent in a vain endeavour to understand the strange, semi-Gaelic dialect of the Dalers.

"But you say you don't know when he will come ; perhaps not to-night."

"Why, sir, you see it all depends on them sheep, and sheep are the most unreckonable of creatures. If the master has sold them all I'm pretty sure we shall see him to-night ; though he might go on to Pateley for the market," she added meditatively.

"There now, you see yourself we cannot rely upon him ; I must find a messenger. Have you no man about the place ?"

The woman shook her head.

"Then there is no help for it ; I cannot walk a step further, so your son must go," I said, pointing to a lad about eighteen who was lounging on the settle.

Mrs. Metcalf shook her head more decidedly than before.

"Of course I will pay him for going," I added impatiently.

"It's not that, sir, Jim would go, and gladly too, just to oblige you, if it was anywhere else ; but not to the Manor, sir, to-night. Why, it is almost dark already."

"But it is not more than five miles, you say, and a great fellow like that cannot mind the darkness."

"Not to the Manor, sir ; anywhere else you like—but not to the Manor. Jim shall not go to the Manor to-night."

That was all she would say ; and my prayers, entreaties, bribes, and threats were alike powerless to move her from her resolve. The more I stormed the more gentle she became, but with the inflexible gentleness of one who was determined at any cost to protect her own from danger.

On the first of September—it was then the twentieth—my brother and I had come down into Yorkshire on a walking tour. Frank was more active than myself, but we had stuck faithfully together until the previous day, when, his patience being

exhausted by the time I took vainly endeavouring to make a sketch of the Brimham rocks, he had set off alone into Craven, to Walthamthwait Manor, which some cousins of ours had taken for the season; and there I had arranged to meet him after a day's rest at Pateley.

At Pateley, however, I found a budget of letters, and amongst them one from the Admiralty, summoning Frank back to his ship. As the letters had been waiting some days, no time was to be lost; and hearing from the innkeeper that Walthamthwait was within an easy walk, I set out. My road lay up Nidderdale, and round by Great Whernside, but either the landlord's idea of distances varied considerably from mine, or else I must have lost my way, for after passing Middlesmoor I wandered for hours in an almost uninhabited region, and then learned at a little wayside farmhouse that I was still five miles from the Manor. The farmer's wife received me most hospitably, and offered me a bed, which, as I was thoroughly worn out, I should have been most thankful to accept, if only I could have found some one to carry the letter to Frank.

I took the woman into my confidence, thinking that, if she realised my difficulty, she would be the more ready to help me. She listened to my story with a sympathy that was quite touching. "If only the old mare were at home," she kept saying; but none the less was she resolved that Jim should not go to the Manor that night; nor could she give me any hope of finding either a horse or a messenger on the way.

"There's not a house between here and the Manor," she said, with a queer little glance at her son; "and if there was, nobody would live in it. Now, sir, just be reasonable. You look real down tired. Have a bit of supper now, and you will feel better. If the master comes home you can have the mare, and if not, Jim shall take the letter over betimes in the morning."

There was nothing else to be done, so I was obliged to submit, although resolved that, if the farmer did not return by nine o'clock, I must set out for the Manor on foot. The woman's obstinacy had excited my curiosity. Although the house was clean and neat, there were signs of poverty on every side; it could only be a very strong reason, I thought, that made her thus prevent her son's earning a couple of sovereigns by a five miles' walk.

She tried to avoid the subject, but, after a good deal of questioning, she confessed that the road to the Manor was "uncanny." This idea amused me not a little; I had thought that all these old superstitions vanished when railways were invented. But then, of course, even railways are things unknown at Walthamthwait.

"If you had seen all I have, you would be less inclined to laugh, sir," Mrs. Metcalf remarked reproachfully.

I apologised for my untimely mirth, and soon, as I sat there listening idly, the woman launched into all the details of the tragedy that must, she said, make that road for ever uncanny.

Mrs. Metcalf, the daughter of a small Berkshire farmer, had, when quite a girl, come down to the Manor as maid to Lady Barchester's two daughters. Her mother had been a Craven woman, and before her marriage, Lady Barchester's maid. Judging by the tone of real affection with which the woman spoke of them, her young mistresses must have been kindly, good-hearted girls, although their mother was evidently a Tartar. She was a genuine Daler, born and bred in Walthamthwait, and never leaving it until she married Sir Frederick Barchester, a fast young officer who, having come North on a shooting-party, fell in love with the beauty of Craven, married her, and took her to his Southern home. The marriage does not seem to have proved a happy one, for when, a few years later, Lady Barchester returned to her father's house a widow, she, who had left it a bright, winsome girl, had become a fierce, hard woman, whose hand was against every man, and, as she believed, every man's hand against her. She brought with her her two little girls, whom she loved with such jealous passion that, if they smiled at any one but her, even at her own father, she would frown with anger.

These two girls grew up at the Manor, entirely cut off from the world, until the elder was nearly nineteen, when their father's relations interfered, and insisted upon their being taken into society befitting their rank. Lady Barchester made a gallant struggle to keep her children for herself alone, and, at the end, it was only the fear that they should be taken from her entirely, that induced her to accompany them to town for the season.

The two Northern heiresses created quite a sensation in London, and little wonder, for, according to the portraits Mrs. Metcalf

showed me, they must both of them have been undeniably beautiful. The younger of the two was a brilliant brunette, who, if one may judge by faces, had inherited her mother's determination, if not her jealous temper; the elder was cast in a gentler mould. She was one of those tall, willowy girls who look as if a gust of wind would blow them away. Her face was wonderfully lovely, with large, piteous blue eyes, which seemed as if they were appealing—appealing, too, in vain—for sympathy to those around. By the strange magnetism of contrasts it was the gentle Dorothea, not the more brilliant Kathleen, who was her mother's favourite child.

When, at the end of the season, the Barchesters returned to the Manor, Kathleen was betrothed to the great catch of the year, Sir Lionel Foster, the owner of large estates in Craven, and a member of a good old Northern family. Lady Barchester, far from being elated at her daughter's good fortune, grieved over it as a calamity. She did not hold with marrying and giving in marriage, and openly declared that, if Sir Lionel had not been a Dalesman, he should never have married her daughter. Dora, too, had found a suitor, a young artist, whose father, the leading Queen's Counsel of his day, owed his fortune and fame entirely to his own ability.

Mrs. Metcalf, much as she deplored the fact of Arthur Dacre's being only "a painting fellow and of no sort of family," was forced to confess that he was a fine, handsome young man, who had already made a mark in his profession, and was, as she styled it, "very much thought of in London;" but as she naively remarked, "if the King upon his throne had asked for Miss Dora in marriage, her mother would have rejected him with scorn;" so there was little hope for one who combined the obnoxious attributes of parvenu, artist, and Southerner. Lady Barchester seems to have been determined that no one should come between this daughter at least and herself. The young artist did not take the contemptuous refusal he received much to heart. Perhaps the fair Dora had found some means of letting him know that she did not share her mother's views, for he coolly wrote and told Lady Barchester that he should renew his proposal when her daughter was of an age legally to decide for herself. This meant that the young people must wait about eighteen months. But Sir Lionel, who was a friend of Mr. Dacre's,

encouraged the match, and took care that his sister-in-law should, from time to time, meet the man she loved.

At length when Dora was twenty-one, she summoned courage to tell her mother that she was resolved to marry Arthur Dacre. A terrible scene ensued, which the girl's strength, already undermined by the silent struggle of the two previous years, was little able to endure; and just as her mother, in a fierce blaze of rage, was calling down the wrath of heaven upon the base-born traitor who had stolen from her her daughter's love, Dora fell to the ground, with blood streaming from her mouth—she had broken a blood-vessel. Lady Barchester's remorse was as passionate as had been her anger, and, ready to make any sacrifice now that her daughter's life was in question, she hastily summoned Arthur Dacre. Unfortunately he was abroad, and nearly a month elapsed before he reached Walthamtwait. In the meantime, Dora seemed to have recovered her usual health, and her mother had begun keenly to regret the invitation she had sent.

"The day Mr. Dacre was to arrive was a terrible day for all of us," Mrs. Metcalf said with a sigh. "Sir Lionel rode backwards and forwards between Stony Place and the Manor, trying to persuade my lady to be reasonable; for, at the last moment, she had changed her mind and declared that Mr. Dacre should not see Miss Dora. She, poor thing, was just a picture of misery the whole time. I felt sure they would kill her amongst them. It was settled at last, though not without a terrible hard battle, that Mr. Dacre should stay with Sir Lionel, and from there come over to dine at the Manor. When Miss Dora knew that she was really going to see him, she was like a different being; she laughed, and chatted, and sang as she came and helped me to look through her gowns, for she was bent, she said, upon wearing her prettiest that night. I remember so well, just as we heard the carriage wheels in the distance, she threw her arms round my neck and kissed me. 'Annie,' she said, 'look through all my things. I should like to give something to each of you to-night. And please run down with that grey travelling-shawl to Mrs. Roberts. The one she was wearing on Sunday was so thin, there could be no warmth in it. Give her my love, too.'

"Now at the Manor the dining-room

door was never shut, as a heavy curtain hung before the opening. As soon as I knew dessert was on the table, I stole downstairs to have a peep from behind this curtain at my young mistress and her betrothed. There was no one but they and my lady at table. Miss Dora, who was usually so silent and sedate, was beaming with happiness, and laughing and talking gaily, whilst Mr. Dacre seemed to hang on the very words as they fell from her lips; they were all and all to each other, for although from time to time they would turn and make some remark to my lady, it was always with an effort. It was just awful to see my lady! She sat at the head of the table with a scowl as black as thunder upon her face. How them young people could laugh and talk so with her glowering down upon them, I could not imagine. The way she looked made my very blood run cold.

"About nine o'clock a terrible storm came on; I have seen many a bad one in my time, but none so bad as that. Folks don't know what real storms are like until they have lived in these narrow valleys. That night the lightning seemed to play like great tongues of fire around the house, whilst the thunder roared, the wind howled, and the rain fell in torrents. I was too frightened to stay upstairs alone, so I crept down into the hall. As it struck ten o'clock my lady rang the bell, and enquired if Sir Lionel's carriage had not come for Mr. Dacre.

"Sir Lionel's not a gentleman as would send a horse out on such a night,' I heard old Thomas, the butler, reply sturdily. 'Why, my lady, have ye na seen the lightning? I'd like to see a carriage that could stand in this wind.'

"Mr. Dacre,' my lady said, in that stately way of hers, 'Sir Lionel promised that his carriage should be here by ten o'clock; he has failed to fulfil his engagement; I am afraid you will be obliged to walk to Stony Place.'

"Through the open door I could see Miss Dora and Mr. Dacre look at her in blank amazement.

"But, mamma, surely——' Miss Dora began, but her mother cut her short with a gesture.

"I know that young men are not now what they used to be,' my lady said, in a voice that made me shudder; it seemed to cut like a sharp knife as you heard it. 'And of course there is all the difference in the world between Northerners and

Southerners; but I should have thought that, even for a Southerner, a walk of two miles would scarcely have been counted a hardship.'

"Neither of two, nor of twenty, I hope,' Mr. Dacre replied with a laugh. 'But, in inky darkness, with a storm such as this raging——' he hesitated.

"It is a straight path, you cannot miss it.'

"Do you mean, Lady Barchester, that you really wish me to set out in this storm?' he asked indignantly.

"Your invitation, Mr. Dacre, was until ten o'clock. If it is the darkness you are afraid of,' my lady added with a sneer, 'one of the footmen may accompany you.'

"Mr. Dacre's face flushed angrily. 'Thank you, I will not trouble your servant, and, as I am so unwelcome, I will intrude upon you no longer. Good evening, Lady Barchester. Good-bye, Dora. Don't let this trouble you, darling,' he aded, lowering his voice. 'I shall see you to-morrow.'

He walked to the door, which old Thomas opened most unwillingly. A violent gust of wind dashed the men across the threshold back into the hall, and at that moment a vivid flash of lightning filled the air with flame, whilst the crash of thunder was so loud that the whole building reeled. Miss Dora, who had been standing as one stunned, sprang forward with a shriek:

"Arthur, you shall not go; you shall stay here. Mother, you cannot turn him out. Arthur, darling, say that you will not go.'

And she clung to his arm with piteous entreaty.

"Be silent, child,' my lady said sternly. 'Have you no sense of maidenly modesty? Mr. Dacre, must I tell you for the second time you are intruding?'

He looked at her for a moment, as if strongly tempted to tell her what he thought; then he threw his arms around Miss Dora in one passionate embrace, forced open the hall door, and strode away.

"For Heaven's sake, be careful at that bridge,' old Thomas cried after him; and then, turning to my lady, he said solemnly: 'Your father, my old master, wouldn't have turned a dog out on such a night as this, my lady. In Craven, a curse rests on them as turns away a guest.'

Miss Dora never closed her eyes that night, but just lay and moaned like a

stricken lamb. It was well on to morning when I fell asleep myself, and when I awoke she was standing by my bedside, very white, but quite calm and determined.

"'Annie, please dress quickly,' she said. 'I am going to Stony Place, and you must come with me. I will not stay another day in a house where he is not welcome.'

"By eight o'clock we were on our way. It was a lovely morning; the storm seemed to have swept from the earth all that was not beautiful and sweet. My mistress talked away quite calmly as we walked. She told me she should stay with her sister and Sir Lionel until she was married.

"'It will only be a week or two now,' she said with a smile and a faint flush, and that then she would go to London and I was to go too.

"Now, at about half-a-mile from the Manor, there is a little stream which separates the park from the meadows. I call it a stream, and so it is in a usual way; in summer, even you may ford across it, although, after heavy rain, it swells out into quite an important river. You will see it, sir, as you go to the Manor—just at the park entrance; there is no lodge at this side. In those days there was an old-fashioned wooden bridge that the gentlefolks set great store by, and artists used to come from all around to sketch. As we drew near I noticed that the river was more swollen than I had ever seen it before, and also that something was wrong with the bridge. One of the shafts that supported it had been washed away and had dragged down with it the little hand-rail. I was just wondering what we should do, for it is a long way by the road to Stony Place, when my mistress suddenly sprang from my side, and, with one bound, was at the brink of the river. What followed, sir, to this day I never rightly knew. I heard a shriek—oh, Heavens! I can hear that shriek still; it was more like the cry of a wounded animal than of a human creature—and saw Miss Dora jump into the river. She fell just in the middle, where the current was most strong, and in a second she was carried away by the force of the stream far beyond my reach. Some men were working in a field near, and heard my cries; but they were too late. Miss Dora was dead long before they reached her."

The woman stopped to dry her tears.

"What could have induced her to commit so wild a deed?" I asked.

"Ah, sir! she had cause enough for what she did, as I saw when I came back to the stream; for there, on the further bank, Mr. Dacre was lying, white and ghastly, with a terrible wound in the side of his head. He must have been on the bridge when it fell, for the doctor said he was not drowned—I myself saw that his face was out of the water—but died from hitting his head against a stone. Miss Dora must have caught sight of him and tried to spring across the river to his side."

"What became of Lady Barchester?"

The woman shuddered as she replied: "The news that something was wrong must have reached her, for we had just taken the poor young gentleman out of the water and laid him on the grass when I saw my lady coming towards us. She came quite close and stood for a moment looking down at him with such a strange, fierce look, almost as if she was glad he was gone. When her eyes fell on me, she asked angrily what I was doing there, and bade me go and see to my young mistress.

"'She must know nothing of this,' she said sternly. 'Do you understand? I forbid you to tell her a word of this,' and she turned towards the house; but the plank of wood on which her dead daughter was lying barred her way. We were all on the soft grass, and had never heard the footsteps of the men who were carrying it. It was terrible to see the dead faces of those two poor young things; but their faces were nothing to my lady's. When I am alone the awful look that came over her when she saw Miss Dora lying before her, haunts me sometimes, even now. She stood perfectly still, just as if she were in a dream; and not one of us dared to move. Then Sir Lionel rode up. Some one must have told him what had happened, for he was white as death. My lady looked at him for a moment and then said quietly, but in a voice that seemed to come from far-off hollow caves: 'Lionel, I killed him, so God has killed her,' and then she turned and walked to the house with her usual stately gait.

"The men that were carrying Miss Dora and Mr. Dacre followed her slowly, we all walking behind them. My lady must have gone more quickly than we, for when we reached the broad avenue she was already out of sight, and just as we crossed the threshold of the Manor House, the report of a gun rang through the air. My lady had shot herself."

"But what has all this to do with Jim's not being able to take my letters?" I asked, after a long pause during which the good woman had in some degree recovered her composure.

She looked at me for a moment as if she thought I must be singularly lacking in intelligence to ask such a question, and then said solemnly: "It is the twentieth of September, sir, to-day; twenty-seven years ago to-night that poor young gentleman died by the Manor Park bridge. He will be there to-night."

I had no time for further discussion, so prepared to start at once in spite of all Mrs. Metcalf's entreaties that I would not tempt fate by trying to cross the bridge that night. "That poor young gentleman will be there," she repeated again and again.

"I only hope he may," I replied with a laugh, as I wished her good-night.

I set out for the Manor, philosophising as I went, on the strange persistency with which old superstitions still linger on in the North. "There is a fine field for a School Board here," I muttered, with a sniff of scorn. "How can people in this our day be capable of such folly?"

All my life I had had a peculiar contempt for so-called psychic experiences, being firmly convinced that in every case they were the inventions of impostors, or the ravings of hysterical women. So far did my antipathy go, that I had given up taking my favourite newspaper simply because it would persist in recording the sayings and doings of the Psychical Society. If, when I started for the Manor, any one had asked me whether I believed in ghosts, I should have regarded the question as a stupid joke, so convinced was I that no sensible man could do anything of the sort; but, before I was at the end of my journey that night, I was doomed to discover that, even in myself, there were more things than I had dreamed of in my philosophy.

My path lay along a narrow lane, with thick bushes growing on either side, from which, now and then, tall trees raised up their heads. It was one of those nights we sometimes have in September, when light and darkness seem to be playing some fitful, restless game. The moon was a good-sized crescent, and shone with quite a brilliant light, but dark, heavy clouds kept flitting before its bright surface, casting thick darkness on the world. A gentle breeze was blowing, just enough to make the leaves, as they fluttered, moan and coo

as if they had piteous tales to tell if only they could find a listener. Perhaps it was they that recalled to my mind what the farmer's wife had told me. There was something almost grotesque in the thought of this peaceful little valley having been the scene of a tragedy so ghastly—of a young man full of life and bright hopes having met there with such a fate; to die like a dog in a ditch, and all through the obstinate folly of a jealous old woman! I caught myself trying to imagine what Arthur Dacre must have felt that night when driven out into the storm. The air seemed to become suddenly chill, or perhaps my weariness made me exaggerate what was only a natural change in the atmosphere. Be that as it may, I shivered as I dragged my tired limbs along, vainly longing for my journey to be ended. The solitude was almost terrible; there was no sign of human being or human habitation, not even a bird was singing, and when a dead leaf blew against my face I started as if I had received a blow. I pulled myself together and tried to laugh at my own folly; but struggle as I might, the conviction that there was something uncanny about the road forced itself upon me. The silence, broken only by the rustling of leaves, seemed to become more and more unnatural. I tried to whistle, but the weird force with which the trees re-echoed the sound was more trying even than the stillness. The trees, too, began to assume all sorts of grotesque forms and shapes: one great gaunt oak stretched out its arms like a skeleton, seeking to clutch the passers-by; another bore a strange resemblance to a gallows. Just as I was passing this one, something touched my foot—it was only a rabbit running across the path—and my heart began to throb and flutter. "Clearly I have been walking too much, and overstrained myself," I said, but a mocking voice whispered that it was the mind, not the heart, that was affected. "What about the superstitious folly of those Northerners now, eh?" it asked. Could it be that I, the sceptic of sceptics, was disturbed by the remembrance of the stupid prophecy of a garrulous old woman? The thought was too absurd, and I strode manfully on. Still, it was no good denying it, the road was uncanny, and in my life I had never seen such strangely human-looking trees; each one of them seemed to have a theory of its own as to how the sound of my footsteps should be echoed. At

length, just as the inexplicable feeling that had taken possession of me was becoming unbearable, I heard the sound of running waters, which told me that I must be near the bridge. The thought that I had only half-a-mile more to go, gave new life and energy, and I walked rapidly on to the solid stone erection that had replaced the rustic wooden bridge of other days. The park was, as I could see, fenced off from the stream by an iron railing. Just as I was in the middle of the bridge, I had another touch of that queer jerky feeling at my heart, that I had had twice before that night. To this day I don't know why I should have felt the sensation then, for I could swear that, at the moment I did feel it, there was no thought of Arthur Dacre in my mind. I stood still, frightened at the rate my heart was beating, and, as I did so, I noticed something white glimmering close to the railing. What it was I could not tell as the moon was hidden by a cloud; then, I will confess, the remembrance of the tragedy which had been enacted there twenty-seven years before flashed into my mind. My heart beat more spasmodically than before; I was conscious of a strange choking sensation, as if something were pressing tightly around my throat, and I felt an unconquerable reluctance to advancing further until I knew the meaning of that white gleam. In a moment, however, an overwhelming sense of the absurdity of my conduct rushed into my mind, I took one step forward; but at that instant the moon pierced through the cloud that had enveloped it, and shone down with a clear brilliant light, and I saw the white ghastly face of a dead man turned towards me. The wish I had so rashly uttered as I left the farm was gratified: Arthur Dacre stood before me. His body was hidden by the bushes, but his face I saw as clearly as I see this lamp before me now.

I stood as one paralysed. For my life, I could not have moved an inch; my heart seemed to cease beating, and my brain reeled as an unutterable sense of horror—not fear, but something a thousand times more terrible, penetrated my whole being. I would rather face a hundred deaths than experience that feeling again. The figure seemed to motion me to advance, and then, as if it noticed my unwillingness, it uttered a cry so strange in the unutterable piteousness of the sorrow it expressed, that it froze my very heart, and—

I remember no more until I found my-

self lying on the grass, and heard a rough, kindly voice muttering by my side:

"Queer job, this! Lean on me, sir; ye be all right now."

It was Farmer Metcalf, who had ridden after me to offer the loan of his horse.

A serious illness, which my friends attributed to over-walking, was the result of my adventure, and it was a month before I was able to leave Walthamthwait. The day before I started for town, Farmer Metcalf paid me a visit. Evidently the good man had something on his mind. He hummed, and hahed, and twirled his hat for some time in dire confusion.

"I kind o' guess, sir," he at length began, "ye'd had a bit o' a fright that night I found ye lying by the bridge. That white thing, ye know, it give me an ugly turn when I first seed it; but it was nobbut the Squire's white-faced mare that had gotten its head fast in t'iron railings!"

CONCERNING PEWS.

IN tracing the history of the many changes which have taken place in the internal arrangements of our old parish churches and chapels during the past fifty years, few things are more noticeable than the rapid disappearance of the old-fashioned square pews.

It was in 1840 that the field was first taken against them by the then Bishop of Hereford (Dr. Musgrave), but it remained for the celebrated Archdeacon Hare to make the first "systematic attack" upon the pew system in one of his charges, wherein they were denounced not only as "eyesores and heartsore," but also as "wooden walls, within which selfishness encases and encages itself." His eloquence produced a powerful effect upon several Bishops and Archdeacons of the Anglican Church Establishment, who soon roused the clergy and the laity of nearly every town and village in England, to join in a crusade bent on the extermination of the pews, and the Cambridge Camden Society and the late Dr. Neale, by the publication of a small tract entitled "Twenty-three Reasons for getting rid of Church Pews," which enjoyed unusual popularity, may be fairly considered to have struck the death blows at their existence.

Wave after wave of reaction and reform passed over the sacred edifices, in which

countless numbers of "these cumbrous, lidless boxes, painted every colour and all colours, these cattileless pens, harbouring in their tattered green baize the dust and corruption of a century," fell before the promoters of church restoration, like the heroes in Homer before Achilles, their places being quickly supplied by rows of neat open benches. Many an old parish clerk still continues to deplore the loss of what, in his "younger days," was always considered the chief ornament of the church, viz., "the Squire's pew," with its handsome brass rods, crimson curtains, often six feet high, together with its large table, stove, and chimney pipe.

The subject of pews presents a very fertile field for antiquarian research, in which the gleaner will be rewarded by the discovery of much curious information. A great deal may be gathered from a careful perusal of visitation articles, injunctions, party pamphlets, plays, trials, satires, and publications of a similar ephemeral character, only to be found in large and valuable libraries, and it is to such sources as these that we must refer those of our readers whose curiosity may be aroused to know more concerning the history of pews than that which could possibly be afforded within the limits of this short article.

Glancing at the etymology of our word pew, anciently spelt "pue," we shall find that it is derived from the Latin word "podium," which originally signified in the Latin of the Middle Ages, "anything leant upon." Another sense of this word, and one from which it has acquired its present meaning, was the "desk" in the stall of a choir. From signifying a desk it came to mean the "seat" generally; and thence, in course of time, an "enclosed" seat or "pue."

The earliest known reference to pews is found in the "Vision of Piers the Plowman," and runs thus:

"Among wives and wodewes ich am ywoned sute y paroked in Puwes," where the word is used of an open seat.

In the will of William Bruges, Garter King-at-Arms, dated February the twenty-sixth, 1449, he expresses his desire to be buried "in the chyrche of Seynt George within Stamford," and after bequeathing to it several pieces of plate, he requests that "the gret framd lying in the gret barne at Kentishton be sold to the most value, and the money rising thereof to be bestowed in 'puyng' of the seyde church." In 1483, among the parish accounts of

Saint Mary-at-Hill, London, there occurs the item, "Certeayne pavyng and mendyng of 'peues' in the church, £0 7s. 9d." About the beginning of the sixteenth century pews began to be called "stoles," or stools. In 1502 we read that legacies were left for "stolyng" different parts of Swaffham Church, in Norfolk, particularly for making "all the great stols of both sydes of the mid alleye" (or aisle). In the parish accounts of St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, under date of 1509, we find this item: "Of Sir Hugh Vaughan, Knight, for his part of a pew, 6s. 8d.," and again in 1511, of "Knight, the courtier, for his wife's pew, 2s." These accounts of Saint Margaret's parish record also, in 1549, a sum of money "paid to William Curlewe, for mending diverse pews when Dr. Lattymmer did preach."

In a scarce tract, entitled "The Voice of the Lord in the Temple," published in 1640, which details the strange accidents occasioned by a thunderstorm on Whit-Sunday of that year, in the parish church of Saint Anthony, near Plymouth, it is related that two women sitting in one pew in the chancel were overturned. Now, it appears somewhat difficult, at first sight, to understand how a pew could have been upset; but the circumstance is explained by the fact of the day on which it occurred being Communion Sunday, when it was customary to place "benches" in the chancel, in which part of the church these women were then sitting.

With reference to the stalls in Durham Cathedral, Peter Smart has recorded that Bishop Cosin would not unfrequently say, "even to gentlewomen of the best rank, sitting in their pews: 'Can ye not stand, ye lazy sows?' when the Nicene Creed was sung." That honest old gossip, Samuel Pepys, in his "Diary," under date of February the twenty-eighth, 1664, remarks that, "At Saint Paul's Cathedral, the Bishop of London sat in a pew made a' purpose for him by the pulpit." Here pew is apparently used for the episcopal seat or throne. In a pamphlet published in 1709, we find another instance of the word pew. It occurs thus in a passage of "The Cherubim with The Flaming Sword; or, Remarks on Dr. Sacheverell's late Sermon before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen in Saint Pauls: "If your lordship and Sir Francis had been breaking down the pulpit, overturning the pews, brandishing the City sword, crying out, 'The Pretender! the Pre-

tender !' there had been some cause for alarm." By the pews are evidently meant the benches placed in the middle of the choir.

It will be seen then, that for a period of nearly four hundred years, the word "pew" bore occasionally the sense of bench, and this we venture to think will be conclusively proved by an examination of the following passage from King Lear, probably written in 1605, where Edgar, as Mad Tom, is made to say: "Who gives anything to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame; hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pue."

In some parts of England at the present day, it is not uncommon to hear certain large moveable seats in ale-houses, fitted with a back above and below, to keep out the wind, called by the name of "pues," and there can consequently be no difficulty in understanding the word "pue" in the passage quoted above, to mean an ale-bench, under which halters could easily have been laid.

As showing to how late a period "pue" retained a general signification, it may be mentioned that Pepys in his "Diary" for 1668, speaks in one page of a "pue" in Whitehall Theatre, and in the next of one in Greenwich Church.

It has been asserted by some authorities that square pews existed in our parish churches at a period anterior to the Reformation. This, however, is erroneous; there were then no "pues," no reading desks, often no pulpits to be seen; the old altars for the most part remained; in some instances a table stood lengthways at the east end, and in others was brought down into the chancel or nave. In this latter case the morning and evening services would appear to have been read from it; in the former some have conjectured that a lectern was used, being placed where the minister could best be heard.

We find no traces of any innovation in this practice until 1569, when Bishop Parkhurst, in his visitation articles for the Diocese of Norwich, orders that "the churchwardens shall provide and support a decent and convenient seat in the body of the church where the minister may sit or stand, and say the whole of the divine service, that all the congregation may hear and be edified therewith."

From that time the practice of employing "a reading-pew," though unauthorised, became yearly more prevalent.

In the beginning of the reign of King James the First a convocation had directed that "a convenient seat should be made for the minister to read service in." In 1603 this innovation received his Majesty's official sanction, and the desk thereupon became a fixture.

Here, then, we may date the rise of pews, for, when the parson was accommodated with his pew, the squire, the franklin, and the yeoman each in turn clamoured for theirs, with the result that pews quickly swarmed into the churches like bees into a hive.

About the year 1612 we find in the parish books of Patrington, Yorkshire, this account:

"Among the stalls in the middle aisle, Imprimis, one grete pue buylded upon ge'all costes and charges of the pish, wherein the parson, curat, clerk, and singing men, are to syt in time of Divine Service, and the next pue was buylt by Humfrey Hale, clerk, for his wyf and children."

After this, the freeholders appear to have erected the "pues" at their own private expense in this church.

It was not long before the fashion of providing pews with locks crept in, since Bishop Earle, in giving a description of a "she precise hypocrite," says: "She knows her own place in heaven as well as the pew she has a key to."

Baized pews next became the rage. In 1624, the Puritans, who had been making vigorous exertions on all sides, seem first to have discovered how mighty an agent for their purposes pews might become. A "clerk's pue" was built in Saint Mary's Church, Ashwell, Herts, in 1627, and in the following year Wimborne Minster was much disfigured with "pues." In 1630, a very costly gallery was erected in the Church of Saint Peter-le-Poer in London; and about the same time one was erected with a cross seat for catechising children, in Saint Leonard's, Shoreditch. Four years afterwards, Saint John's Church, Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, was "pued" throughout; and in the neighbouring church of Saint Milburga, Stoke, two covered "pues" or "dovecotes," as they were called, were erected.

We come now to the first vigorous opposition to pews, which was made in 1635, by Matthew Wren, Bishop of Hereford. His action, however, so highly incensed the Puritans, that on July the twentieth, 1640, a charge of high crimes and

misdeemeanours was exhibited by the Commons before the House of Lords against this prelate; the prosecution being conducted by Sir Thomas Widdrington. One, among other charges, was that he had oppressed many poor parishes by making them remove the "pues" from their churches at a vast expense. The conduct of Bishop Wren was, by the House of Commons, declared Arminian and heretical, and he was forthwith stripped of all his preferment and made incapable of holding any other for ever after.

The next prelate who bestirred himself against "the poor pues," was Bishop Williams, who caused their removal from a chapel at Buckden. If we may give any credence to the accounts furnished by some Royalist writers at this time, it would seem that "ye high and close pews" were used for purposes of anything but a devotional character. In a play attributed to the pen of one Brome, a Cavalier, entitled "Love's High Court of Commission," the lover wishes to steal a kiss from his mistress, whereupon she exclaims:

"Fie, sir! I would have you to know that we are not now in our pew!"

It is worthy of notice that between the years 1646 and 1660, scarcely any pews appear to have been erected. A gallery was built, in 1657, in Saint Nicholas Church, Gloucester; and we are told that at Saint Peter's, Paul's Wharf, London, where the Liturgy was used for some time during the Commonwealth, many of the nobility flocked to hear it, and were accommodated with galleries hung with rich Turkey carpets.

With the Restoration of Monarchy, a great alteration was at once effected in the internal arrangement of our churches. At Saint Martin's, Ludgate, in the City of London, in 1660, the pulpit "was removed from where it stood some years previous, all the unhappy time of the war, and quite shaded the Ten Commandments, to the great grief of several good people of the parish." Some cruel parish wit accounted for their grief in the following manner:

The Fifth Commandment did their souls so gall,
They raised their canting tub to hide them all!

Churches in large towns were now ordinarily "pued" throughout. Sir Christopher Wren endeavoured to withstand the introduction of pews into his London churches, but without success.

At the Revolution, pews began to be objects of admiration, and churches were "re-pued" by wholesale.

Countless notices of pews culled from the writings of this period might be here adduced; but it must suffice to subjoin but one, taken from Dean Swift's "Baucis and Philemon":

A bedstead of the antique mode,
Compact of timber many a load,
Such as our ancestors did use,
Was metamorphosed into pews;
Which still their ancient nature keep
By lodging folks disposed to sleep.

During the eighteenth century, "The Spectator," "The Guardian," and "The Tatler," one and all satirised pews with merciless severity; and in "Sir Charles Grandison," and in the caricatures of William Hogarth, we catch occasional glimpses of the closely "pued" edifices of the Georgian era.

It remains for us to observe that our American cousins have always cherished an affectionate regard for square pews. The Rev. H. Caswall, in his "History of the American Church," states that in his day some of the pews in the Boston churches were actually lined with velvet! We doubt, however, whether in the whole history of English church pews there ever existed such a remarkable contrivance as that described by a writer in one of the numbers of "The North American Review," with whose words we conclude. Referring to the early churches of New England he says:

"The pew seats were made with hinges, so that in prayer time they might be raised up and allow the occupants to lean against the back of the pew. At the close of the prayer they were slammed down with a noise like the broadside of a frigate!"

RED TOWERS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," etc., etc.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVII. NEW STORIES BEGINNING.

CELIA had told Paul that her marriage was to be in a fortnight. The first week of that time flew swiftly by; he was at River Gate, and his happiness was only interfered with by an occasional chill of apprehension: what would Antoinette think of that promise of his? Would she ever understand it all, and forgive him? He did not even confess it to Mrs. Percival till the day he went away, feeling quite sure that she would disapprove. On the

contrary, the tears rushed into her eyes, and she did what she had not done since he was a schoolboy—she kissed him.

His second week, at Red Towers, dragged terribly; he had never known days so long before. Not that he was looking forward to Celia's wedding, which he dreaded heartily; but the uncertainty of the future, the melancholy weeks and months that might pass before he saw Antoinette again—in fact, before Mrs. Percival, who had grown rather severe, would let him see her again—weighed upon him with a leaden dreariness. He could not persuade himself to go out shooting; long walks were awful, with no company but his thoughts; reading was impossible; music made him sadder and more impatient—how he was to struggle through that winter, he did not know; it was a question very hard to answer.

Meanwhile, the fogs had cleared away, and up there at Holm Celia's wedding-day dawned frosty and clear. Her marriage was fixed for two o'clock in the afternoon. Paul had arranged to go up by a train reaching Charing Cross soon after one. He was very restless, and got up that morning earlier than usual, coming down to breakfast in his favourite old study, where red rays of morning sun were just beginning to shine in, and a glorious fire was blazing. In spite of Mrs. Percival's approval, Paul was not at all sure now that he had done right in giving that promise to Celia: sometimes it seemed too frightfully unreasonable; the thought of shaking hands with Vincent, the picture of the whole scene that rose in his mind, were too repulsive. That morning, when he came gravely and slowly downstairs, and grunted some reply to Sabin's cheerful "Beautiful morning, sir," he felt as if a month of penal servitude would be preferable to what he had to go through that day.

As he stood scowling at the fire, reflecting on Celia's sins and his own misery, wondering for the thousandth time whether Antoinette, when she heard of his presence at such a ceremony, would ever recover her surprise, ever again believe in his love and respect for her father, Sabin came in and brought him a telegram. He looked at it rather absently for a moment, for the thought was just crossing his mind: "Celia's doings will be such a shock to her, she won't think of mine. How can it matter to her, after all, what I do?" and this horrid suggestion was worse than any fear of her anger.

However, here was this telegram, whose contents soon, and for ever, drove all such thoughts away.

"Please meet the 11.45 at Paddington. Take her to 24, W— Place. I have telegraphed there. Timms knows. Take her to the church, and then back. Do all you can. Cannot possibly go with her. —F. PERCIVAL."

"Tell Ford to have the dog-cart ready in ten minutes," Paul shouted to Sabin. "I must catch the 9.30 train."

After all, Ford was ready before his master, and he has often boasted since of that morning's drive; he did not think the six miles had ever been done in so short a time before. But the Squire had said, soon after they started: "Look here, Ford; if the horse can't do this, he's useless, and you may sell him to-morrow morning."

Ford was not going to have the horse, a special favourite of his, insulted like that, and would have done the distance in a minute less, if necessary. But his respect for his master was not increased by such a remark. He said afterwards to Barty that the Squire was as ignorant and unreasonable about horses as any woman, always excepting Miss Darrell, to whose short reign Ford looked back with a romantic regret.

The frosty sun might shine at Red Towers, but in London it was dark and foggy enough that day. The great dreary church was lit with gas, early in the afternoon, for Celia's wedding; but the dim, murky atmosphere of the outside world came in and hovered there, making the whole thing even more like a strange nightmare dream.

Paul did not know what Antoinette's thoughts were, though he obeyed Mrs. Percival's telegram, met her and Timms at Paddington, took her to Mrs. Percival's favourite lodgings, came back an hour or two later and drove with her to the church, where he left her and Timms in a seat near the chancel, and walked back mechanically to the door; he knew that Celia expected him to be in attendance upon her. He was not afraid now of what Antoinette might think of him, having a secret consciousness that their feeling on the subject was the same, though she had hardly spoken to him, though the new shock made her face look worn, and strained, and proud; and he was not even sure, after the first moment of the meeting, whether there had been a smile in her eyes as she caught sight of him.

The moments of that dream passed quickly by.

Vincent Percival and some friend of his came in together, and he shook hands with Paul with a sort of nervous grin, muttering:

"Awfully good of you."

Then came Celia, followed by her maid; she had not chosen to ask any one to her wedding. She took Paul's arm without looking at him, and they walked very fast up the church together.

As they approached the chancel he felt her start, and then she whispered, so low that he hardly heard her:

"Is that Antoinette?"

He only answered, "Yes;" and so they went up and stood in their place. The clergyman appeared, and the service began instantly.

That London curate, if he was not too much used to odd experiences to think at all, must have thought it rather a strange wedding party; the singular beauty of the bride, the dark, handsome, melancholy face of the young man who seemed to belong to her, the eager and not very pleasant looks of the bridegroom; the two gazing ladies' maids, French and English, in the background; the slight young girl in black, distinguished, sad, who moved from her place in the church after the service had begun, and came up and stood near the bride, with eyes that seemed to see no one but her. They were the kind of people whose marriages are not generally performed in a corner. Perhaps the bride's grey dress was something of an explanation, if any one cared to look for it.

In the vestry, afterwards, Marie Antoinette Victoire de la Tour-Montmirail signed her name as a witness after Celia's. While she did it, the bride seemed to forget everything else, even the jealous eyes of her husband, as she gazed at the young bending figure, the pale cheek with its flush of excitement. Just five years since, in Paris, Antoinette had stood beside her grandmother at her father's marriage with Celia. The Marquise drew her aside for a moment, and spoke to her in French, very low.

"I did not expect this answer to my letter," she said to her.

"Really?" said the girl, with a sad little smile. "But one must show respect to those one loves—and I must always be proud of you."

"Je te remercie, petite," said Celia, very earnestly. Her eyes looked soft, almost

tearful, as she held both Antoinette's hands; in her manner there was real tenderness. Perhaps in marrying the only man she could ever really love, she was learning more lessons than one. "Will you come back to our hotel?" she said.

Antoinette shook her head. "I am to sleep in W—— Place to-night," she said; "and to-morrow I am going back to Mrs. Percival. I do not think we shall see each other again."

"As you please," murmured Celia. She still lingered a moment, half wistfully, with the child who had trusted her so long. But the signing was all done, and she was conscious that Vincent was impatient. "Good-bye, then, dear child," she said. They kissed each other on both cheeks, and Celia, still holding the girl's hand, turned to Paul and drew her a little towards him.

"Here, take care of her, Paul," she said.

Then she and Vincent were gone; they were hurrying together down the side aisle of the church, out into the fog and cold, and had already forgotten, perhaps, who and what they left behind them, before Paul and Antoinette had followed them half-way down. In another minute, Antoinette too was gone; the carriages had driven away; and Paul was left, with Vincent Percival's friend, standing on the steps of the church. It had seemed better to let her go alone; he had felt her trembling, and had seen that she was on the edge of tears. Old Timms was not stupid, and would be very good to her; but, in fact, Paul felt that he dared not go.

"That was what I call the right sort of wedding," said Paul's companion, approaching him with a pleasant smile. "If all weddings were like that, they wouldn't be so tiresome. Can you tell me who the young French lady was?"

"Mademoiselle de Montmirail," said Paul, rather gruffly.

"Ah! the stepdaughter. She did not disapprove, then. Captain Percival seemed to think that all the relations were more or less cut up."

"It is rather unusual——" Paul began; but then a discussion with this curious stranger became a thing impossible. He muttered something, lifted his hat, and walked off down the street in a great hurry.

He stayed at a hotel that night, and spent it chiefly walking about the room.

He took a cab to W— Place in good time for the morning train to Woolsborough. London was as foggy and depressing as ever, but there was a little pale sunshine in Antoinette's face when she received him. He boldly put Timms into another cab, and drove with Antoinette himself to the station. It was more possible to talk to her to-day than yesterday; she had lost something of that little air of sad dignity which had been grafted that year, somehow, on her happy childishness, itself having something of a child, something that never could last long without the breaking out of smiles. To Paul, in its perfect naturalness and sincerity, it was enchanting; but more enchanting still were the moments when it broke down. Even in her deepest sorrow, the warm young heart could find a smile; and when she was happiest, she had never been heartless.

"How dark and cold!" she said, with a shrug and shiver, as they drove through the monotonous streets.

"Yes," Paul said; "it will be better at Woolsborough. I dare say there's sunshine down in Surrey, too."

"Are you going back to-day?"

"Yes, in an hour or two. Will you tell Mrs. Percival that I have done what I could for you—all that she would let me?"

"Thank you," she said. "You have been very good to me;" and, after a moment, she looked round with a question in her eyes: "Did you think it wrong of me to wish to be there?"

"Do you know," said Paul, without exactly answering this, "ever since I knew that I was going to be there I have wondered if you would think it wrong of me. But I only went because she asked me, and I could not refuse. I did not wish to be there—till this morning."

"I thought," said Antoinette, with a little smile, but speaking so low that Paul could hardly hear her, "that she was his wife, and that he would not wish the people who belonged to him—who loved him—not to stay near her, and take her part, whatever she might choose to do. Of course I think it is dreadful. I will say no more about that. At first it seemed impossible that she could do anything so strange, but then—oh, you will not understand me—I seemed to have

a little dream of him in Paradise, and he called her 'my Célie,' and was very sorry for her; and, you know, the one thing I want is to do the things he would have liked me to do."

"I do understand you," said Paul; and then—sad waste of time—neither of them spoke again till they turned into Paddington Station.

They were only just in time for the train. At the last moment Paul leaned in at the window, and said to her:

"May I come to Woolsborough before very long?"

"Yes!" she said. "But come soon, very soon, or perhaps I shall be gone away."

The ready answer almost discouraged him; but then he remembered what an innocent child she was; and then, as he looked at her, his eyes saying a good deal that he had neither courage, conscience, nor time to say, she flushed suddenly up to her dark hair. She also looked doubtfully at her hand, when it was released at the last second from a grasp very unusual in the experience of a young French lady.

It was not till late in the next summer that Paul Romaine brought his bride home to Red Towers. They had spent their honeymoon at her own old home, La Tour Blanche, where they will certainly spend a good part of every year.

Perfect happiness, perfect trust and freedom have developed in Antoinette all the brilliancy of her race, with its practical good sense as well; and if Paul is, and always will be, much quieter and more thoughtful than his wife, he is not less happy. She knows all his old stories now: his father and mother, his friend Colonel Ward, are hers in the spirit. In spite of their differences, hereditary and personal, these two people understand each other to such a degree that Mrs. Percival sighs, and wonders whether they mean to be in love all their lives.

The Clumber family flourishes still, though Di has gone to the Paradise of good dogs. Jack came home from France to rejoin his relations, and the white curly flock, even old Dick, with a touch of rheumatism, go out walking in the Surrey lanes with Paul and Antoinette. There the curious tourist may meet them, during several months of the year.

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1888.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

It was like a statue coming to life—a carven lump of marble suddenly kindling into human warmth and colour. Madge could at any moment as soon have pictured Old Cuddaw himself, descending from his height, walking up the garden-path and graciously bidding her "good morning," as Miss Shore so far condescending. Yet that was what happened. And not only did the young lady condescend to the greeting of common life, but she absolutely displayed for Madge's inspection the water-colour drawing on which she had been so long occupied, asking for her opinion on it.

It was a spirited sketch. Miss Shore had caught the purple tone of the landscape together with the golden glow of summer sunlight. If it had been drawn by another hand, Madge would have gone into raptures over it.

"It is pretty," was all she said by way of praise. "I will, if you will allow me, see how it looks against the wall hangings of my room."

These wall hangings of the little room—an octagon opening off the inner hall—were of chrome silk. The landscape, hung sideways to the light, was strikingly effective.

"I suppose," said Madge, turning to Miss Shore, who held the sketch in its place, "I must give up the idea of more than one other, the same size. You are not quick with your brush."

She looked up at the girl's face and then for the first time noted the change that

one day had wrought. Ten years seemed to be effaced from it, the marmoreal hardness of the features had disappeared, a faint flush of colour tinged the white cheeks, the grey eyes were shining. Madge's long look no doubt seemed to repeat the remark she had made as to Miss Shore's artistic capabilities.

"I am not always so slow," she replied, "but I was fit for nothing when I came here first."

"Fit for nothing!" repeated Madge, still eyeing the girl keenly.

"Yes. I was weak—I was ill. I could not eat—I could not sleep, naturally I could not paint."

Madge felt inclined to ask whether a certain paragraph in the preceding day's paper had not had something to do with the young lady's increased power of eating and sleeping, but restrained herself.

"I shall be glad to have a companion picture to this," she said. "A sketch of the valley if you will undertake it."

And then she looked and looked at her again, saying to herself: "A statue coming to life—marble glowing into flesh and blood—that's what it is."

But not alone in Miss Shore's face and figure was a change perceptible; Madge's maid in her morning attendance, reported another wonder—that the looking-glasses in Miss Shore's room had been uncovered and appeared to be in use, and that the young lady had frequently of late asked her advice on the matter of hair-dressing, and appeared to have suddenly awakened to the fact of the insufficiency of her wardrobe. This last statement was confirmed by Miss Shore expressing a wish one morning to be driven into the village, as she had sundry small purchases to make.

Madge watched her drive away in the little pony carriage, in and out among the shifting shadows of the larches and sycamores. She noted that the grey gossamer veil was tossed back, as if the wearer enjoyed the greeting of the bright sunlight and mountain breeze, and that the young lady, as she sat, was turning to the man who drove her, as if asking him questions.

"Would to Heaven she would never come back!" Madge prayed in the bitterness of her heart. The bitterness ended in a sigh. If Lance had been so fascinated with the ice-cold shadowy maiden, what would he be in presence of such glowing flesh and blood loveliness as this!

"Weigh your wealth against her beauty, Madge Cohen, and see what it is worth," she cried aloud to herself bitterly.

Sir Peter's stay in town had been prolonged beyond the three days to which Lance would fain have limited it. The old gentleman once on the wing was not to be easily persuaded to settle down again.

"I can't get him back," wrote Lance to Madge, "he's here, there, everywhere; I might as well try to catch ether or sal volatile and get it into a railway-train as Uncle Peter. Town is a wilderness; there's nothing on earth for a man to do, yet his hands are full from morning till night. I should run down to Cowes or to Exmoor for a day or two, only I daren't leave him lest he should get into mischief. For one thing, I'm confident I've kept him out of the mumps. I missed him suddenly the other morning, and started in pursuit immediately. I traced him first to the telegraph office. I knew he had a lot to do there—off and on he has almost lived there lately—thence, I hunted him down to the boot-makers—he's always wanting boots, you know—and finally, to my horror, found him down a blind alley attempting to adjudicate between two little dirty boys who were fighting over their marbles. Both of the little imps had their faces tied up, and had a generally puffy appearance about the jaws. 'Uncle Peter,' I shouted, 'if there is anything to be caught, you'll catch it, depend upon it. Think of your birthday! Fancy receiving a deputation with your face tied up!' And so I dragged him away."

With Sir Peter in so active a frame of mind, Lance had found some difficulty in making an opportunity for the little serious talk with him, which he had planned. From morning till night the old gentleman

was never to be found alone. He received the secretaries of his pet charities at breakfast, the members of their committees at luncheon, and as a rule dined with, or received at dinner, certain clerical magnates who chanced to be in town. At the odd moments which occurred between his meals he was either inspecting orphanages, or reformatories, or immersed in charity reports and subscription-lists.

Lance had rehearsed over and over again a little speech which ran somewhat as follows: "Uncle Peter, you've always said, that on the day Madge and I get married, you'll set aside a certain definite property from which I can draw a certain definite income. But supposing that match never comes off! What then?"

To get opportunity, however, to make this little speech was another matter.

He seized a chance that presented itself one morning when Sir Peter, suddenly looking up from his papers, said:

"I shall get Madge to put down a handsome life-subscription to this 'working boys' refuge.' She might spend a couple of thousand yearly on charities and never miss it. Her income is princely."

Lance caught at the last words. "I don't believe there's a Prince in England with half her fortune! Don't you think it's a trifle presumptuous, on my part, with no independent means of my own, to aspire to a marriage with her?"

Sir Peter smiled up at him benignantly. "My dear boy, you're too modest! Your future is as assured as a man's can well be. You know—I've often told you, you stand in the position of an only son to me. And it strikes me, even if it were not so, that you'd stand comparison in Madge's eyes with the biggest millionaire in the kingdom. Ah, lend me your pencil a moment, I don't understand these figures—there's something wrong with this balance-sheet. I'll tot it up again!"

Again and again Lance beat about the bush, but all to no purpose.

"Supposing you'd had a son, what would you have done with me?" he asked abruptly on another occasion.

"Eh, what?" And Sir Peter pushed his spectacles high up on his forehead and said, "Eh, what?" again, before Lance's meaning dawned on him. "Well, my boy," he said at length, "I suppose you'd have followed your father's profession—been out in India by this time, and have led much such a life as he did. By the way, Lance, it occurs to me, seeing that

you belong to a Service family, that your name ought to appear on the military asylum committee. I'll get you nominated, and you can——"

"No, I can't," interrupted Lance. "I'm not cut out for that sort of thing." And then he took his hat and made for his club, fearful lest, willy-nilly, Sir Peter would drag him into one of those stuffy committee-rooms, in which so large a portion of his own time was passed with entire pleasure.

It was not until the morning of their return to Upton that Lance contrived to put the momentous question, "What then?" after its due prelude of "supposing Madge does not feel inclined to marry again!"

But it was absolutely out of the power of Sir Peter to realise such a possibility as this. "A young woman, at her age, to remain single all her life! Impossible, incredible! Tell me at once that she means to turn nun!" he exclaimed.

"Well, put it another way," said Lance impetuously, speaking on the spur of the moment. "Supposing that I were not inclined to settle down and marry just yet, what then?"

"What then!" cried Sir Peter, aghast. "My dear boy! My dear boy!" He jumped up from his chair and began walking up and down the room very fast. Then he stood in front of Lance, his eyes at first very bright, and then, suddenly altogether as dim. "After all these years—my most cherished hope! Impossible!" He began his favourite heel and toe movement as if on rockers. "My dear boy! My dear boy! Don't say it again! Impossible!"

After this, Lance thought it prudent to let the matter drop for a time.

Lady Judith had fidgeted a good deal over Sir Peter's prolonged absence.

"It's my belief, my dear, that Sir Peter has got into mischief of some sort, and Lance as usual has stood by and enjoyed the fun," she said to Madge.

But as the days slipped past, and Sir Peter's birthday approached, the note of complaint swelled to a louder tone.

"Most inconsiderate—most thoughtless of them both!" she declaimed. "I don't like to say what I think of such conduct; but any one who gives the matter a second thought must know how much their absence throws on my hands just now. The house will be full in a day or two—as many men as women to entertain. There are all sorts of final directions to give

about the villagers' sports, and the tenants' dinner. I ask you, Madge—is it possible for one brain to undertake the arrangement of all these things, in addition—mind, I say in addition—to other subjects for thought?"

Madge did not pay much heed to Lady Judith's laments. She appeared at that moment to be wholly absorbed in the completion of the decoration of her little octagon sitting-room—an occupation in which, strange to say, Mr. Stubbs's assistance had been volunteered and accepted. He it was who supplied her with the name and address of a man at Carstairs—an "art-decorator" he styled himself—who came to the Castle to take Mrs. Cohen's orders.

They were very simple. A long, narrow looking-glass was to be fixed in the wall facing the door, and a certain picture, which Mrs. Cohen had commissioned an artist to paint, was to hang immediately opposite. It was imperative that the room should be finished by the twenty-first, as it would be in use on the night of the ball.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR PETER and Lance returned to Upton three days before the old gentleman's birthday.

"Why a man at his time of life should insist on keeping his birthdays at all, passes my comprehension," Lady Judith was in the habit of saying, as the yearly festivity came round.

All things considered, however, the wonder was rather that Sir Peter, like the schoolboy intent on plum-cake, did not insist on keeping his birthday twice over in the twelve months. The general racket and fussiness of the whole thing suited him amazingly. The deputations from the tenants, the village sports, bonfires, bell-ringing, were an inexhaustible source of delight to him; the constant demands for his personal presence, for his attention to a thousand and one things at the same moment, sent him into ecstasies, and gave colour to his inner conviction, that he was the life and soul of things generally.

He came back from his holiday trip with Lance, looking very radiant, and evidently prepared to enjoy everything. The waggonette was not required to bring the two from the station, as it had been on so many dire occasions when Sir Peter had paid

flying visits to the metropolis, and had returned encumbered with stable-boys, or gardener's lads.

"No protégés this time," Lance telegraphed to Lady Judith on the morning of their return; "but lots of luggage. We've spent a good deal of time in toy-shops lately."

Yes, there was a good deal of luggage. Even Madge, who was accustomed to travel about with a haystack of trunks and dress-baskets, exclaimed at it as she saw it uncarted at the door.

"Presents of shawls for the old women, pipes for the old men, bushels of toys for the children, something for you, Madge, something for Aunt Judy—nobody forgotten!" exclaimed Lance.

Nobody had been forgotten; and there was one box in which Sir Peter showed a good deal of interest, and which, as the other boxes were carried to their destination, he desired to be placed for the moment in the hall.

"Madge will do it best—you ask her," he whispered to Lance.

"No, you ask her," whispered Lance back again. "Madge thinks a great deal more of your requests than she does of mine."

Madge, a few yards off, heard this remark, and came forward asking:

"What is expected of me?"

Sir Peter addressed Lance again:

"You explain; you know how it all came about."

"No, you do it," said Lance. "You've a much greater command of language than I have."

Sir Peter cleared his throat. "Well, my dear," he said, addressing Madge, "you see this is a season of rejoicing for us all. I've got well through a very nasty illness and—"

"Haven't caught anything fresh in town," suggested Lance.

"Exactly; have come back in excellent health—"

"Laden like Santa Claus at Christmas time," again suggested Lance.

"Exactly; shawls for the old women, pipes for the old men."

"Corals and gutta-percha toys for the babies—nobody forgotten," said Lance.

"No, nobody forgotten inside or outside the house," chimed Sir Peter. "And it occurred to us, for Lance, I may say, shared my feeling on the matter—" Here he looked at Lance, hoping that he would take up the thread of the narrative. Lance

remained dumb, however, so Sir Peter went on again:

"It occurred to us that—that at such a time of rejoicing, no one should be forgotten inside or outside the house—"

"You've said that before," said Lance.

"Ah, have I. Well, it occurred to—
us—"

"You've brought a present for Miss Shore?" asked Madge, jumping, as she so often did, at a possibility.

"Exactly, exactly, my dear," said Sir Peter, much relieved now that the truth was out. "Lance said to me—"

"No, you said to me," said Lance.

"Well, I said to Lance, 'I don't suppose, coming into the house in the unexpected way in which she did, that the young lady will have with her any dress suitable for the twenty-first,' and Lance said to me, 'It would be a crying shame for a handsome young woman like that not to make her appearance at the ball.' And so, my dear, the long and short of the matter is, we went to your dressmaker in Bond Street, and left it in her hands to send down a dress fit for the occasion."

Had the choice been given him, Lance, in Madge's hearing, would sooner have had the former than the latter speech put into his mouth. For some reason, however, he did not attempt to modify Sir Peter's statement.

"The question is now," Sir Peter went on cheerily, "how to present the dress to the young lady without hurting her feelings. Of course it would come better as a gift from you than from me."

"I couldn't do it—it would be impossible—quite, quite impossible," said Madge in a very low tone of voice, and with far more earnestness of manner than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"You always do that sort of thing so cleverly, Madge," put in Lance.

"You may be sure, my dear, the dress will be everything it ought to be," said Sir Peter, mistaking the cause of Madge's reluctance to present his gift. "I saw Madame Claire herself, and she said that nothing remained to be done to the dress that your maid couldn't do. It's a beautiful colour, a soft grey. Lance was very particular on this matter—"

"I couldn't do it. No, no, it would be quite impossible!" broke in Madge. Then, to avoid further discussion, she went back to the music-room and opened her piano. "It would be Judae-like," she said to herself, as she began to practise her singing

with a great deal of energy in a very high key.

"May I speak with you, Mrs. Cohen?" said Mr. Stubbs's voice over her shoulder, before she had been three minutes at the instrument.

"What is it?" asked Madge, letting her fingers glide into the quickest and loudest of Cramer's exercises.

"I merely wished to say that to-morrow the Australian mail will be delivered, and to ask for instructions in case a second letter may arrive for Sir Peter with the Rutland Bay post-mark."

No answer from Madge. Only her fingers threatened to trip each other up with the speed at which they travelled over the keys.

Mr. Stubbs waited patiently.

"What have you to propose?" at length she asked in a low, nervous voice, but still not lifting her fingers from the keys.

"If you wished it, madam, I would put any such letter on one side, until after the twenty-first," he said respectfully.

"Wait till one comes," was all Madge's reply, and then her fingers glided from Cramer's exercises into Weber's "Hilarité," which she executed at double-time, with the loud pedal down.

"Madge," said Sir Peter, coming into the room at that moment, "where is Miss Shore? I've been all over the garden in search of her. I want to know how your sketches are getting on."

Mr. Stubbs disappeared. Madge was all attention at once.

"The sketches have resolved themselves into a pair only, one of which is quite finished. I dare say Miss Shore is in the billiard-room, she has been at work there lately—the weather has been so wet. You know she gets the same view of the valley there as she does from the terrace."

All this she said with her eyes fixed on the piano keys. For the first time in her life she dared not look her benefactor in the face.

Sir Peter vanished, but was back again in two minutes.

"There's not a soul in the billiard-room," he said as he came along. "And where is Lance? I have a hundred and one things to consult him about; everything, every one seems all behindhand—"

Madge recollected that she had seen Lance pass outside the windows towards the conservatory. It occurred to her in a flash of painful thought that, where he was, it was possible Miss Shore might be.

A glass door at one end of the drawing-room commanded a view of this conservatory and gave admission to it. Madge led the way thither. Sir Peter followed her a step or two, then he remembered that he had forgotten to inquire after the health of his butler's mother, who suffered from rheumatic gout, and forthwith he flew off in an opposite direction, to set the library bell ringing, in order to have his mind set at rest on the matter.

The conservatory at the Castle was a large one, and was arranged rather with a view to general effect, than for the exhibition of choice flowering plants, as such. Seen from the drawing-room it was just a lovely tropical garden, where big flowering shrubs formed triumphal arches with palms, and tree-ferns; and glowing cactuses weaved a bowery ceiling with luxuriant passion-flower and the moon-convolvulus of Ceylon. A lemon and white macaw strutted majestically over the tessellated floor, scolding at the flies as it went along. A majolica fountain threw upward to the glass dome a sparkling jet of water, which caught the sunlight as it fell back into its basin among the broad-leaved Japanese lilies, and the flashing gold and silver fish. Beside this fountain stood the two of whom Madge was in search. Lance's fair, handsome face, though at one with the beauty of his surroundings, seemed to have its markedly Saxon type emphasized by them. Not so Miss Shore. Among roses in an English garden, she looked the foreigner she was; here among the palms and the cactuses she seemed to be in her own country. Those large, lustrous eyes of hers recalled the fire of the stars in a southern sky; that bandeau of jet-black hair seemed to demand magnolia or myrtle for its rightful crown.

Was that what Lance was thinking, for he had drawn downwards a heavy bough of a flowering myrtle tree? Miss Shore's hand waved it on one side as if she would have none of it.

"You hate the scent!" Madge could hear him say, "from association, I suppose? It must recall some scene, some person you hate—that I can understand."

Madge, fearing to play the listener, opened the door and went in. Miss Shore turned with a start. Her face was flushed; her eyes brilliant. Madge, who had seen that same face look a cold, expressionless adieu to Lance and Sir Peter, as they set off for London, could only marvel over its transfiguration.

Lance did not start; there was evidently

no intention on his part to hide his predilection for Miss Shore's society.

"Miss Shore has been telling me of her early days in—in——" he paused.

Miss Shore did not fill up the blank.

Madge felt disposed to suggest "Santa Maura," but forbore: "Norway, Greenland, Finland?" she said sarcastically.

"Absurd," cried Lance. "Say the North Pole at once! 'In the South,' you said, didn't you? at any rate where magnolia——"

"Where 'the cypress and myrtle are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,'" said Madge, to all appearance carelessly, but with keen eyes fixed on Miss Shore's face. She started, flushed red, then grew deathly pale again. "I hate that land. I would forget it," she said in low, nervous tones, halting and stumbling over her words. "My father was born in this country, and my father's people are living now up in the North."

"In the South." "In the North." Evidently the young lady did not choose to localise, with greater exactitude, either her own place of birth, or the home of her father's people.

"You will go to them when you leave here?" queried Madge, with a meaning hidden from the two who stood beside her.

"That is a far-away day at present I hope," interrupted Lance hastily. His eyes also were fixed, though not with the expression in them that Madge's had, on Miss Shore's face.

Miss Shore answered his words, not his look, for her eyes were bent upon the water-lilies in the fountain. "Who knows?" she answered absently. "If I say I will go here, go there, do this, do that, fate may say 'No' to me."

Lance gathered the water-lily on which her eyes were fixed. Look at him she should!

He presented the flower to her. "Fate is just another word for circumstances to my way of thinking," he said. "Some people rule them, some are ruled by them. Personally, I have found the second method an easy and agreeable way of getting through life."

Miss Shore toyed with the flower.

"Fate rules circumstances as well as people. There are some who from cradle to grave never have a chance given them——"

She broke off suddenly, turning her head away. Her voice had a wail in it.

Madge did not hear that wail. The

only thought her senses brought home to her, was that the heart of the man she loved was being won by the woman she hated.

Her eyes blazed, her face grew pale, but words she had none.

The sudden opening of the conservatory door which led into the garden let in a rush of fresh, outside air. It let in something else beside—Lady Judith's voice in gradual approach.

"If he would but believe that the world could get on without him," she was saying as she came along; and there could be no doubt to whom the "him" referred. "Now I ask you, can there be any necessity for him, so soon as his feet are inside the house, to set all the bells ringing, and messages flying in all directions, telling everybody that things are all behindhand, and must be hurried forward as fast as possible. Johnson" (the house-steward) "has been sent for, and had a hundred and one directions given him. He even seized upon Gordon" (the housekeeper) "as she was coming from my room, and told her, 'he hoped she would see to the airing of the spare beds herself——'"

Here Miss Shore quietly slipped away.

Lady Judith followed her with her eyes out of the conservatory, and then went on again:

"A positive insult to a woman who has done her duty for twenty-five years in the house as Gordon has! Then he rings for the butler——"

"But—but," interrupted Madge, "has he done all that in something under ten minutes? He was with me just now."

Lady Judith turned to Lance.

"If only you could have kept him another day in town, it would have been another day of peace for us all," she said, quite forgetting her former lament.

Lance slipped his arm into hers.

"Aunt Judy, let's go down to the farm together; I want to see the latest sweet thing in cock-a-doodles you have on view," he said.

And Lady Judith was all smiles and complaisance at once.

Madge stood among the palms and myrtles, looking down into the clear basin of the fountain, with its floating lilies, and flashing fish. Her "heart to her heart was voluble." "Lance, Lance," she thought, "would you hate me, could you know what I am doing for your sake?"

A shadow fell upon the sparkling water and gleaming fish. It was Mr. Stubbs approaching with a key in his hand.

"I have brought you the key of your sitting-room, madam," he said. "I thought you would wish it kept locked till the night of the ball. Everything is finished according to your orders."

Madge took the key. "Everything?" she queried.

"Everything, madam. And the door need not be unlocked until the morning of the twenty-first, when it will be unhinged and removed, and curtains substituted."

He turned to go. Madge called him back.

"One moment," she said. "You are confident that this is the best, the most effectual way of—of doing this thing?"

"I can see none better, madam."

"And you charge yourself with her departure—that is, with seeing her out of the house, and on her road to her people 'in the North,' wherever that may be?"

"I do, madam."

"Stay a moment. You may want money. It had better be in gold. If I write you a cheque for—for—?"

"A hundred pounds, madam?"

"Yes, a hundred pounds; can you get it cashed without exciting suspicion?"

"I will do my best, madam," said Mr. Stubbs, as he bowed and departed.

Later on that day Madge was to have another glimpse of Miss Shore.

Dinner was over; Lady Judith had as usual fanned herself to sleep on a couch in the drawing-room, Sir Peter and Lance had gone together to one of the farm meadows, to inspect the arrangements that had been made for the villagers' sports, that were to take place on the day following the ball. Madge, a little wearily, was crossing the gallery on the upper floor on her way to her room. A cool current of air, meeting her half-way thither, told her that one of the gallery-windows was open. Outside this window the stone parapet formed a narrow turreted balcony, and, kneeling there in the dim twilight, was a woman's figure. It was easy enough to identify her long graceful outline. Her hands were clasped, her face was upturned to the night sky with an eager, questioning look on it.

The Cuddaws stood out in defined gloomy grandeur against the deep translucent blue of the summer sky, one sharp, jutting crag cutting a segment off a great, golden harvest moon that was slowly sinking behind it.

High above both mountain and moon there shone out, among the legions of

stars, one glittering planet. On this the kneeling girl's eyes seemed fixed. Her lips moved. "Have mercy, have mercy," she said piteously, as if she were addressing a living human being.

Madge's heart at that moment must either have been of marble coldness or one quick fire of jealous love, for she went on her way with her purpose unshaken.

HATFIELD HOUSE.

ON the Great Northern line the train runs many miles from King's Cross before it is clear of the villas of modern London, advancing northwards, like a great army, with outposts lying hid in all the quiet vales, and vestiges appearing on the crest of every hill.

Barnet is left behind with its memories of the old battle-field; but that now is pretty much of a suburb of Greater London. Potter's Bar is reached and passed, and yet we are still hardly beyond the lines of bricks and mortar. Then there comes a strip of pleasant country, gently undulating, green and well-wooded. The woods rise in a gentle sweep; avenues and terraces appear for a moment; there is a glimpse of a massive structure, with tower and turrets rising among the trees, and of the tall spire of a church hard by; and then Hatfield is reached, and the end of our journey.

Not far from the station appear the twisted iron gates and the red-bricked lodge, that give an entrance to Hatfield Park; but the ancient way is the one for pedestrians; through the town that is, a town that seems to have some business of its own, with tall chimneys here and there, and yards opening out with prospects of drays and vans, and rows of cottages, whose builders have studied the useful rather than the picturesque.

Mounting the High Street—and the word mounting is used advisedly, for it is something of a climb to the top—these commercial, or rather manufacturing symptoms disappear. Here are the country shops and the gabled cottages, and the snug, warm-looking professional houses, all aligned upon the highway that makes uncompromisingly up the hill. Near the top of the ascent the street breaks off into a pleasant green churchyard, and the church with its grey old tower and tall spire appears to the view. And a little beyond is an ancient archway flanked by brick

buildings which bear the cachet of the days of the Tudors, with all the subdued and varied hues that old Time has laid upon roofs and walls in these centuries past.

The archway leads into a grassy court, one side of which is occupied by a range of buildings of the same mellow red-brick, here a square tower, and there a row of mullioned windows, with quaint brick mouldings and picturesque gables and arched doorways opening into deep shaded interiors. A gateway pierced in this range of charming domestic buildings, corresponds with the archway we have entered by, and gives a glimpse of waving trees beyond, and the green sward of the park.

Here are the stables of the mansion, and stables with a history. For such as they are, they formed a part of the old Palace of Hatfield; here was the banqueting hall, there the chapel; and the gateway, that now shows the sheen of trees and grass, once led into the solemn shaded quadrangle, about which clustered chambers and domestic offices with their façades of sombre brickwork. This, the west wing of that structure, is the only part now remaining, the rest was demolished to make room for the present Hatfield House.

Such historical associations, therefore, as are of an earlier date than the reign of the first James, are connected with the remains of the old palace. The site was, it seems, once a residence of Saxon Kings; but before the Conquest it had been given, with the manor belonging to it, to the Abbot of Ely.

The forest supplied pannage for two thousand hogs according to Doomsday, and there was a Priest who served the little church, and looked after the souls of fifty or sixty humble households, whose habitations were clustered round. And there were meadow and pasture sufficient, and four mills, which must have supplied grist to all the country round. Such was the manor of Hatfield when the Abbot of Ely had it, and when, instead of an Abbot, there came to be a Bishop of Ely, such it still remained.

The Abbot's pleasant manor-house was then enlarged and improved no doubt, and that busy, constructive prelate, Morton—afterwards Cardinal and Archbishop, and the builder of the well-known gateway at Lambeth Palace—erected a new palace on the site, and the building, half college and half cloister, still exists for use in this one solitary wing.

When the Reformation came, King Henry cast covetous eyes upon this pleasant and noble dwelling, and he made the Bishop of Ely give up Hatfield in exchange for lands elsewhere. Here Prince Edward spent some of his early years; and when the grim old monarch his father died, hither came princes and nobles to conduct the poor youth to the throne of his ancestors. Elizabeth, too, spent much of her youth at Hatfield, and she was here when the news came of her sister Mary's death.

With this incident end the chronicles of the old building. James the First exchanged the palace for Lord Burghley's manor of Theobalds, and presently the old gave place to the new. Other times, other manners; and as we pass from out the shadow of the quiet old arch, and into the sunshine and sheen beyond, we see before us Hatfield House, seated proudly among its glades and terraced gardens in quaint magnificence.

The place is by no means a solitude at this present moment. Here is a girls' school marching up the avenue; groups of sightseers are scattered over the wide expanse of gravel in front of the main entrance; and others are to be seen among the leafy avenues of the park. It is the north front of the house that is before us—what in less elaborate buildings we should call the back of the house—not so stately, or so richly ornamented as the front, that faces the sunshine, but still sufficiently imposing, with its mullioned windows, its projecting porch, and its clock-tower, whilst pilasters and enrichments, and the solid, sturdy brickwork, are all mellowed by time and weather into a soft, harmonious hue, that contrasts with the dark-green of the ivy that has covered parts of the building with its mantle.

The southern front is more elaborate, with two massive projecting wings, each with its four tourelles, while the central tower shows to still more advantage with its battlements curiously arranged to show the date, 1611, when the house was finally completed. The centre shows an arched colonnade, running the whole length of the building, while the columns between the arches are continued in a different order in the floor of state above, and quaint and ornamented gables crown the whole design. Here, too, time has been at work, and has thrown its subdued tints over the whole frontage, so that anything heavy and formal in the original design of the

building is softened and redeemed by the charm of its unequalled colouring. And the whole is set off by the emerald sward, out of which the great house rises in all its stateliness and dignity.

Everything about the outward appearance of the mansion suggests a certain unity of conception, and recalls the individuality of its founder. Robert Cecil, the first Earl of Salisbury, was the builder, and even, it is said, the designer and architect of Hatfield House. The evidence, indeed, is rather negative than positive; but among the detailed accounts of the charges and costs attending the erection of the great house, preserved among the archives of the Cecils, there is no mention of an architect or his charges. One Conn, a master mason, and Syminge, a carpenter, mere country artisans, but clearly skilled beyond the common, carried out the Earl's designs; and the panelling and carving, with which the interior is so richly adorned, were executed in London according to my lord's directions. The Cecils, indeed, were great builders. Lord Burghley, the father of Earl Robert, had erected Salisbury House in the Strand, Burghley House in the Midlands, and Theobald's Chase, by Enfield Chase. The first and last have entirely disappeared; but Burghley House still remains—a fine specimen of a Tudor mansion. Robert Cecil, however, took a new departure. There is little Tudoresque about Hatfield House, which is rather of a Franco-Italian school—the school of decadence some might call it; but whether decadence or renaissance, of a sombre, serious dignity characteristic of its founder. Everywhere, whether chiselled in stone, or carved in oak, you meet with the favourite, self-adopted motto of the wise Earl, "Sero sed serio," a motto that seems full of meaning when read by the light of Robert Cecil's life-history.

And now to present ourselves and our credentials at the chief entrance, on the cool-shaded northern front of the house. Here, after passing through an ordinary entrance-lobby, hung with the hats, coats, and umbrellas of the period, we are ushered into the fulness of the seventeenth century all at once—its grace, its variety, and colour. Here is the hall—the marble hall, as familiarly known, from its pavement of squares of white and black marble—and a noble, well-proportioned hall it is, with richly-ornamented roof, with a fine music-gallery of carved oak at

one end, from which hang tattered banners, the relics of modern fields of warfare. The upper part of the walls is hung with fine Gobelins tapestry, the lower is panelled in oak, with a fine, quaint, oaken chimney-piece, and high mullioned windows, which give place at one end to a more modern bow, affording a pleasant view of the terrace and leafy glades beyond. The oaken panels are relieved with ancient portraits. Here is Elizabeth, with ruff and stomacher, and again as a girl in a wild, mythologic costume; here is Mary of Scots, taken not long before her execution, and looking old and worn; and here are other personages Royal and noble.

There is still a mediæval touch about the hall; beards have wagged merrily when the long tables were spread, there have been mummers and masquers, and an echo of the light-hearted gaiety of old times seems to linger about the place, as of the days when "my grave Lord Keeper led the brawls," and the merry minstrelsy echoed in the vaulted roof.

But even when Hatfield was building the old manners were passing away, and the arrangements are rather of a stately house, where Royal guests and the highest of the land may be entertained, than of the ancient English hall where gentle and simple gathered in noisy revelry.

With all the turning and winding, the sudden changes of scene and front, it is difficult to retain a symmetrical impression of such a house as Hatfield, with sombre, oaken-panelled corridors opening upon bright scenes, where the rich stores of centuries are spread out to view:

The ceiling's fretted height,
Each panel in achievements clothing,
Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.

Only, so far from "leading to nothing," all the communications are arranged with an order and compactness that reflect great credit on the constructive sagacity of the wise Lord Keeper who planned them. On the ground-floor, besides the domestic offices, with halls, pantries, kitchens, and everything belonging to the service of the house, which occupy the west wing, there are the fine hall already mentioned, a dining-parlour, as it was called, at the foot of the great stairs, and a summer breakfast and drawing-room. Then we have the cloisters—originally so called—once an open arcade, running along the whole of the central front—a notable architectural feature in the building. Within, the

last half century, the cloisters have been glazed in, and now form the armoury, adorned with suits of armour, with buff coats, weapons, and other relics of the past.

Then we come to a fine oaken staircase, far too distinguished to be characterised as "back stairs," but still subsidiary to the great State staircase. There is a fine play of light and shade, all sombre and subdued, about the massive oaken stairs; and, adding to the effect with a subtle charm of which it is difficult to give any idea, we hear from the regions above a sweet young voice, carolling a pleasant tune, that rings about these old oaken-panelled rooms with beautiful freshness. Then a warning, slightly-reproachful voice calls softly, "Rebecca!" and the song is suddenly hushed. But it has cast a glamour about the place, such as lingers long in the memory.

All is stately and dignified in this the grand State floor of Hatfield House. There are great bedchambers, with their monumental bedsteads, their portraits, their tapestry, their carved chimney-pieces, their pleasant outlook on lawn or pasture. In former days, these were impersonally distinguished, say, as the rose-room, the yellow-room, and so on; no doubt after the colour of their hangings. But a more interesting nomenclature now prevails. Here is the Beaconsfield room, which the great parliamentary chieftain occupied when he visited Hatfield; the Wellington room, adorned with portraits of the great Captain; and the Queen's room, where Royalty reposed once upon a time. There is a chaplain's room below, where his reverence is handsomely lodged, you may imagine, and which is hung with some marvellous tapestry, which seems among the most ancient in the building. Then we have the State bedchamber of King James himself, the cannie goodman from Scotland, who owed so much, perhaps even his crown, to Robert Cecil, and who, for once, was not ungrateful. Here is the great bedstead, all upholstered with cloth of gold, sadly faded and filmy now, with the Royal cypher and other devices, and the chamber service of those times.

Strongly characteristic, and charming too, is the long gallery with its gilded, fretted ceiling, which stretches from end to end of the south front. So long is the gallery, that from either end, the roof seems wanting in height; but seen from the centre, this defect is removed, and,

with its antique furniture, its bric-a-brac, its quaint tapestry, imagination can fitly people it with the forms of the statesmen and courtiers of old times, with high-born dames and lovely damsels, the rustle of whose silks and satins, with the faint perfume of the roses and lilies of other days, seems to linger still in this stately gallery. The tapestry of the gallery is especially remarkable, being English and of the time of Henry the Eighth, and representing the four seasons in quaint archaic manner, with the Signs of the Zodiac sprawling over its margins. Here is an organ which is said to have belonged to King James the First, and many relics of earlier times and more glorious epochs are scattered here and there.

At the west end of the gallery is the library, with glimpses of the trim and ancient gardens where Gloriana gathered flowers, and the sagacious Burghley paced with stately tread and pondered on great affairs of State. Here are the shelves that Robert Cecil filled with the literature of his day. But the most valuable of the contents of the library are the Cecil manuscripts, containing Ministerial papers, invaluable to the student of the period which they cover. As Elizabeth's principal Secretary of State, Cecil was the centre of all the correspondence that came before the Royal council, relating to all the multitudinous details of home and foreign politics. The clues of all the tangled threads of policy were in his hands, and when his old mistress, Queen Elizabeth, died, it might have been said that the disposal of the crown was virtually in his hands. The Scottish King was the surest card, and Cecil played it—reaping the reward of his sagacity in titles and honours, which raised the youngest son of the house of Cecil to an equality, at all events, with the firstborn.

Cecil's thoughtful, melancholy face and feeble frame appear over the chimney-piece of the library—done in Florentine mosaic, with all the rich colouring of the splendid dress of the period. And this is the room that his shade might be supposed especially to haunt. For the Earl was a bookish man, with tastes far removed from the ruffling and dashing courtiers his rivals. Elizabeth called him "her pigmy," and James "his little beagle." The son of elderly parents, he inherited but a weakly constitution. His mother was a pious, learned woman, the sister of Francis Bacon's mother, by

the way, but unbeautiful if her portraits at Hatfield are not grossly libellous; rich in mental gifts, but worn and feeble in body. With her son an inherited frailness of constitution was counterbalanced by the gift of earnest application, and thus he justified his favourite motto here as elsewhere frequently repeated, "Sero sed serio." Strange it seems that the genius of the founder of the line should have slumbered these many generations, and that now, in the days of Victoria, the descendant of Elizabeth's two great statesmen, father and son, should be found at the head of affairs, and guiding the domestic and foreign policy of the country in the manner of his ancestors, under such changed conditions. "Sero sed serio!"

But the library with its folios, manuscripts, and gilded tomes is left behind, and rooms of state succeed one after the other. The great chamber, or King James's room, is a noble room corresponding in size with the marble hall below, adorned with ancient portraits, and rich in antique furniture, with a great marble chimney-piece in the taste of a later period, and a bronze effigy of King James the First presiding over the scene. Here are many relics of the Virgin Queen: her garden-hat, resembling the hay-makers' hats of to-day, but cunningly wrought in silk and gold thread, and her silk stockings.

Interesting, too, is the domestic chapel in the west wing, with its florid Italian ornaments, and stained windows of rich Flemish glass, and its snug luminous gallery with a throne for Royal occupants, and high-backed chairs covered with embroidery worked by notable dames who, centuries ago, were turned to dust. It is noticeable that the great fire which in 1835 destroyed a great part of the western wing, and in which the Dowager-Countess perished, just reached the chapel, and was there subdued, sparing the chief part of the venerable fabric. The wing itself has been restored in exact accordance with its former state, and, except for a difference in the tone of its colouring, can now hardly be distinguished as modern.

Then there are other dining and withdrawing-rooms adapted to the changing seasons of the year, and other famous chambers, of which the memory recalls especially the elm-room, with its panelling and ornaments entirely in that sombre wood. And here are some extremely curious portraits—one of Elizabeth, by Frederick Zucchero, painted when the

Queen was still in the prime of life, with abundant hair and youthful features, while still untouched by time are

Her lion port, her awe-commanding face.

It is in the emblematic taste of the period—the Royal robes studded with eyes and ears—symbols of Royal attributes, while the serpent, Wisdom, is twined around one arm, and the other hand holds a rainbow, with the flattering inscription, "Non sine sole Iris."

Here, too, appears the sagacious Lord Burleigh, by the same artist, a man of fresh and cheerful countenance, one whose nod we may be sure was rather brisk and incisive, than of that solemn and pompous character with which tradition has somehow invested it.

In this, or some other room adjacent, is the Cecil pedigree, an affair of portentous dimensions, and placed in a kind of press with rollers, on which it can be wound up or down. It begins with Adam, and conducts the reader, by gentle gradations, down to the time of Queen Elizabeth. The marvel of the pedigree is, however, lessened when we learn that the Cecils were originally Welsh, for a Welsh genealogy slips easily back to Adam, and that the family name was originally, according to English spelling, Sitsilt, which is, perhaps, in Welsh, Sysylt, or Essylt—a region in North Wales, which puzzled Romans ventured to call Siluria.

Passing onwards we reach the grand staircase, up and down which have passed, with flowing trains, in hoops, in farthing-gales, in patches, in powder, with towering hair or gently waving curls, so many generations of England's fairest and proudest dames. Twisted balusters, all the turner's and carver's art, are here displayed, zigzags and florid ornament. The general effect is rich and stately, befitting grand receptions; courtly ceremonies; Charles with his melancholy fated look; his Queen with her frizzled locks; the second Charles in the bravery of silks and velvets; Queen Anne with her hoops; the gallant Sidneys, nobles, and courtiers of every degree—all these might step forth from the canvasses that adorn the walls, and thronging the grand staircase irrespective of chronology, would harmonise well enough with their surroundings.

One of the characteristics of Hatfield is the continuous occupation that has lasted since the house was built, with only gradual changes as times and manners changed. How many of our ancient houses,

still subsisting and visited by the curious, have fallen at one time or other into the condition described by Pope, when an owl flying in mistook the place for a barn; so that their present antiquities are suggestive of Wardour Street and the bric-a-brac shops. But Hatfield has known neither decadence nor decay, and has remained continuously the home of one and the same family since the days of the great statesman of Elizabeth and James.

And now we reach the terraced lawn of the south front, and the gardens of Hatfield lie before us. There are many gardens, of different ages and tastes—modern beds of colour, shaded walks, clipped yew and box, labyrinth, sun-dials, and mossy cells. But the most charming, from its veritable antiquity, is the square garden on the west side of the house, known as Queen Elizabeth's garden. It is doubtless of her time, and belonged equally to the old palace that Morton built; and, indeed, a fragment of the palace wall is to be found on one side of it. It is just such a garden as Francis Bacon gives directions for, "with a stately arched hedge" round three sides of it, pleached arbours, such as Shakespeare, perhaps, took the pattern of from this very garden, and planted with the same homely, beautiful flowers, that Perdita scatters among her followers. Nowhere can one linger among the perfumes of the past with more delight. At the four corners are four mulberry trees planted by the Royal hand of James the First. James, we know, was great in mulberries, and they were planted all over the country under his directions.

Then we pass a sunken rose-garden, which also seems to have belonged to the old palace. The time of roses is well-nigh past, and their petals are scattered with every sigh of the summer wind, but the fragrance of them lingers still.

Now that we have reached the north front of the house once more, the long avenue stretches invitingly into the recesses of the park. The number of people attracted to the place has increased. The member of the county police who is on guard by the terrace is the centre of a throng of enquirers. School-children play hide-and-seek among the trees, or picnic comfortably on the grass, while teachers and pastors repose amicably in the shade. But there is no other party on the way to Elizabeth's oak, which lies somewhat to the right of the main avenue. There on a knoll stands the gaunt, lifeless trunk of an

old oak, propped up here and there, and surrounded by a railing. The oak was old, no doubt, but still vigorous and feasted with russet leaves when Elizabeth, in the soft gloom of a November afternoon, stood beneath its branches, waiting expectant of she knew not what. Perhaps of a more rigorous captivity, of the Tower, of the block. The cavalcade that approached, riding hard through the woodlands, had come to greet her as Queen of England, and among the historic gathering was Sir William Cecil, the future Lord Burleigh, who could have had no notion, then, that Hatfield would come into the possession of his descendants.

Beyond Elizabeth's oak lies the vineyard, which Robert Cecil named and designed as a real vineyard, and for which he bought twenty thousand vines. But soon after his time the grounds were transformed into a kind of stately pleasure, with walks overarched with yew, descending by many devious ways to the grassy margin of the river. It is the River Lea, that, widened into a broad reach, glides softly by. The opposite bank is thickly clothed in wood, through which a narrow avenue has been cut, with an old-fashioned garden-house closing the vista. An air of sombre calm and seclusion hangs about the scene, harmonising with the rich verdure, the graceful curve of the river, the waterfowl sailing in stately procession across the stream, the peacocks stalking on the terraces, the gentle rustle of leaves, and whisper of the breeze.

So we turn back towards that world whose voice every now and then disturbs the solemn stillness of the scene; through grassy rides driven through wildernesses of fern, where rabbits are scattered like stones on a highway, and where the pheasants rustle to and fro as fearless as the birds on Selkirk's isle. Here are old oaks to be found, monstrous in bulk, decayed, awful in age, yet with green branches here and there, the relics of some mighty forest—oaks under which Saxon Kings may have held their rural courts.

Passing out from under the old palace archways, and looking down the steep High Street, with the tufted valley below, where the railway is whistling its summons to all and sundry—the churchyard close at hand, green and well kept, with open gate, invites the passing footsteps. The church is open, too—a handsome country church with no striking features,

except for some quaint effigies of the once possessors of Brocket Park, and the Salisbury Chapel. Here, enclosed within an iron railing, are the tombs of the Cecils, with the monument of the first Earl of Salisbury occupying the place of honour. The Earl, in his robes of state, is stretched upon a marble slab, supported by figures emblematic of the four cardinal virtues, while beneath reposes a wasted cadaver, mere skin and bone. The moral is trite and obvious enough—

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

And passing round the churchyard again we get a final glimpse of the old palace and gatehouse, with great Hatfield House rising massively in the background, the whole embowered in foliage and lit up by a passing ray of sunlight, while stormy rain-clouds closing in heighten the momentary glow.

COME.

COME, Love, come, the bonny boat
On the blue seas lies afloat,
With her red flag flying steady,
And her white wings spread already;
Come, the waves are whispering low,
In the music that we know;
And the wooing western breeze
Whispers o'er the sunny seas,
Mocking lingering doubts delay:
Youth and gladness, come away,
Leave the cares of earth behind,
Trust the waves, and trust the wind.

Come, Love, come, says hope and youth
In the glow of passionate truth;
What have we with fear to do,
We, life's own triumphant two?
Age and prudence whisper warning,
In the glory of the morning,
Shall not noon be glad and gay,
Evening sweeter than the day;
Love will make and smooth the path,
Come, and face the world in faith;
What shall each fair venture find?
Ask the waves and ask the wind.

IN A VILLAGE POST OFFICE.

WHEN old Mrs. Pryer—who kept the post office in our village for a long series of years—died, there was some difficulty in finding a successor. One or two of our leading shopkeepers applied for the appointment; but as soon as they ascertained how much the Post Office authorities required and how little they paid, my neighbours turned up their noses at the business and refused to have anything to do with it. It really seemed for a time as if nobody would be found to undertake the responsibility, and that the inhabitants of Avonhill would have to forego the advan-

tages of postal communication with the outer world. In this emergency, our Rector appealed to me. He represented the serious nature of the crisis in our parochial history, and he was supported in his appeal by the head postmaster of the nearest town, who seemed very anxious to place the village post office in my hands. This gentleman briefly explained the nature of the duties, and assured me that I should have no difficulty in performing them. I listened to these joint representations, hesitated for a while, and at last was persuaded to become sub-postmaster of Avonhill.

My appointment was, I think, generally acceptable to my fellow villagers. Some of the intimate friends of the late Mrs. Pryer disapproved, probably because they felt that, with the office in my hands, they would not enjoy such opportunities as they formerly possessed for obtaining information about their neighbours' affairs. The late sub-postmistress was a great gossip herself, and most of her associates were like-minded. I do not wish to injure the respected memory of my predecessor; but I know that in her days the post office was the local school for scandal, and now it is sometimes said that the village is much more dull and uninteresting than it was when she and her friends concerned themselves about everybody's business. Their gossip was usually harmless enough; but there were, I believe, occasions upon which she was officially rebuked for her indiscretion, and seriously warned to be more careful for the future.

This, however, is a digression. Whatever my own failings may be, I hope I am not wanting in discretion, and I can confidently affirm that I have never betrayed by word or gesture anything that has come to my knowledge in my capacity of sub-postmaster. Necessarily I have learnt a great deal about my neighbours from seeing the outside of their correspondence; but the information I have thus acquired I have always kept to myself, though I have often been sorely tempted to disclose it. When, for instance, my old friend and neighbour at the Hall Farm suspected her pretty daughter Mary of carrying on a clandestine correspondence with a young and good-looking scapegrace from the neighbouring town, and of having letters left at the post office to be called for, a word, or even a look of mine would have cleared up or confirmed her suspicions. And when our relieving officer enquired whether old Hannah Brown—who had

asked for help from the parish—was in the receipt of periodical remittances through the post, an answer from me might have saved the worthy man a good deal of further labour. But I have learned to hold my peace, and even to control my features lest they should betray official secrets.

My house is in the middle of our village street, and stands a little back from the road. Formerly I cultivated a few flowers in the small front garden, and my heartsease were considered the finest for miles round, blooming freely all the spring and summer. Alas! they have now disappeared, for I have been obliged to remove the flower beds and to put down gravel to allow the public to get access to the letter-box in my front window. I have also been compelled to provide a counter in what was my sitting-room, and to fit it up in other respects as an office. All this has been done for the most part at my own cost. The authorities allowed me four pounds; but I spent three times that amount in preparing my house for postal purposes. In wet weather my doorstep is never clean, and in fine weather the house is very dusty downstairs, as the front door is always open.

My daily round of duty begins at a quarter before six in the morning, summer and winter, week days and Sundays. At that early hour I must be up to receive the mail which arrives by cart from the neighbouring post town, the letters and newspapers in a canvas bag or bags, and the parcels in a hamper. Having satisfied myself that the receptacles are externally in proper order, I sign the driver's time-bill and he proceeds on his journey. I then open the bags, examine the bill to see if there are any registered letters, and any letters upon which unpaid postage must be collected, and if there are such I stamp them with a dated stamp and place them on one side for a time. Next I stamp the ordinary letters and sort them and the newspapers in readiness for the letter-carriers, who attend at half-past six o'clock. There are two of them, one delivering the correspondence for Avonhill and the immediate neighbourhood, while the other performs a long and somewhat circuitous march to several of our adjacent hamlets. Before they start they have to arrange the letters and packets in the order of delivery, and whilst they are doing this I unpack the parcel-post hamper and dispose of the contents, which they have also to deliver. At seven o'clock, or a little later, they are

despatched, and, as the office is open to the public at that hour for the sale of stamps, and for answering enquiries, I must be ready to attend to early comers.

I am not as a rule much troubled by the public until nine o'clock, when telegraph, money-order, and savings bank business begins. At first I found telegraphy very difficult; indeed for some time I was quite unequal to sending or receiving messages at the required speed, and a clerk from the head office was detailed for the duty as a temporary measure. Young people learn telegraphy more easily than their seniors, and though I have now made myself a fairly efficient telegraphist, I shall never become very expert at the work. This is not, perhaps, very material, because Avonhill folks do not send or receive many telegrams. Half-a-dozen in and as many out are about our daily averages, and I can manage that number pretty well, although, if two or three happen to come in succession and people are wanting attention in other directions, it is rather worrying. We do not in so small a place transact much money-order or postal-order business, and, except at the end of the week, our savings bank deposits and withdrawals are not numerous. People who save money are very suspicious, and seem very anxious that their friends should not know of it. They ask all sorts of questions as to the safety of the bank, and whether they may be quite sure that the amount of their deposits will be kept secret. A man once told me he would be quite satisfied to leave his money in my hands, but he did not like the idea of having it sent to London. He seemed to think all Londoners rogues, and I had some trouble to get the notion out of his head; indeed, I have only partially succeeded for the other day he informed me that he looked to me to make it all right if the London clerks made any mistake, or lost his money. People can now buy Government Stock through the post office, and occasionally I have a Stock transaction, but there are often a lot of preliminary enquiries on the part of would-be investors. I am asked to explain the difference between Reduced and Consols, and Mr. Goschen's Conversion Scheme has cost me a lot of trouble. One old maid was very indignant at the reduction of the interest to two and three-quarters per cent., and I was quite unable to pacify her. She said it was a shame; that it was very cruel and wicked

to rob a poor unprotected woman; and finally declared that there would have been no reduction had poor dear Mrs. Pryer been living. Another troublesome class of depositors are the children and others who save by buying stamps and sticking them on to the forms issued by the department for that purpose. As soon as the value of the stamps amounts to a shilling the child can make a regular deposit; but the process of saving pennies is very tedious, and I am often asked whether I can remove one of the stamps and give the owner a penny, as he wants the money to buy something. Fortunately in the interest of thrift I am obliged to refuse; but I am afraid my young friend thinks me very hard-hearted, and leaves my office disappointed at being unable to raise money on his little security.

All day long I am selling stamps, or answering miscellaneous enquiries about every branch of postal business. Old Job Crawley, who has a son in Canada from whom he has not heard for a longer period than usual, is very anxious to know when the mails come in, and if I am quite certain there is no letter for him in the office. When I assure him there is not, he asks me to write to London and enquire if his long-looked-for letter has not been put on one side there; and if I tell him such an occurrence is impossible, he looks very doubtfully at me, and then wants to know how I can say that, since I have not looked myself. Perhaps a small boy has been sent in to post a letter, and has dropped the penny given him to pay for the stamp; he would like the letter to be sent free of charge, and turns away in despair when I say it cannot be done. If a parcel is damaged in transit the receiver comes to me with his complaint, and may insinuate that I have done the mischief myself. At first, all this sort of things troubled me a good deal; but I am by this time quite hardened.

Our general mail goes out at seven o'clock, but there is a despatch at midday, and a second mail is received at two o'clock in the afternoon. The letters arriving by the second mail are only delivered by carrier in Avonhill itself, and people living outside the village must fetch their letters if they want them before the next morning. On five days a good many applications are made for the letters arriving in the afternoon; and sometimes I have more callers than letters. At six o'clock, the rural postman, who started at

seven in the morning returns, bringing with him the letters he has collected on his inward journey, and from the time of his arrival until seven o'clock there is plenty to do. The letter-box closes at a quarter before seven, and the bulk of the letters are posted during the preceding half-hour. Not only is there the pressure caused by the posting of letters themselves, but the people who bring them often buy stamps or make enquiries; and though money-order and savings bank business ceases at six o'clock—except on Saturdays, when it is continued for another hour—telegrams can be sent off and received until eight.

The hour immediately preceding the despatch of the mail is the busiest of the whole day, and I am obliged to get assistance to enable me to perform the duty. When the bags are made up, and the parcel-hamper packed, it is time for the mail-cart to call, and the cart is generally punctual. It is with a certain amount of relief I see the bags and hamper carried out of the house, although the day's work is not over. The office remains open until eight o'clock; and when it is finally closed for the night I have my accounts to make up, and often some official correspondence to attend to. Not until nine, sometimes even later, do my duties as sub-postmaster of Avonhill come to an end; and I am generally so tired that I am glad to go to bed.

I get more leisure time on Sundays. A mail comes in the morning at the ordinary time, and letters are delivered as on week days; but there are no money transactions beyond the sale of a few stamps, and there is very little telegraphing. At ten o'clock the office is closed, and I have no other duty but to send off the evening mail, which is lighter than on week days.

I flatter myself that I do a good day's work for the post office. Fifteen hours is, I think, quite enough; and though there are days when I have few customers, I must always be ready for them during the hours the office is open. Occasionally I manage to go off duty for an hour or two in the afternoon, but my assistant, who helps me to send off the evening mail, is not often available during the day. I am not too liberally paid, and I am not entitled to a pension. Happily, I am not entirely dependent on my official salary—I pity the unfortunate sub-postmasters who are—and sometimes, when the work is heavier

than usual, I am sorely tempted to throw up the appointment, and to return into the private station from which I emerged to become sub-postmaster of Avonhill.

DEGENERATE WORDS.

THE history of a word is often singularly like that of a human being. Some words rise from a very lowly origin in the slums of slang to respectability and general use and acceptance; others, entering the language under much more favourable conditions, fall by mischance or neglect into disuse, and drag out a maimed existence in provincial or dialectal forms. In worse case even than the latter are those words which, having been for many years, perhaps for centuries, in ordinary use by the best writers, gradually sink into disrepute, and being heard only in colloquial or vulgar language, find a last resting-place in the pages of a slang dictionary. Such words in their decline often undergo a slight change of meaning. They are no longer used with accuracy and precision, but become contaminated by the company they keep, and acquire new significations, coarser and broader than of old. A good example is the word "gob." As a noun this is now vulgarly applied to the mouth, and as a verb it means to swallow. "Shut your gob!" is a polite invitation to silence among certain classes of society. Says Tom Cringle in the first chapter of Michael Scott's famous sea story: "I thrust half a doubled-up muffin into my gob." But the word itself is a very ancient and respectable one. "Gob" formerly meant, in a general sense, a small portion, mass, or collection of anything. In its longer form of "gobbet" it is found not unfrequently in *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer, and Wiclif. It was often used literally or metaphorically to describe a mouthful or a piece of anything just large enough or fit to be put into the mouth at once. In Ludowick Barry's comedy of *Ram-Alley*, published in 1611, one of the characters says that "Throate the lawyer swallowed at one gob" certain land "for less than half the worth." A hundred and sixty years later, Foote, in his farce *The Cozeners*, describes how "Doctor Dewlap twisted down such gobs of fat." The old general meaning seems to have survived in America. In Mark Twain's "*Innocents Abroad*," Gibraltar is described as "pushed out into the sea on the end of a flat, narrow strip

of land, and is suggestive of 'a gob' of mud on the end of a shingle."

Another degenerate word is "clean," in the sense of "entirely," or "altogether." The word with this meaning was constantly employed by the best writers until a very recent date, but its use now in serious writing would be considered colloquial, if not vulgar. To be "shut of" a person or thing, meaning to be rid of him or it, is a familiar provincialism in the Northern Counties of England, and is also to be frequently heard among the lower order of Londoners. But the phrase was formerly in respectable literary use. It is used by Massinger in the *Unnatural Combat*, 1639, Act iii., scene 1:

We are shut of him,
He will be seen no more here.

Bunyan, who was naturally fond of racy and proverbial expressions, uses it in the "*Holy War*." Many years earlier, Thomas Nashe employs the phrase in his satirical pamphlet, "*Have with you to Saffron Walden*," where, in the "Address to the Reader," referring to his unfortunate antagonist, the pedantic Gabriel Harvey, he writes: "I have him haunt me up and downe to be my prentise to learne to endite, and doo what I can, I shall not be shut of him."

To "cotton," meaning to agree with, to take to, is now a common colloquial expression. As the poet says in the "*In-goldsby Legends*:"

For when once Madame Fortune deals out her hard
raps,

It's amazing to think
How one cottons to drink!

This use of the word, however, was common several centuries ago. It is found occasionally in the Elizabethan writers, but perhaps the earliest known example is the following, from Thomas Drant's translation of Horace, published in 1567:

So feyneth he, things true and false
So alwayes minglenth he,
That first with midst, and midst with laste,
Maye cotten and agree.

The word is entered in Bartlett's "*Dictionary of Americanisms*," but as this quotation shows, "to cotton," like so many other so-called Americanisms, is simply a survival, in vulgar use on both sides of the Atlantic, of a respectable old English word. It may be noted by the way, as regards its etymology, that it has no connection with the plant cotton, but is derived from a Welsh verb, meaning to agree, to consent.

A notable instance of descent from literary to vulgar use is to be found in the history of one of the meanings of the verb to "cut." The phrases to "cut over," and to "cut away," are found in the writers of the latter part of the sixteenth century, bearing precisely the same meaning as attaches to the corresponding modern slang expressions. For instance, Lambarde the antiquary, in his "Perambulation of Kent," published in 1570, says: "Let me cut over to Watling Streete." Nashe, in one of his Marprelate tracts, the "Counter-cuffe to Martin Junior," 1589, writes: "He came latelie over-sea into Kent, from thence he cut over into Essex at Gravesende." With the present day use of these phrases is generally associated the idea of more or less hurried, or enforced departure. In "Great Expectations," Orlick remarks: "A good night for cutting off in. We'd be puzzled how to bring down a jail-bird on the wing to-night."

The expression to "knock off," meaning to desist from, to give up, is a familiar colloquialism, with a peculiarly modern appearance; but in reality it can show good authority for its existence in its use by one of the best and most vigorous of English prose writers. In the tenth chapter of the "History of the Worthies of England," 1662, Fuller writes:

"In noting of their nativities, I have wholly observed the instructions of Pitseus, where I knock off with his death, my light ending with his life on that subject."

A frequently-heard vulgarism is "along of," in the sense of "on account of." But, vulgar as its use is now considered to be, it is a genuine, good old English phrase, that was in frequent literary use for centuries before, falling from its high estate, it became a familiar locution in the vocabulary of the street. It is found so far back as the ninth century in King Alfred's translation of Orosius's "History," and is in fact common in most of the early writers. It occurs in Chaucer and in Caxton. William Stafford, in his "Examination of Complaints," published in 1581, speaking of the general poverty, says: "Whereof it is longe I cannot well tell." In the first part of King Henry the Sixth, Act iv., scene 3, the Duke of York exclaims:

We mourn, France smiles; we lose, they daily get;
All long of this vile traitor Somerset.

Cymbeline, when telling his daughter Imogen of her mother's death, says:

And long of her it was
That we meet here so strangely.

Another street word of respectable descent, is "fadge," to suit, or fit. Its use is now pretty well confined to costermongers and similar street folk; but it is to be found in Shakespeare, and in other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. "How will this fadge?" asks Viola in Twelfth Night. "Clothes I must get; this fashion will not fadge with me," says a character in Beaumont and Fletcher's Wit without Money.

A word that might have served a very useful purpose in our language is "proser." We have no equivalent in English for the French "prosateur," a word that Menage invented in imitation of the Italian "prosatore," a writer in prose. "Proser" was coined to meet the want, and is to be found in this sense in Drayton. But the word has degenerated, and is now so universally used and accepted as a mere synonym for a bore, or a dull talker or writer, that it would be a hopeless task to try to employ it in any higher or broader sense, and, for the present at least, we must be content with the rather ugly compound "prose-writer."

The phrase to "make bones of," that is, to find difficulty in anything, is now restricted to colloquial use; but it was formerly current literary coin, and is frequently to be met with in our older literature. Its earlier form was, "to find bones in," which clearly shows the phrase to have originated in a reference to bones in soup, or similar food, regarded as obstacles to swallowing. In this form it is found as early as the middle of the fifteenth century, in the Paston Letters. It does not occur in its present shape "to make bones" until a century later, but from this period on to the end of the seventeenth century it was in constant use. Two early instances may suffice. Nashe, in his before-mentioned "Have with you to Saffron Walden," speaking of Harvey, says: "He would make no bones to take the wall of Sir Philip Sidney." In Robert Greene's "Francesco's Fortune," 1590, a timid lover is thus encouraged: "Tricke thy selfe up in thy best reparrell, and make no bones at it, but on a wooing." "Gills," a slang term for the lower part of the face, was used with much the same meaning by Ben Jonson, and by Lord Bacon. To "swop," that is to exchange or barter, is now an undeniably vulgar word, but it appears in the classic pages of the "Spectator," and is also to be found much earlier in Robert Greene's volumi

nous writings. "Tall," in the American sense of vain or braggart, is only a modification of the former generally accepted meaning of brave or bold. Dekker, in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 1600, Act I., says: "Hee's a brother of our trade, a good workman, and a tall souldier."

But the list might be extended almost indefinitely, for the words and phrases given above are but examples of a very large class. The fate of many words, as of some books, seems to have been controlled by

That shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow,

or some other irresponsible elf. Good and useful words die from neglect and disuse, while inferior coinages enjoy a vigorous existence. Some words, originally slang and of doubtful origin, receive promotion and become integral parts of our recognised vocabulary; but others, such as those which form the subject of this paper, although still current, are yet but debased images of their former selves.

THE UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE OF SIMEON PRECIOUS.

CHAPTER I.

DOCTOR PRECIOUS — Simeon Precious, M.D.—was Demonstrator of Anatomy in the University of ——. He was a tall, lank man of fifty-five years of age, clean-shaven, and of cadaverous complexion; while the falling away of his dark hair from his brow and temples had had the effect of still further accentuating the general asceticism of his appearance. Of a somewhat feeble physique from his childhood, much study and continual mental exercise had served to increase the initial disproportion between the energy of his mind and the frailty of his body, and to render the latter, as time went on, more and more incompetent to restrain the impulses and vagaries of the former, and less capable of remaining stolid and unmoved when exposed to its surging eddies and wild commotions.

He had no practice in the ordinary sense of the word, but devoted the whole of his time to lecturing, and tuition, and private research; though, when the local hospital happened to contain a patient suffering from some mysterious and perplexing disease, he was frequently to be seen there, making close and prolonged examinations, and suggesting new and

strange methods of treatment, which were oftentimes startling in their novelty and boldness. But it was not the diseased man who absorbed his attention and excited his sympathy; it was the disease itself in which all his interest centred, and it was less to save life or banish pain that he schemed and operated, than to bring back into proper working order the deranged mechanism of the sufferer's system.

That life was saved and pain banished as a consequence of his delicate and skilful manipulations was a matter of comparative indifference to Doctor Precious; and when the patient's body was once more in a normal condition, all his interest in him ceased. He pondered much over problems which are generally considered to be so incapable of solution as to make the serious contemplation of them nothing more than waste of time. But the search for the *Philosopher's Stone* and the *Elixir of Life*—futile as it has always proved—has been the means of discovering many valuable and interesting facts in chemical science, and perhaps Doctor Precious found a similarly sufficient reward result from his prolonged courses of experiments and investigations.

He was chary of making confidences, and spoke but little of the strange and mysterious problems which it was known were engaging his earnest attention. It was said that, amongst other seemingly wild dreams, he confidently cherished the hope of being able to add a third or more to the actual duration of a man's life, and, consequently, to his opportunities for study and research, by discovering a means of making sleep unnecessary. He argued, so those who were most intimate with him said, that a man grew tired and sleepy through some change in the condition of his system, or of some part of it, the blood most probably; and that Nature, by some unknown process, transformed, during the six or eight hours of nightly sleep, the condition which produced a feeling of drowsiness and weariness into the condition which made a man feel wakeful and fresh. Other effects which Nature but very slowly brought to pass, science had discovered ways of bringing about in a very short time; and Doctor Precious declared that he could not consider he was entertaining an altogether extravagant or idle hope in looking forward to a day when science, by injecting some strongly oxygenated liquid into the blood, or by some other means, should find out a way of effecting this as yet

mysterious and occult transformation of the condition of the human system in as many minutes, or fewer, as unassisted Nature took hours.

For years past, too, he had devoted much time and untiring labour to a series of experiments and observations by means of which he hoped to cast some light upon the mysterious connection between mind and body. How could two things (if "things" were, indeed, a right word to use) so different in nature affect each other? This was the question to which he was striving to find an answer. He had studied deeply the theories of Leibnitz and Spinoza, but he could not yet see his way clearly to accept them. At the same time, however, he had no theory of his own which would give a satisfactory answer to the question which was constantly tormenting him, and driving him on to fresh experiments and investigations. To say, as Leibnitz says, that when a man moves his finger coincidentally with the desire to move it, it is a delusion to suppose that there is any connection between the desire and the act, seemed to him to be contrary to all experience; and yet how could mind, intangible, invisible, imponderous mind, act upon solid, ponderous matter? So year after year he strained and strove after the mysterious secret which ever eluded his grasp.

When not engaged in lecturing or other official work, the Demonstrator of Anatomy lived a hermit-like life in a couple of uncomfortable rooms in one of the quietest streets of the town. He seldom or never dined in the hall of his college, and he was not much troubled with invitations to dine elsewhere. He himself had never been known to ask any one to share a meal with him in his own rooms; and if such an invitation had ever been given, some excuse would probably have been invented for declining it, unless curiosity had mastered the not unnatural unwillingness to make a table-companion of a man who seemed to look upon his fellow-creatures merely as potential "niduses" for the incubation and development of monstrous growths, or as subjects for courses of mystic experiments.

There were few, if any, who could be called his friends, for he gave but slight encouragement to those whom interest in the same studies brought into association with him to cultivate a closer intimacy. Without being morose or misanthropic, his manner seemed distinctly to proclaim

that a healthy, living man, who afforded him opportunities neither for dissection nor delicate operation, was devoid of all interest and attraction for him. To the young men who attended his lectures and demonstrations, he was more a speaking automaton than a man of like nature with themselves. There was no sympathy, no feeling of a common humanity between them; and the Demonstrator's pupils would as soon have thought of looking upon one of the antique statues in the University Museum in the light of a possible friend, as upon himself.

Of Simeon Precious, indeed, it could be truly said that, though he was in the world, he was not of it. Its pleasures, and gaieties, and beauties were utterly without charm or interest to him; and a "yellow primrose by the water's brim" was not even a yellow primrose to him, nor even "a perennial acaulescent herb;" it was simply nothing at all. Anything that was simple, and natural, and wholesome, might just as well have not existed, for all he cared about it, except inasmuch as it provided him with food, and consequently supported his vitality, and so enabled him to continue the researches and investigations for which alone he seemed to live.

Notwithstanding his apparently frail physique, he had never been compelled by ill-health or bodily weakness to desist from his work or studies even for a single day. There was something about his whole appearance, indeed, which seemed to suggest that his body was scarcely like the bodies of other men; but that it was a mere cloak or covering for his mind, helplessly swayed and tossed about by the impulses and vagaries of the wild spirit it veiled, rather than a solid working machine. His acquaintances shook their heads gravely now and then as they glanced at him, and prophesied some terrible break-down in the near future.

CHAPTER II.

THE Demonstrator of Anatomy had been working hard and late for several days past, hard and late even for him. He was thrilled with a feverish hope that his experiments and investigations had at last disclosed to him the elements of the solution of the mysterious problem which had so long been baffling him, the action of mind upon matter, if only he could understand their full bearing upon each other, and combine them in the right way. But everything was still very misty and

indeterminate, and the Demonstrator felt painfully conscious that his hopes were born rather of a kind of hazy intuition than of an actual comprehension of clear facts. Still he worked on, now experimenting, now rapt in deepest thought.

For several nights past his enthusiastic ardour had kept him up long after the time when he usually went to bed, and his hours of sleep, which were never more than were barely necessary, had been seriously curtailed. To-night he worked on till his brain grew quite confused and heavy. Strange and almost indescribable thrills shot through it, as though little bubbles were bursting, or tiny bomb-shells were exploding inside it. He was not unfamiliar with these sensations, and he knew that he had worked too long, and that for an hour at least after he had laid his weary body down in his bed, he would feel those startling thrills and explosions in his over-worked brain, and that for so long, or even longer, sleep would refuse to visit him and grant him the soothing restfulness of perfect unconsciousness.

Feeling utterly tired out, he crossed the landing and entered his little bedroom. He began to undress, but, as he did so, he could not keep his mind from dwelling on the visionary discoveries of the last day or two. Suddenly a fresh ray of light seemed to gleam upon him, and he thought that he could see his way to unravel at least one perplexing knot. Fearful lest the happy inspiration should vanish and be forgotten before morning, he seized a piece of paper, and sat down at a little table to make a note. But what had seemed so clear a moment or two ago, was now all hazy and indistinct. The Demonstrator racked his brain in his endeavours to bring back his former train of thought, in which he fancied he had seen a certain series of facts manifestly pointing to a most important and interesting conclusion; but it was all in vain. He could not now recall what for a moment had seemed so clear. Suddenly, as he sat rapt in deep and striving thought, one of those horridly-whirring bomb-shells seemed to explode in his brain with greater violence than he had ever known before, and a moment afterwards the Demonstrator fell on to the floor in a state of utter unconsciousness.

CHAPTER III.

It was one of the mornings when the Demonstrator of Anatomy was announced

to lecture. All through the night he had lain on the floor just as he had fallen; and it was broad daylight when he awoke from the sleep into which, without any interval of wakefulness, his state of unconsciousness had merged.

He tried to open his eyes, or rather he was conscious of wanting to open them; but he not only found that he was quite without power to raise the lids, but he felt strangely incapable of even actively trying to do so. The will to raise them was there, but all energy or power to attempt to carry out that will was wanting. His whole body seemed rigidly paralysed. As he lay on the floor, the events of the previous evening came back clearly to his recollection, and he remembered everything that had occurred up to the moment when he had fallen. It was his morning to lecture, he knew; and, wondering what the time might be, he felt a desire to look at his watch, but his hand refused to carry out the will of his mind, and remained fixed and immoveable by his side.

"What can have gone wrong with me?" he pondered. "My mind is perfectly clear, and I have no pain; yet I can't move even the smallest muscle, and I don't feel able even to try to move one. Can I speak, I wonder?" and at the same time he willed to utter the words of his thought, but his lips remained still, and no sound issued from them.

Then his eyes suddenly opened automatically, without the slightest attempt on his own part to raise the lids.

"This is really very extraordinary!" he thought; and already he began to feel more of a professional than of a merely personal interest in his own case. "I never knew anything like this before. I wonder if I can close my eyes again!"

But he only experienced the same strange incapacity as he had been conscious of previously. He could not even try to close his eyes; he could only inertly will to do so, while the perverse pupils remained staring widely open.

In just the same peculiar automatic manner as his eyes had opened a few moments previously, his right hand now mechanically sought his waistcoat-pocket, drew out the watch, and held it up before his eyes for a moment, and then placed it back in the pocket again.

Doctor Precious was too much astonished to note the time; and as he lay quite nonplussed and baffled by the extraordinary behaviour of his body, he was more startled

than ever at feeling his lips begin to move, and hearing himself exclaim :

"Can I speak, I wonder?"

"Good Heavens!" he thought — he would have uttered the words aloud if he had been able—as a sudden idea flashed through his mind, "is it possible that there can be anything in that theory of Leibnitz's after all, and that there is a double mechanism, and that my two machines have got out of synchronism?"

His eyes now closed as suddenly and as automatically as they had previously opened.

"It must be so! I did want to shut my eyes just after I tried to find out whether I could speak."

Now, as the theory of Leibnitz's of which Doctor Precious was thinking may not have come within the compass of the studies of all the readers of this narrative, it may be as well to say a word or two in explanation of it. It is, by the way, borrowed chiefly, if not altogether, from Spinoza.

"Man," says Leibnitz, "is composed of mind and body; but what is mind and what is body, and what is the nature of their union? Substances so opposite in kind cannot affect one another; mind cannot act upon matter, or matter upon mind; and the appearance of their reciprocal operation is an appearance only, and a delusion."

That is to say, that when we move a finger or a foot coincidentally with our will to do so, we are under a delusion if we suppose that there is any connection between the will and the deed. Now, as most people had got into the habit of thinking that there was even something more than a mere connection between the two, and that the latter was entirely dependent upon the former, Leibnitz was conscious that their conversion to a more correct way of thinking would not be brought about by merely telling them that they were under a delusion; and so he offered them, in the place of their old erroneous opinions, a theory which he assured them afforded the true and scientific explanation of the apparent connection between will and act, or mind and body. He compared man with a sort of double clock, wound up and regulated so that the two sections of it should always keep exact time together. Such a double mechanism, he declared, was man, and he had been so constructed that when the machinery regulating his desires

made him feel the wish to stretch out his arm, at that precise moment the machinery regulating his actions thrust the limb forward. This is the theory, which is known as Leibnitz's "Harmonie Préétablie," and it was this theory which Doctor Precious—who had never believed in it before—was now beginning to suspect might be true.

"Well, I can soon settle that point now," thought the Demonstrator. "I want to get up and go to that chair by the table and sit down in it. Now, if Leibnitz is right, my body ought presently to carry out the will of my mind."

For a little while Doctor Precious's body lay perfectly motionless on the floor; then, after an interval of similar duration to those which had already separated his acts of volition from the execution of them, it rose in a perfectly natural and easy manner from the floor and seated itself in the chair.

"Wonderful!" thought the Demonstrator, quite delighted at the amazing and unprecedented experience which was falling to his lot, and quite forgetful of the inconveniences which must necessarily attend such a condition as his when he came to go about in the world again.

"Now the next thing I must find out is the amount of time by which the two mechanisms are out of synchronism; and I must get at my watch to do that. I wish to take it out of my pocket, detach the chain from my waistcoat, and then place both watch and chain on the table here just under my eyes."

Again he remained quite motionless for a time, and then his fingers carried out the plan his mind had formulated, and the watch and chain lay on the table before him.

It was half-past seven o'clock.

"Now," reflected the Demonstrator, "I must will to do something, and then see how long a time elapses before I actually do it. I wish to touch the swivel of my chain with the forefinger of my right hand."

Doctor Precious's eyes were all this time fixed rigidly on his watch, for he could no more change their direction, without giving due notice of his intention to do so, than he could get up from his chair and walk across the room. Exactly two minutes after framing the wish, his finger laid itself on the swivel and remained fixed there.

"Two minutes! That means, then, that whatever I want to do I shall only be able

to do two minutes after I have formulated the wish or felt the impulse to do it. I'm very much afraid that this will be somewhat inconvenient when I am operating. However, I hope that this abnormal derangement of the twin mechanisms won't last very long. I will take a strong opiate to-night, and try if that will put mind and body back into correct synchronism again. Here's this tiresome finger sticking fast to the swivel just because I forgot to wish that it should resume its former position after just touching it. I must be more careful in the future and think a little longer ahead."

Presently the finger left the swivel, and resumed its former position, and Doctor Precious noted that the interval between volition and act was again exactly two minutes.

"Now," reflected the Demonstrator, "I must make my plans for the day very carefully. If I can manage to get on all right till to-night, I hope that I shall be able to restore mind and body to simultaneous action by to-morrow. What a delightful case it would be, if only it were somebody else's! I wish I hadn't got that lecture this morning. Shall I send a notice that I cannot come to-day? No, I've never missed one yet, and I'll contrive to get through it somehow. Fortunately, I'm not on very familiar terms with my class, so there's not likely to be anything said or done that I can't easily prepare myself for. I must think the whole business well out, and keep my volition a good two minutes ahead of the time for acting. I have more than two hours yet in which to settle all my plans. But I must be careful that I don't think my programme out too intensely, and that my thoughts don't become wishes, or I shall be going through the whole lecture prematurely. I really think that when I have given my lecture I will return here at once, and take that opiate, and give directions that I am not to be disturbed till to-morrow morning. Now I must think about having a wash and a brush, and then about getting some breakfast."

The Demonstrator found no great difficulty in making his toilet, for he had been accustomed to thinking out small details, and so he accurately rehearsed in his mind all the separate little acts which go to make up the several necessary operations.

The question of breakfast had next to be considered. Doctor Precious felt nervously anxious to prevent his strange condition

from becoming known to others, and he had now to leave the solitude of his bedroom and face the world, though for the present that would be represented only by his landlady's maid-of-all-work. The Demonstrator always prepared his own coffee, and all that the girl had to do was to bring up his two rashers of bacon when she heard him ring his bell. Doctor Precious now willed to leave his bedroom and go up to the bell-rope in the room where his breakfast was laid. In a couple of minutes his legs began to move, and quickly brought him into smart collision with the door. He had unfortunately forgotten to wish to open it. This was careless, and not like him. The consequences were painful, and the Demonstrator of Anatomy would have appeared in a very ridiculous light if there had been anybody there to see him. His forehead bumped heavily against the upper part of the door, and remained in close contact with it as though it had stuck there, while his feet kicked the lower part of it several times in their attempts to make further progress. Then they ceased to move, and Doctor Precious seemed to be adhering to the door like a limpet to a rock. This little accident considerably disconcerted him, and he remained closely pressed against the door for some moments before venturing to wish to make any further movement. He saw the necessity of the most careful forethought and consideration before committing himself to a definite act of volition, and he was determined to avoid any more such awkward mistakes as this in the future.

Thinking out beforehand every little detail, he now succeeded in reaching the bell-rope without further accident. Then, before formulating the wish to pull it, he stood thinking for a moment or two, planning a series of little acts which should enable him to preserve a natural appearance during the minute or so that the servant would be in the room. He never spoke to her unless he had some order to give her, and the thought of his taciturn and reserved habits once more afforded him satisfaction.

When the girl came up into the room with the Demonstrator's dish of bacon, she found Doctor Precious sitting at a little table in front of the window with his back turned towards her. He was bending over a book, and seemed to be reading it intently. But it was only the words immediately under his eyes that he could see, for his pupils remained rigidly fixed,

and could not be made to move without the inevitable two minutes' notice. The girl put down the bacon, said "Your breakfast is ready, sir," and then left the room. Doctor Precious gave a mental sigh of relief.

It was a difficult task that he had now before him. How could he possibly calculate beforehand the exact amount of mastication that each mouthful of his bread and bacon would require? He sat thinking over this awkward problem for some time after he had succeeded in making his coffee. He knew quite well that his jaws would work up and down only just so many times as he willed they should do two minutes previously, and that if he miscalculated the amount of mastication that would be necessary, he would either be left with his mouth half-full for a couple of minutes till he could persuade his refractory mechanism to begin to work again, or his jaws would go on rising and falling in a ridiculous and uncomfortable fashion when there was nothing left for them to chew.

To describe that probably unparalleled breakfast in detail would weary the reader as much as the actual experience and enduring of it wearied Simeon Precious. After struggling resolutely on for some time against the difficulties of the task, his throat now making convulsive attempts to swallow when there was nothing for it to swallow, and now remaining obstinately sullen and rigid when his mouth was full of hot coffee or bacon, the disheartened Demonstrator at last ceased from further attempts in disgust, and left half his breakfast unconsumed.

His recent experience had considerably lessened his confidence in himself, and Doctor Precious now felt painfully troubled at the thought of lecturing. He comforted himself, however, with the reflection that he could rehearse beforehand exactly what he was going to say; and he resolved to do so at least twice, a plan which he thought would not only prevent awkward mishaps, but would, if the rehearsals were successful, greatly serve to restore his confidence in himself, and this, he felt, would be half the battle. He would cut the lecture very short, he said to himself, and would get back to his rooms again with as little delay as possible. Fortunately, he need perform nothing in the way of demonstration or operation; he had nothing to do but to talk. He noted down, after due notice to his fingers, an outline of what he

intended to say, and then commenced to mentally fill in the details. When he had fully thought out the whole of his lecture, he placed his written notes in front of him, and then formulated the wish to utter the lecture aloud. After a lapse of two minutes, and when he had already mentally rehearsed several sentences of it, his lips began to move and gave utterance to the first sentence. So it was until the Demonstrator had finished his discourse; his mind was always several sentences in advance of his lips. This, however, caused him no serious trouble, for his lips moved quite automatically, and the mechanical uttering of the words in no way interfered with the definite formulating of his thoughts. He was getting, too, a little more accustomed to the anomalous derangement of the twin mechanisms that respectively regulated his volition and action, and he felt renewed confidence in his ability to get through his morning's duty without any one discovering that there was anything wrong with him. Then he would at once return to his rooms, and keep his secret till the next morning, at any rate, by which time he hoped that he would be able to bring mind and body back into exact synchronism again.

Doctor Precious now rehearsed the whole of his lecture for a second time. He got through it without any hitch, and felt quite prepared for his coming ordeal when he would have to deliver it before his class. He sat thinking for some time as to the best way of getting to the lecture-room. At first he thought of taking a cab, but then he reflected that he could not exactly forecast the time of his arrival, and that, in default of the necessary two minutes' notice, troublesome difficulties might arise about getting out and paying his fare. He settled that he would walk as usual. He carefully planned his route, and then set out, keeping his eyes bent down, as he passed along the streets, to avoid as far as possible the glance of any one he knew.

To walk along even the quieter streets of a quiet town was not a task to be lightly undertaken by one in Doctor Precious's strange condition. When once he had formulated his wishes and his limbs had begun to carry them out, he could not turn aside or stop. Not the slightest deviation from the previously-settled plan was possible without a two minutes' notice to his body. The Demonstrator was painfully conscious of this, and he adopted a

very slow pace in order to lessen the chances of collision. He was terribly afraid lest any one should want to stop him for a few moments' conversation, for he knew that he could neither stay his steps nor speak a single word without the inevitable interval between volition and deed. His unsocial and reserved habits, however, again stood him in good stead, and he reached the lecture-room without meeting any one who cared to greet him or have a moment's chat with him. He had made a point of getting there very early, before any of his class should have arrived. He wanted to have a few minutes alone in which he might privately prepare himself for the coming ordeal, and wind up, as it were, his vocal machinery. He took his seat at his desk, and bent his head over his notes in an attitude of deep study. He wished to appear as absorbed as possible, in order to preserve himself from all chance greetings or remarks. He was beginning to feel painfully troubled and nervous again, and he regretted that he had not yielded to his first impulse and postponed the lecture. It was too late to do so now. At any rate the Demonstrator felt too much unstrung and too distrustful of himself to dare to deviate from the plans which he had laid down. It would be better, he felt, to make the effort to deliver the lecture than to run the risk which would come of making excuses and entering into fictitious explanations without having time to maturely think them over and carefully formulate them.

Presently the Demonstrator's class began to assemble. Doctor Precious was feeling terribly troubled. As soon as he heard the preliminary whir-r-r, which notified the near approach of the striking of the hour, he willed to raise his head and commence his lecture.

Soon after the hour had struck, the Demonstrator's head sprang up with the jerky movement of a mechanical wax-figure, and his lips began to work. He gabbled through his lecture without the slightest inflection of tone and without the least motion of hand or head. Then he stopped and drooped his head again with the same jerky movement with which

he had raised it to commence his lecture. Now that the dreaded ordeal was well over, Doctor Precious felt even more confused and troubled than he had done while it had yet to be gone through. His mind seemed to be growing clogged and to be getting beyond his control. He sat perfectly motionless till his class left the lecture-hall, and then by a violent effort of will he formulated the wish to return to his rooms. His body reluctantly obeyed his commands, and, as the Demonstrator gradually neared his lodgings, he grew more and more afraid that he would never reach them, and that before he could do so his mind would cease to have any influence or power of control over his body.

Summoning up all the little will-force that was left to him, he at last succeeded in arriving at his rooms with a swimming brain and a reeling frame. He had just sufficient power of volition and strength of body left to enable him to open the door of his bedroom; but he had scarcely entered the little room when he fell heavily on to the floor just where he had fallen on the previous night.

It was a fortnight later when Doctor Precious again recovered consciousness. He awoke to find himself in bed under the supervision of a nurse from the hospital. When he was allowed to talk, he learned that, a couple of weeks previously, he had been found lying insensible on the floor of his bedroom, and that he was now just recovering from a sharp attack of brain-fever. To his intense, though unexpressed satisfaction, he found that his mind and body were in exact synchronism again. Partly owing to the time which had elapsed since the commencement of his fever, and partly owing to the unwillingness he felt to institute enquiries which might perhaps lead to making a matter of public knowledge and gossip that which he hoped he had been able to conceal from every one but himself, he was never quite able to thoroughly satisfy himself whether the events of that strange morning were actual facts, or merely the wild dreamings of his fever-racked brain.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

"How I'm to get into it, my dear, I don't know," said Lady Judith to Madge, as together they inspected an elaborate arrangement of crimson satin and lace sent down by her London milliner. "They've absolutely squeezed me into a yard at the waist, as if I were trying to make myself into a girl in her teens, when they know perfectly well that I've been a yard and an inch for the past fifteen years!"

It was the morning of Sir Peter's birthday; bells were ringing from Saint Cuthbert's old tower; the district generally had broken out into flags, triumphal arches, best clothes, and a whole holiday. A delightful air of liveliness and bustle pervaded the Castle; guests were arriving by every train, the well-trained servants went about with a more animated tread, as if their minutes were of value to them. As for Sir Peter, rosy and radiant, he was here, there, everywhere, now at the front of the house, now at the back; yet, strange to say, whenever he was wanted he was nowhere to be found. Servants seemed to be perpetually running after him—in at doors, out at windows—his movements being so rapid that it was rather a difficult matter to overtake them.

"If he'd only keep in one room for half-an-hour we should all know what we're about," sighed Lady Judith, when she had finished her lament over her dress.

"Madge, is it going to rain, do you think?" said Sir Peter, at that moment

putting his head inside the dressing-room door.

"Good gracious! You were in the garden half-a-minute ago. I saw you myself superintending the rolling of the gravel paths, or the lawn-mowing, or perhaps it was the stoning of the flower-beds!" cried Lady Judith sarcastically.

The weather appeared to be very much on Sir Peter's mind that day. It was among the few things utterly beyond his superintendence, and he was proportionately anxious on the matter.

"Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter," sounded Lance's voice at that moment outside the door. "Are you anywhere to be found? You are as difficult to catch as the fluff off a dandelion; I've sent half-a-dozen servants hunting all over the grounds for you, and now I hear your voice up here!"

"Wanted again! Another deputation?" said Sir Peter gleefully. "Dear me, dear me! What with one thing and another, I shall be worn to fiddle-strings before the day's over! The end of it will be I shall have to give up keeping my birthdays, they'll be too much for me—eh, Madge?"

Give up keeping his birthday! There was but little fear of Sir Peter doing that till he gave up himself and went into his grave.

Madge had come downstairs in the morning with such a white, tired look on her face that every one had overwhelmed her with enquiries as to headache, neuralgia, or such possible ailments. Later on in the day, however, as the demands on her time increased with the arrival of the guests, her cheeks grew so flushed and her eyes so bright, that people altered their minds and complimented her on her good looks.

Between thirty and forty of the invited guests were to be accommodated at the

Castle on a two or three days' visit. Lady Brabazon and other near neighbours had filled their houses in anticipation of the yearly festivity. The inn at Lower Upton had been hired from top to bottom by Sir Peter, and special trains were to run throughout the night from Carstairs for late arriving or early departing guests.

Young Mrs. Cohen was always greatly in request at this annual festivity. Naturally enough she was looked upon as Lady Judith's representative, and as it was a much less-fatiguing matter to carry on conversation with her than with the elder lady, she frequently found herself overburthened with confidences intended for Lady Judith's ear.

Even Miss Shore followed suit in this matter.

"Will you tell Lady Judith how grateful I am to her for her handsome present," said that young lady's voice suddenly over Madge's shoulder. "I never can make her understand me—she asks me always 'Are you Scotch or Welsh?'"

Madge was having a brief five minutes' rest in the library, where she knew she would be within call if wanted, and where was her only chance of quiet if such were to be had that day.

She started at the sound of Miss Shore's voice, shrinking from the young girl as heretofore Miss Shore had shrunk from her.

Miss Shore repeated her request:

"Will you thank Lady Judith for the beautiful dress she sent me yesterday by her maid, and for the help she allowed her maid to give me in arranging it?"

Madge immediately guessed the truth of the matter, and giving honour to whom honour was due, saw Sir Peter's ministering hand alike in the manner as in the matter of the gift.

"It is Sir Peter who should be thanked, I think," she said, coldly.

A sudden idea occurred to her.

"Now that I have the opportunity of asking, will you tell me how much I am in your debt for the picture you have been good enough to paint?" she asked, a little formally.

Miss Shore coloured slightly.

"The pictures are not finished; one is only half done," she answered.

"If you do not mind, I would like to pay for the one that is finished—for the two if you like. It makes no difference to me."

Again Miss Shore flushed. Madge, in

her own mind, could not help contrasting this with a former conversation she had had with this young lady on the subject of pictures. Then she had been warmth, and Miss Shore had been ice. Now, the cases seemed reversed.

"It is as you like," she began, hesitatingly.

"Twenty, thirty, forty pounds?" queried Madge:

"Oh no, no," exclaimed the girl. "I could not—would not——"

"I dare say you will like it in gold?" interrupted Madge. "I haven't so much loose money now. I will ask Sir Peter to lend me some. Wait here, please, till I return."

But to find Sir Peter was a thing not easy to accomplish, although not a minute before he had put his head inside the door, and had told her that, "The wind was getting round to the south-west." Madge, however, appeared to have strong reasons for wishing to discharge her debt. She hunted high, and she hunted low, and eventually lighted upon Mr. Stubbs, who, it may be inferred, from the ready manner with which he supplied her with gold, had already changed her cheque for a hundred pounds.

Miss Shore was not alone when Madge returned to the library. A screen shut the door off from the rest of the room. As she entered behind this screen, Madge heard her voice concluding a sentence:

"I will thank Heaven when the evening is ended!"

To which Lance's voice replied laughingly:

"Have you been looking at the stars again? I would like to tell them to mind their own business, and not trouble themselves with our affairs. But it's the beginning, not the end, of the evening I want to talk about—the first valse, don't forget—you've promised to give it me."

The last sentence was said, not whispered, as Madge crossed the room towards them.

"Miss Shore believes in the ruling of the planets, Madge, in these days of steam-engines and electric-lighting! Can such a thing be credited?"

Madge did not reply. Instead, she began counting her sovereigns on a table in front of Miss Shore.

"Ten, twenty, twenty-five," she said.

Miss Shore laid her hands over the gold. They were trembling; her face was flushing; her eyes seemed—could it be possible!—swimming.

"No, I will only take ten. I would not take that, only——" she broke off abruptly.

"I do believe the older one gets, the younger one feels," said Sir Peter's voice, gradually approaching from behind the screen. "Now, isn't this sweet—isn't this touching, I ask you—'Presented, by the children of the infant-school of Saint Cuthbert's, to Sir Peter Critchett, as an expression of their love and duty.' That's what the label attached says. Now, I ask you all, isn't it worth being sixty-three years of age to receive such a tribute as this?"

He stood in the middle of the room with an enormous nosegay in his hand. It was entirely composed of cottage-garden flowers, such as orange-lilies, columbines, marigolds, and in size was about the circumference of a small umbrella.

He had evidently been repeatedly enjoying the fragrance of the flowers, for a portion of the pollen of the lilies was transferred to the tip of his nose.

Sir Peter could scarcely have expected an affirmative answer to his question from any one of those three young people assembled there. He rarely, however, expected answers of any sort. He walked up and down the room about half-a-dozen times; asked Miss Shore a variety of questions concerning her sketches; catechised Lance as to the dancing capabilities of certain of the younger men who had arrived that morning; finally directed Madge's attention to the generally cloudy appearance of the heavens; and then vanished.

All this in about a minute and a half.

Madge recommenced counting her sovereigns.

Lance made an impatient movement, and walked away to the window.

Miss Shore stood for a moment looking from the gold to Madge's face, from Madge's face to the gold.

Madge grew restless under those furtive yet questioning glances.

"Shall I take this gold from you?" they seemed to ask. "Do you wish me well? Can I trust you?"

"There goes Lancelot Clive, but for the special interposition of Providence," said Lance suddenly, from the window recess where he stood looking out into the grounds.

Madge's eyes followed his and rested upon a groom coming up to the house in company with a gamekeeper.

"Where, who, which?" she asked, a little bewildered.

"Whichever of the two you like. Upon my life, Madge, if I were turned out into the world to-morrow to get my own living, I don't know how I should do it except by grooming or gamekeeping!" he answered as he left the room.

Could it have been the sight of Miss Shore being paid for her pictures that had aroused in him the thought that he had even less capacity for earning a decent livelihood than she; or had he been suddenly seized with an altogether inexplicable wish to be independent of Sir Peter's bounty and patronage?

But whatever might have given rise to the thought, Madge felt that there was no gainsaying the truth of it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I FEEL like a camel threading a needle," said Lady Judith, in her voluminous crimson draperies, entering the drawing-room where Madge was already seated. "Madge, my dear, are you going to throw open your little sitting-room to-night? I suppose your wall decorations are finished by this time?"

Dinner—on this particular night a stupendous affair—was over; guests had retired to their rooms to put finishing touches to their ball toilettes. Lance and sundry other of the younger men lounged on the terrace outside in the soft early night, waiting for the dancing to begin. Sir Peter, as usual, was everywhere that he was not wanted to be, nowhere that he ought to have been. Madge and Lady Judith, ready to do the honours of the evening, were having a little chat together, or, in other words, Lady Judith was turning to the best account a quiet five minutes that gave her all to herself a silent if not an attentive listener.

Dancing was to be in the big inner hall, where "the eight-and-twenty Critchetts looked down," with glazed eyes and varnished smiles, on banks of exotics and ferns specially arranged to grace the evening's festivities.

Madge's octagon sitting-room was little more than a big recess opening off this hall. She replied, at the top of her voice, to Lady Judith's query, that, "when the hall grew unbearably hot she would throw open her boudoir for fans and flirtation."

Not a word did Lady Judith hear; she had fallen upon another subject now!

"Sir Peter tells me that Lance and he went to Claire's and ordered a smart ball-

dress for Miss Shore," she said, wielding with great energy a fan that might have suited Titanic fingers.

Madge had to unfold her own fan in self-defence, and hold it as a screen sideways to her forehead, for her curls were flying hither and thither in all directions.

"It seems to me a far-fetched idea," Lady Judith went on, "to expect the young lady to make her appearance at all to-night! But then every one knows that Sir Peter's ideas are——"

"Madge," said Sir Peter, at that moment appearing at one of the long French windows, "I don't believe it will rain after all! But will there be a moon to-night—that's what I want to know—is there an almanack anywhere handy?"

"Uncle Peter!" said Lance, appearing behind the old gentleman with the big nosegay of cottage flowers in his hand, "you've left your button-hole behind you!" Then he turned to Madge, "Isn't it time the fiddlers struck up! Lovely visions in clouds of tulle and lace are beginning to descend the stairs!"

Madge, on her way to the ball-room, stopped a moment to give an order to a servant. It was to see that the candelabra in her octagon boudoir were lighted, and that the curtains which overhung the doorway were kept closely drawn.

Sir Peter, as might have been expected, considered it incumbent on him to open the ball. He chose for his partner in the first quadrille a Dowager Countess, about half-a-dozen years younger than himself.

"Now," he said with a deprecating air, as he led the lady to her place at the top of the room, "I'm sure if the choice had been given us, you and I would much sooner have been in our beds than footing it here with the young people."

But to Madge he whispered when in the course of "flirtation figure," it fell to his lot to guide her through the dance, "If the choice had been given to me I would have had you for a partner, my dear—and isn't the music horribly slow? I must speak to the bandmaster."

Lance and Madge were partners in this quadrille.

"A duty dance!" said Madge to herself bitterly, as she thought of dances in days gone by when his eyes had looked into hers their tale of boyish first love.

"That'll be a match, not a doubt," she heard one elderly chaperon whisper to another. The whisper came inopportunistly enough on the heels of her thought. She

glanced furtively with flushing cheeks at Lance, wondering if he had heard it. His face, however, told no tale save that of eager expectancy as, turned towards the door, it watched the stream of guests flow in.

That long, low-ceiled hall presented a gay pageant. "A wind-waved tulip bed" it seemed, brilliant with swaying colours under soft, bright light.

Madge, looking up and down the ranks of young happy faces there, thought that her own face must have shown strangely haggard and wan among them all, if one quarter of her thoughts were written upon it. But a casual glance into a mirror undeceived her, and she started back amazed at her own presentment.

It seemed as if for the evening a certain wild bizarre beauty had been granted to her. Her eyes were brilliant; her cheeks glowed; a reckless, defiant gaiety seemed to have taken possession of her. In her dress of pale green, all ablaze with rubies and diamonds, one might almost have fancied her

A cross between
A gipsy and a fairy queen,

who for the evening had condescended to quit the woodland and don ball-room attire. She danced, she talked, she laughed incessantly, till every one of her partners began to think that young Mrs. Cohen had suddenly developed into a most fascinating creature, and to speculate on his individual chance of winning her affections. But though Madge proved herself a very mistress of the fine art of ball-room fascination, it was her lips that did the work, not her eyes. They were fixed as steadfastly and expectantly on the door as Lance's were, though not with quite the same look in them.

The first valse, the second, the third, had been danced out by the swift young feet. The fourth had begun; Madge, in the midst of the swaying dancers, was saying to herself: "She will not come, she has changed her mind, and perhaps gone to bed," when suddenly she felt rather than saw a grey figure silently glide into the room. If her eyes had been shut she knew she would have felt that grey, cool presence—just as one standing in full sunlight with closed eyes is conscious of a cloud passing athwart the sun. In the brilliant moving through the shadowy grey draperies and the still, white face seemed to show like a patch of moonlight falling cool, clear, apart, into a heated, gas-lighted room.

"Who is that distinguished-looking young lady?" asked Madge's partner, a stalwart young fellow, who seemed to think that the whole art of dancing consisted in letting his partner's feet touch the ground as seldom as possible.

Madge did not answer—did not even hear the question.

"I am tired; I must sit down," she said abruptly. Her partner found a seat for her at once. She speedily, however, found another for herself, a low settee placed immediately beside the dark tapestry curtains which covered the entrance to her octagon boudoir.

There she leaned back against the cushions, watching the dancers as they whirled past—or, rather, watching one pair of dancers from out of the motley throng, for Miss Shore had no sooner entered the hall than Lance had claimed her for his partner, and together they floated along the soft stream of valse melody.

They made a distinguished and handsome couple. Nature had put some of her best workmanship into Lance—had not left him to be fashioned hap-hazard by any of her journeymen. Lithe, and full of grace, he guided his partner as only the lithe and graceful can through the crush of the dancers. The misty grey of the girl's filmy dress floated lightly around them like so much vaporous cloud, out of which looked their two faces—the man's with an unmistakeable look of admiration for his partner in his blue eyes—the woman's with a look of wild, mournful spirituality in her dark grey ones such as is rarely seen out of a picture.

"How cool and comfortable Miss Shore looks when every one else is so remarkably red in the face!" said Sir Peter, bustling up to Madge with a very red face himself, and his right-hand glove split up the back through the energy wherewith he had been shaking hands with every one. Then his voice changed to a confidential whisper. "Madge," he said, "I have just had a polka—a nice quick one—substituted for the lancers, you and I will dance it together, eh?"

Madge pleaded fatigue. Her last partner had danced on castors instead of feet, she said, and she had had to run after him all round the room at six-eight time.

Sir Peter opened his eyes very wide. "Tired! tired!" he repeated blankly. "Why, I've only just begun to feel alive, and to enter into the spirit of the thing!"

"The breeding of young ladies of the present generation is something to wonder at!" said Lady Judith, bearing down upon them at that moment, like a sou'-wester incarnate. "Miss Lottie Brabazon absolutely answers a remark I address to her on her fingers! On her fingers, my dear, if you'll believe such a thing, as if I were as deaf as a post! If young ladies were only taught to speak as I was taught when I was a girl—to take hold of their consonants properly, and to open their mouths wide enough to get their vowels out, their elders would have no difficulty in understanding them!"

All this with her fan going at double speed. She fanned Sir Peter away from Madge's side, as one might fan a moth from the wall, and then fanned him on a little farther into the ball-room, following him up with a string of vigorous questions as to whether another pair of gloves could not be found for him, was it not possible for him to renew his button-hole, and so forth.

But Madge had not heard a syllable of all this. Lance and Miss Shore were at that moment floating past, and their words, like so many sharp stabs, pierced her ear.

"You said this morning," said Lance's voice deep and clear below the waves of waltz melody, "'Would to Heaven to-night were over!' Do you say the same now?"

To which Miss Shore replied in soft, tremulous tones:

"I say now, would to Heaven this night could last for ever—this valse, at least, for anything more like heaven I never knew!"

Madge leaned back on her cushions, her breath coming in short, quick gasps. For a moment all was confusion to her. The room dissolved into a whirling chaos of colour, light, and tuneless music. She pressed her hand over her eyeballs. It was easy enough to shut out the zig-zagging light and colour, but not so easy to muffle the sound of that discordant, jarring waltz. On and on, and on and on it seemed to beat against her very ears in hateful regular rise and fall. Would the feet of those dancers never tire? Had fate conspired with the infernal powers to render Miss Shore's wish a reality, and would this waltz go on aimlessly, endlessly, through eternity?

One after another the dancers yielded to fatigue and sat down, till Lance and Miss Shore had the floor to themselves.

Still the musicians played on. A fascinating sight some would have said, that

handsome man and beautiful young woman rivaling the waves of the sea in rhythm and grace of motion.

One there was leaning back on her cushions, who felt her eyeballs scorched by it, and if she had been called upon to describe an eleventh circle to Dante's *Inferno*, would have said, "Here it is;" for she could have pictured no worse form of torture than to behold eternally the sight which confronted her at that moment.

"It must be now or never, Mrs. Cohen," said Mr. Stubbs's voice suddenly, stealthily, right into her ear.

The music had ceased, and Lance was leading Miss Shore up the room, towards the settee on which Madge was seated.

Madge's eyes, in answer to his whisper, said: "Keep back! Don't dare to come near me to-night!"

Her lips said nothing. She rose from her seat, steadying herself with one hand against the arm of the settee; with her other hand she pulled the cord of the tapestry curtains, laying bare to view the cool, dark, little room, just as Lance and Miss Shore reached her side.

"Here is a tempting little nook!" she said, addressing the two. "What a glorious waltz you have had!"

A tempting little nook indeed it looked. The light from the brilliant hall caught the dark sheen of its polished oak floor, the bright sheen of its yellow silk walls. A large deep sofa and some luxurious low chairs showed in solid outline in the dimness.

"What a jolly room you've made of it!" said Lance, standing back in the doorway to allow the two ladies to pass in before him.

A long, narrow mirror nearly faced the door. On the wall immediately opposite to it hung a picture, lighted on either side by candelabra, and necessarily reflected in all its details in the mirror.

And this is what Miss Shore saw in that mirror, as she stood in the middle of the room, a little in advance of Madge:

A gaunt mountain, standing out in black outline against a stormily-purple sky, with a stone-built chalet in a bowery garden at its base. And high over the mountain there shone out one star of intense metallic brightness.

A BOOK OF THE CIRCUS.

CERTAINLY, you will go to the Paris Exhibition, 1889, although you may not approve the centenary chosen. I cannot

promise that you will see the top of the Eiffel tower—which is not a tower, but only a scaffolding—but you will see the basement and some of the superstructure; for, in case of a hitch in the upper storey they won't have time to grub it up.

You will indulge in a long day's miscellaneous sight-seeing, making good use of your eyes, improving your mind, and fatiguing your legs. After absorbing as much promiscuous information as you can take in at once, you will think of dinner, which you will have richly earned. Better is it not to restore your strength on the spot—lest the tower should take it, not into its head, for it won't have any, but into its body, to fall while you are in full enjoyment of your repast—but return to Paris, where you may dine well and reasonably, if you know where to go, or cheaply and badly, without taking any trouble.

Having accomplished your restauration, you are confronted by the difficulty: "What to do with the rest of the day?" It is too early to go to bed, unless you have been so foolish as to travel in an excursion train at reduced fares—a "train de plaisir," forsooth—all the previous night.

Somebody will suggest: "They are playing one of Racine's tragedies at the Théâtre Français, with stars in all the characters; or you may prefer a most interesting sensational spectacular drama, with gorgeous scenery, costumes, and the rest, at the Porte Saint Martin. At the Gymnase, Alexandre Dumas the Younger is working out one of his social and moral problems by an illustration embodied in dramatic form."

But, with your intellect already overworked, will you care to listen to unfamiliar verse and lofty phrases in a foreign language? to follow the incidents of a complicated plot, or to weigh the value of arguments whose soundness you more than doubt? No, after your hard day's exhibitioning, that would be anything but a relief.

A book which has just come out* gives me the hint to send you to the circus. At eight, to a minute, the performance begins; at ten, to a second, all is over. In five minutes, or less, the building is cleared of the last spectator, so ready and convenient are the means of exit. Thence, you can betake yourself straight to your

* "Le Cirque, à Pied et à Cheval," par A. J. Daleme, Paris; à La Librairie Illustrée, 7, Rue du Croissant.

rest—unless the once more hungry stomach begs for a little bit of supper first.

M. Dalcème's enthusiastic reasons for patronising "Le Cirque" are stronger than any that I can urge. The deuce take the theatres, he says, with their long-winded speeches, their wooden landscapes, their wearisome rigmaroles, where half a pint of pison, as Ducrow used to say, is diluted to fill out five long acts. Away with the stage, the footlights, and the prompter. Words! words! nothing but words! As if gesture and action were worthless superfluities, although they have the inappreciable advantage of being understood throughout every latitude and degree of sublunary intellect. If you want a true volapuk, there it is, giving you no trouble to follow the dialogue, and setting up no pretensions to correct people's morals.

Balzac was never tired of admiring a skilled lady horse-rider's agility and grace. He thought the "écuyère," in the plenitude of her powers, superior to all the glories of song, dance, or dramatic art, whether exhibited by Taglioni, Rachel, or Cinti-Damoreau—especially as, every time she wins applause, she runs the risk of breaking her neck.

But the signification of an equestrian scene is only another phase of theatrical convention, which varies according to circumstances. For a circus is a theatre whose stage is in the middle, with the audience all round it.

The young lady gambolling on the flat white saddle, or on the horse's bare back, is no more her actual self than Patti is in the *Bride of Lammermoor*, or Sarah Bernhardt in *La Tosca*. Coquetry, love, terror, madness, are interpreted by the gestures and the eyes. Leander will express his soft, "I love you," by outstretched arms, instead of by word of mouth; Don Juan will not be the less seductive because he practises his wicked arts at a canter. The horse, however, will claim his share of the triumph, which he knows to be his, by right.

And now, exactly as, to eat stewed hare, you must first of all procure a hare, so, to exhibit feats of horsemanship, you must begin by constructing a circus. And equestrian architecture is guided by principles which deserve to be codified.

You take, and leave unoccupied, a flat surface of ground having a diameter of exactly thirteen metres, or forty-two feet, six-tenths and four-hundredths of a foot English, the regulation size of the arena,

which must never be departed from—not thirteen metres three-quarters, nor twelve metres and a half, but thirteen metres, rigorously to a centimètre. In this case, at least, the number thirteen is not unlucky, but just the contrary.

The fixed dimensions of the arena comply with a twofold exigence—the requirements of the man and the habits of the animal. Both are inveterate wanderers from town to town. Wherever they go, they carry with them an absolute identity of movement, which secures for an exercise its mathematical and mechanical precision. Neither the horse, nor probably his riders, know centripetal and centrifugal forces, even by name; but practice enables them to measure those forces accurately and to keep them in exact equilibrium with their speed.

In circuses of invariable dimensions, the artists, biped and quadruped, are everywhere at home. On the same identical extent of sand or sawdust, a false movement is never made by experienced performers. The horse knows his business and fulfils it without hesitation; he is not put out by having to act his part under unaccustomed conditions. And he is proud of having acted it well. There are horses who take all the applause for themselves, and want to treat the public to an encore before it is asked for. The rider may urge them to make their exit; they will strive to linger before their admirers a little longer.

For the circus develops a horse's intellectual capabilities, besides improving his behaviour and manners. Why should speed be the only quality aimed at by those who profess to improve the breed? The Circus is not inferior to the Turf in its aims, certainly not in its practices.

The director of a circus, according to the Dutchman Carré, ought himself to educate his horses—for every horse is teachable—and allow nobody else to present his trained steeds before the public. It seems, indeed, no easy task to take an uncouth rustic quadruped and convert him into a polished dandy; yet Charles Franci showed its possibility with Regent. Good sense and patience are the passwords to success. If gentleness fails, it will be time enough to have recourse to rigour. But be careful to let no needless severity exasperate the animal's innate sense of justice.

A first-rate French horseman, the Com-mandant Lunel, invented in the Crimea an

instantaneous method of breaking horses. He bought them by troops, mostly in an all but wild condition. The necessity of rendering them serviceable at once brought about the adoption of a "hippo-lasso," a complication of straps and thongs, in which the rebellious subject was suddenly entangled and held as fast as if in a vice, paralysed, subdued without escape.

In the circus, instantaneousness would serve for nothing. The horse is a disciple who must be taught his a, b, c, letter by letter, slowly, deliberately, methodically. To restrain him, there is the tether; to excite him, the "chambrière," or long circus-whip; to direct him, the spoken word.

It took Louis Fernando not less than a whole year to accomplish the reputed impossible task of taming and mastering Barbare, a furious mare whom no one could approach without fear and trembling. Her owner, giving up the hope of doing anything with her, was about to send her to the knacker's.

"A good-for-nothing brute," he said, "who will neither submit to be mounted nor harnessed."

"Very well," Fernando answered; "you will see. One of these days, we shall make her perform at liberty."

And this mare, nervous up to epilepsy, impressionable up to madness, whom ten men could not hold from striding over the circus boundary, and dancing on the velvet seats—this savage beast, with haggard eyes and fiery nostrils, became little by little the obedient slave of her master's slightest signal or movement.

The above-named French officer had a companion brute to Barbare in Mercure, a Norman horse, whose sole accomplishments were biting, kicking, and rearing. He never went out of the barrack-yard, where the only work he did was to drag a water-cart.

In a few months, Mercure acquired the docility and cleverness displayed by horses of the "haute école," polkaing and waltzing in perfect time, executing ten galloping movements within the length of a yard, running round the Champ de Mars in less than six minutes, and beating the best trotters of the Bois de Boulogne. Neither prancing, pawing the ground, pirouetting, nor the Spanish step, had any mysteries for him. He would fetch a handkerchief, or point out accurately the loveliest young woman in the audience.

This transformation was fortunate for

him, because it secured him ease and independence in his declining years.

When he attained the age of retiring from business, M. Lunel took him to a neighbouring fair to sell him. A few purchasers looked at him; one of them made an offer.

"Very good," said the vendor; "but how do you mean to employ this horse?"

"Ma foi! he will drag one of my luggage-carts."

"Mercure drag a luggage-cart! Never! But who are you to venture such a proposal?"

"I am Bazola, the circus manager."

"A manager with only half an eye. You have a prize within reach, and can't stretch out your hand to grasp it!"

"A real prize? Where? How? What do you mean?"

Whereupon, the professor of horse-breaking gave a description of his pupil's talents—during which, Bazola's eyes opened wider and wider.

"I take the animal," he said at last.

"He shall perform in my circus."

"But not too long at a time."

"Nevertheless, when I have paid for him——"

"You shall not pay for him. I give him to you, gratis—on two conditions: first, that you shall feed him well; secondly, that he shall never be overworked."

"Done! A bargain; and thank you very much."

Lunel superintended in person the débuts of the new performer, which proved a great success.

A few months afterwards, Bazola and his troop rang at the gate of the Château de Chagny, where Lunel resided.

"Ah, monsieur, how kind you have been! What a lucky find!"

"Mercure, you mean?"

"Certainly, monsieur. Make your mind easy. There is no stint about his oats. And as to fatigue, only look here," pointing to a big covered waggon, painted red and relieved with gold.

"What may that be?"

"Mercure's conveyance, built expressly for him—my breadwinner, you understand. Naturally, I take the greatest care of him. He never travels on foot nor performs half-an-hour per day."

Thus, instead of dragging a luggage-cart, Mercure rode in his carriage. Never did horse receive such honours since Caligula made his horse a Consul.

In circus life, though falls must be

reckoned with, it is still possible to alight at least upon one leg. Witness the history of Eveline Pernod.

On one of the grand boulevards in Paris, is a café described as "palatial." Even its counter, splendid with carved wood, brass chasings, and twining arabesques, looks as if it were a monarch's seat. The illusion would be complete if every counter were occupied like that where Eveline reigned a few years ago.

She was a Queen after her fashion—Queen by beauty and distinction. In spite of her surroundings of grog and beer glasses, you would have taken her for a lovely Peri. Whether replenishing her crystal flagons, or arranging symmetrical sugar on silver salvers, or bending over her books to enter her receipts, she was the cynosure of every eye.

With strict impartiality, she bestowed the same amenities on all her admirers, making an equitable distribution of her smiles. No one would ever have been able to boast of obtaining any preference, had not her eye occasionally wandered, with a complaisance which in the end excited jealousies, in the direction of the table at which was seated, morning and evening, Monsieur Félicien R. For Félicien R. was not like other suitors; his intentions aimed at more than a fugitive attachment. There are symptoms respecting which a woman is never mistaken. Eveline divined a serious inclination from the moment when, for the first time, after paying his account, he took leave, his voice slightly trembling with emotion, with the words: "Mademoiselle, I have the honour to lay my homage at your feet."

Afterwards, he daily occupied the place nearest to the lovely cashier. In sunlight, by gaslight, in summer, and winter, he completed his payments with the invariable formula, "Mademoiselle, I have the honour to lay my homage at your feet."

Félicien R.'s methodic regularity seemed as if it were the accomplishment of an imperative duty. The truth is, that he was a bureaucrat, as much through instinct as by profession. Gifted with solid qualities, he held an enviable place in an important office. His seriousness was not incompatible with mirth, at the same time that his manners became the dignity of a "Chef de Bureau" whose grey hairs would show themselves before very long.

Such a personage was not displeasing to Eveline. Félicien perceived it, and was

thereby emboldened to exchange a few remarks about this or that; but their conversations always ended by the presentation of his respectful homage.

Evidently, Monsieur R., in spite of his experience, was only a superficial observer; otherwise, he would have remarked the blush which overspread Mademoiselle Pernod's cheeks every time that he complimented her with the same parting salute.

Such a persistent continuance of devotion implied something more than civility. It betrayed a warmer sentiment. Eveline blushed more and more deeply. Félicien attributed her blushes to satisfaction, for decidedly she did not repel his assiduities. On the contrary, they appeared to him to be so welcome, that he ventured to open his usual phrase with "Dear Mademoiselle Eveline——"

Months passed in this way; but at last he was obliged to summon up courage and conquer his natural timidity. As the fair cashier was an orphan, he could not address himself to her parents, but had to ask her hand of her own proper self. For that grave step, he awaited one day till the very last customer had departed.

That evening, Mademoiselle Eveline's lips wore a radiant smile, her cheeks were brilliant scarlet. She sat restless on her throne, rose, sat down again, and then, with a presentiment of what was coming, stepped forward.

It was the first time Félicien had seen her descend from her platform. It was consequently the first time he could understand why she blushed every time he took his leave. The feet, before which such frequent homage had been laid, were reduced to one. The poor demoiselle de comptoir had a wooden leg.

A wooden leg? Well, yes! And she made no attempt to hide it. The moment was too decisive. She thought it honest, before allowing him to compromise himself, to show herself as she really was. The defect had been caused by a fall in a circus, where she had been one of the boldest riders—a frightful fall, necessitating amputation.

Félicien now knew all. Should he persevere in his offer of marriage? The decision was left to his unfettered choice. He did decide, with the loyalty of a gallant man and the delicacy of an upright conscience.

Eveline appeared to him dearer than ever. If she had only one foot, it was a

model of beauty. The Chef de Bureau, therefore, would not retract. He made her happy, and was happy himself. Eveline is a pattern for wives. Félicien adores her as when he first saw her. Only he has modified his profession of faith. He now and then murmurs: "My dear Madame R., allow me to lay my homage at your foot."

MORE ABOUT RATS.

THE rat has a great many peculiarities, and stories without end are told of his cunning and 'cuteness; of his penetration and forecast; of his gratitude and kindness. We will dwell, first, on his migratory habits.

Thirty years ago the writer resided in the Weald of Kent. His house stood back from the road with a considerable breadth of lawn and garden in front. Nearly opposite, but standing a good deal further back, were the house and buildings of a great farm. Whoever knew a farmyard without rats? This one was no exception to the rule. But, sometimes, food ran short there, or the rat fraternity required a change of scene and provisions. So they used to make their way over a large arable field, across the turnpike road (there were turnpikes then), and entering a ditch they found their way up to a pond near the back of the writer's house, around which were piggeries, cow-house, stable, hen-house, etc., and out of which, or rather into which, a drain ran from the dairy. These unwelcome visitors were rather partial to the dairy; for the cream on old Smoky's milk was some of the best, Smoky being very much of an Alderney in breed. Sometimes we had a hunt, but the rats had the best of it when they got into the long drains. Once, I remember, a big patriarchal rat got into the meadow ditch, and then turned back into a short drain, out of which he could not come. At last a ferret got hold of him, but had no room to turn to come out; so the writer's arm was stripped, and very soon ferret and rat were brought out, and the rat's peregrinations were at an end.

Not far from the Didcot Station, on the Great Western Railway, are some bleak, almost treeless downs, dotted here and there with a farm-house or farm-buildings. Rats have been seen by shepherds in the early morning, marching in long lines from one set of buildings to another. The corn having been thrashed in one place, they

were marching off to another, as if guided by unerring instinct. A medical gentleman, who lived in the neighbourhood of these downs, relates that, on one occasion, preparations had been made to ferret out and destroy all the rats in a certain barn. The day was fixed and the morning came, the company assembled; men with big sticks, ferrets, dogs, and all; but, strange to say, not a rat was to be found. The ferrets poked in and out of the holes, the dogs routed in the straw, and the men brandished their sticks, but all in vain; not a single rat made his appearance; they were all gone. The migration of the rats was either a mere coincidence, or else some of the wisecracs among them had noticed the preparations and guessed at their purpose, and had communicated the intelligence to the rat community, and so they evacuated the fortress before the storming party were ready for the attack. The gentleman afterwards ascertained that a labourer had met, early in the morning of the day when the hunt was to take place, a whole regiment of rats, marching along the bottom from the vacated barn to another some distance away. In confirmation of these migratory habits of the rat, it may be added that a gentleman, driving in a gig one summer morning about three o'clock, met, on the bridge of Kingston-upon-Thames, a large number of rats on the march. He pulled up, and the rats, without apparently taking any notice of him or his gig, filed off right and left, and pursued their journey uninterruptedly.

Rats are very accommodating as to their food. Though they always wash after eating, and contrive to keep their persons clean, however dirty or even filthy may be the ways they travel, they are by no means particular as to their diet. Their taste ranges from the nicest dainties to the veriest garbage. The neighbourhood of slaughter-houses, candle factories, and other places where butcher's offal and other animal refuse would otherwise gather and breed fever, are kept clear of infection by the consumption of the disgusting remains by the numerous rats which harbour around. So that, in reality, they act as scavengers, and are helpful in the matter of the public health. But they do like nice bits, and are even fond of their drops. I have heard of the bones of rats being found in cider barrels when the liquor has been drawn off, but I do not remember to have seen them. But the thing is quite possible, and even likely, as the newly-

filled tubs are left open at the bung-hole for a time that fermentation may be fairly set up. It would benefit, rather than injure the cider—if you only did not know it—for it used to be common to put maize, malt, hops, raisins, or even beef, for the cider to “feed on;” and anything of the kind would soften it.

The tail of a rat comprises a larger number of bones and muscles than does the hand of a man, and while it is very useful to help the creature to spring and climb, it is brought into requisition sometimes to extract wine from bottles, which may have been left uncorked. In this way they sometimes take “more than is good for them.”

There is a story of an old lady who lived in a town in the south-west of England. She was noted for her home-made wine. A cask had been recently made and placed on a shelf in her cellar. A night or two after she was horribly frightened by strange noises proceeding from that apartment. The household was called up, the house was searched, but nothing could be found to account for the disturbance. The next night, as soon as the lights were out and the place was quiet, the dreadful noises were repeated, only with more alarming circumstances. There were sounds of squeaking, crying, knocking, scratching, and of feet pattering about, and they continued the whole of the night. The old lady lay in bed with her candle burning, pale and sleepless with alarm; now muttering her prayers, and then half determined to fire off the rusty old blunderbuss that hung over the chimney-piece. At length the morning broke, and the cock crew, when ghosts of all kinds find it convenient to disappear. To the old lady's intense relief, the noises ceased, and she solaced herself with sleep. The next night great preparations were made. Farm-servants, armed with pitchforks, slept in the house; the maids took the dinner-bell and the tinder-box into their room; and the big dog was tied to the hall-table. Night came, and the old lady retired to her room with some loaded horse-pistols for company. Instead of going to bed, she sat in her arm-chair by the fire, listening for the expected and dreaded sounds. But all was silent. Not a sound was heard all night, save the snoring of the serving-men, and the rattling of the dog's chain. The precautions had succeeded; the ghosts were vanquished. At least, so she thought. In the course of a few weeks

the scare passed away, and the whole thing was well-nigh forgotten. One evening, however, when the old lady was entertaining a party of friends, the conversation turned upon domestic matters, butter-making, cheese-making, and wine-making coming under consideration. One lady took occasion to speak highly of her host's home-made, which remark suggested the idea of tasting the last brewing. The maid was sent to the cellar to fetch some, but soon returned, apparently much scared, and out of breath: “Oh—mum—sure—'tis all gone; it is, indeed!” And sure enough it was. The ghosts had drunk it. The empty cask was there, with one side eaten half-way down, and marks of sharp teeth very visible about the bung-hole. The thing was clear. The ghosts were no other than rats, who, having made the pleasant discovery of the wine-tub, and having relished its flavour, had invited their friends and neighbours to a grand all-night's carouse. The strong wine had excited their active brains, and rendered them outrageously drunk, and hence the noises which so alarmed the people of the house, and almost killed their mistress with fright.

A rat is the last creature of which people in general would think of making a pet; but though to most of us he is a pest, and nothing less, to some he has become an amusing pet. The cases we propose to give as instances, show that Mr. Rat, like many quadrupeds and bipeds in general, is capable of improvement.

There was living in London, some years ago, a man who worked hard to get a living for his numerous family as a maker of whips. He was in the habit of cutting a number of strips of leather, oiling and greasing them, and placing them in a box ready for use. These strips frequently disappeared, one by one, nobody knew how. One day, while at work in his shop, he saw a large black rat poking his head out of a hole in one corner of the room. Presently he came out and made his way straight to the box where the strips of leather were placed. In he dived, and almost immediately reappeared with one of the strips, and made his way to his hole. The man determined to catch the thief; so, having obtained a cinder-sieve, which he propped up with a stick, and baited with some cheese, he held the string in hand and awaited the issue. The rat soon made his appearance, smelling about, and was soon attracted to the cheese. Nibbling

away at the nice morsel, the sieve soon fell, and Mr. Rat was caught. The man armed himself with a heavy stick to despatch the prisoner when the sieve was lifted. To his astonishment the rat lay quite still; then, in a few moments, he quietly walked up the man's clothes and rested on the sleeve of his coat, looking up into his face as if pleading for his life. The whip-maker was disarmed, and decided not to kill the rat, but to see whether food placed for him every morning would not divert him from the leather strips. He put the rat down, therefore, and he quietly walked away to his hole. Every morning bread and butter was placed for the rat's breakfast, and with due regularity he came out and partook of it, while the strips of leather remained untouched. The creature soon became quite familiar; he would run about the shop, and even on the work-bench of his master. He would follow him to the stable, picking up the stray grains of corn that fell from the manger, taking care, however, to keep out of the way of the pony's feet. His great delight was to lie basking in the sun in the stable window. But this he did once too often. A neighbour's dog caught sight of him one day, dashed at him through the window, gave him an ugly squeeze and a disagreeable shake, and all was over. The dog walked away with ears and tail erect, but poor Mr. Rat's race was ended.

Another story, which we cite on the authority of the "Quarterly Review," is even more amusing.

The driver of a 'bus, in moving some trusses of hay in his hayloft, found a young rat coiled snugly up in the hay, but very miserable in its appearance. This baby rat was piebald, and the man was induced to take pity on the little creature and carry him home to his children. The children became fond of him; and as they had a little brother named Isaac, they called the rat Ikey. The little creature at once made himself at home, his favourite seat being inside the fender, but he would never occupy it if the hearth was not clean. One day the mistress was cleaning up the hearth, she gave Ikey a push to get out of the way. He at once jumped on to the hob, where he remained, though the fire grew hotter, until the hair on his legs and body was actually singed.

His master taught Ikey a great many tricks, in performing which he seemed to be much delighted. The man grew quite

fond of his pet, and the little creature, at the word of command, "Come along, Ikey," would get into his great-coat pocket when he went out to drive his 'bus. He used to put him into the boot of the 'bus to guard his dinner. The dinner was never touched, excepting when there was plum-pudding, which was too great a temptation for Ikey's virtue; but he always confined himself to the plums. The idle fellows that lurk about the public-houses where the 'bus horses are baited, do not always clearly distinguish between mine and thine, but if any of them attempted to appropriate the dinner of the driver, Ikey would be out of the boot in a moment, and, flying at the thieves, effectually put them to flight.

The father of the late F. T. Buckland, M.A., was for some time Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford. Returning to his rooms late one night, he found a rat running about among his books and geological specimens. He gave chase, but the rat was too quick for him. The battle was renewed several times; but, in the end, the scholar gave up the thought of study that night, and went to bed in the next room. In the morning he was astonished to find something warm lying on his chest. Carefully lifting the bedclothes, he discovered his tormentor of the previous night quietly and snugly ensconced in a fold of the blanket, and taking advantage of the warmth of his two-legged adversary. The two lay looking daggers at each other for some minutes, the one unwilling to leave his warm berth, and the other afraid to put his hand out from under the protection of the coverlid, particularly as the stranger's aspect was anything but friendly, his little sharp teeth and fierce black eyes seeming to say, "Paws off from me, if you please." At length he made a sudden jump off the bed, scuttled away into the next room, and was never seen or heard of afterwards.

Rats are commonly used, it is said, by some barbarous people as food. It is said the taste is not at all disagreeable. Some workmen at a farm-house once had an amusing treat. The story is related by a man who "catches for the Queen at Windsor Castle," for rats, like spiders, "are in Kings' palaces." He says he was out at a farm-house catching, and they put some young rabbits on the fire to broil. While they went elsewhere, some labouring men found out the cooked rabbits and ate them. The next time he went to that farm-house he put some big old rats on the

gridiron, and left them as before. The labourers came, and ate up all the rats, not knowing the difference. But this practical joke brought on a conflict, which did not end pleasantly for either party.

Rats are said to be very plentiful in Paris. During the siege of 1871, that proved an advantage. "Rats were in great demand," says the author of "Cassell's History of the War," though the quarters in which they were caught gave them a very disgusting character. Holes were made in the bed of the sewers, and filled in with "soupe de glucose," a thick and sweet liquid. The rats, attracted by this, were lured into the holes, from which they were unable to escape, and were captured by thousands. A rat, fat from the drains, cost one franc fifty centimes.

Rats are extremely prolific, and were not their enemies very numerous and destructive, they would soon overrun any house, any building, indeed any town or country, where they had once established themselves. It is said that rats will begin to have young when they are four months old, that they will breed every two months, and bring forth eight, ten, or more at a litter. Happily the males predominate over the females in the proportion of three or four to one, and so a check is put on their multiplication. This is a merciful provision, for, according to the testimony of a London rat-catcher, his little dog "Tiny," weighing less than six pounds, had destroyed two thousand, five hundred and twenty-five rats, which, he calculated, would have produced, in three years, no fewer than one thousand, six hundred and thirty-three millions, one hundred and ninety thousand living rats!

SYRINGA.

HER form soft-gowned in purest white ;
A maiden's innocent delight
Upon her sunny face ;
With sweet syringa in her hands,
And twined among her curls, she stands
A type of girlish grace.

It seems but yesterday we said,
"The child grows fast, the bonnie head
Has reached to father's arm ;
She grows apace, her fair, soft eyes
Look forth in rapturous surprise
At life's mysterious charm."

It seems but yesterday, and now
We watch upon her cheek and brow
The swift sweet blushes rise ;
The hand that holds the scented sprays
A token shows, of diamond-blaze,
That love has won our prize.

She wears syringa now, but lo !
Her orange-blossoms are a-blow,
The diamond band will guard
Full soon upon her finger white
The dearer golden symbol bright
Of wedlock's watch and ward.

Ah, child ! with those syringa sprays
Will pass thy careless, girlish days ;
For orange-blossoms bring
With closer love, and fortune fair,
Life's graver work ; and unknown care
Encompasseth the ring.

We hold thee yet, our very own,
Obedient to our look and tone,
But that fast-coming day
That brings the bridal ring and flower
Will rob us of our olden power,
Will take our child away.

Dear heart ! thou dost but choose the lot
Thy mother chose ; we murmur not ;
Thou dost but lay aside,
As once did she, a guarded life,
To wear the blessed name of wife,
In pathways yet untried.

What, tears ? Nay, let us dry them, dear,
For lo ! thy lover draws apear ;
Thou canst be his and ours ;
Ah ! keep us in thine heart a share,
And with his orange-blossoms wear
Our white syringa flowers !

HAMPTON COURT.

THERE are surely more Hampton Courts than one along Thames shore. Can it be the same pile of buildings, the same woods and gardens, that leave such different impressions according to the mood of the visitor, varying with age and temperament, and also depending upon the chance which offers one side of the shield or the other, first, to the view? Gloomy, cheerful, splendid, and mean; a palace for monarchs, or a retreat for elderly dowagers; haunted by memories of high historic note, or associated with recollections of crowds of holiday-keepers; there is something about Hampton Court which seems to change with every changing light in which it is viewed.

From the river gay, with pleasure boats and barges, and presenting on every fine day the aspect of a continuous fête or water frolic, the palace, it must be said, presents rather a dowdy aspect, with its approach of barrack yard and cavalry stables, where troopers in their shirt sleeves are engaged in curry-combing and horse-brushing, and where now and then a bugle-call marks some epoch in the soldiers' monotonous round of duty. Still the military element is not out of keeping, and the sentry pacing up and down by the gateway suggests a thought of the time

when guards were set all round, and passwords given, and the Royal dwelling was encompassed with all the precautions of a military post.

More imposing, perhaps, is the view from the bridge; and here you have the additional advantage that the bridge itself—the ugliest, perhaps, of the many ugly bridges that deface our beautiful river—is taken out of the landscape. Here the mass of buildings that form this really enormous palace—which is said to cover eight acres of ground, and to contain over a thousand rooms—with its lofty enclosing walls, its towers and gateways, and innumerable twisted chimney shafts, shows grandly among luxuriant foliage; its quiet dignity and repose contrasting sharply with the busy lock in the river below, where skiffs, barges, and house-boats are mingled pell-mell, or where sometimes a big pleasure barge fits as tightly as a cork into a bottle—a barge that conveys a whole community of pleasure-seekers to some favoured spot on the river.

Quite another aspect is presented when you reach the place from the other side. The long, shaded avenue of chestnuts in Bushey Park; the stately foliage; the shaded boles of the noble trees; the green glades visible between, with spotted deer browsing peacefully in the sunlight; while Diana's fountain closes the vista, rising from the tranquil pool, where patient disciples of Izaak Walton sit by the grassy margin and fish. Countless children dart about among the chequered shades; dozens of happy groups are picnicking under the trees; fair equestriennes canter over the turf; and cyclists whirl noiselessly past on their iron steeds. Far removed is anything that might suggest the struggles and miseries of less happy scenes. And yet, "yesterday it was," says our driver, pointing with his whip to a fisherman by the bank, "that gentleman caught something on his hook that he thought was a big fish; and he reeled up his line, seeing something floundering in the water that rolled over to the surface at last, and there was a human body with ghastly, glassy eyes." It was where the water is not deep and the bottom shelves gently, so that some poor nameless creature, that nobody missed, had ended the weary profitless struggle by seeking a quiet bed in Diana's pool.

From the gate of Bushey, where the "Greyhound" stands appropriately enough within hail of Diana, there is only the

road to cross, and you reach the Lion Gate of Hampton Court; yet that strip of road is as lively and animated in its way as the river close by. Here, with a merry blast of the horn, dashes up a four-horse coach with passengers for Weybridge or Virginia Water. Everything is classical in its appointment; its scarlet-coated guard, its coachman, with calm, ruddy face, broad-brimmed white beaver, and voluminous coat, a worthy descendant of the immortal Weller, who no doubt was well acquainted with the "King's Arms" at Hampton Court. Hardly has the coach rolled away, when another four-horse vehicle, vast and roomy, appears upon the scene. Here are whole families, united by some friendly bond, who descend in leisurely fashion upon terra-firmâ. A smart artillery sergeant gives a dash of colour to the group, and is the cynosure of the smartly-dressed young ladies of the party, while the boys look up to him with awe and admiration. The whole party are swallowed up in a neighbouring restaurant, and more vehicles take the place of theirs; now it is a landau, driven by some dark-faced sons of an Eastern clime, or a break full of beanfeasters, or the pony-carriage of the period driven past with many-hued skirts and sunshades displayed, or a stately landau rolls by with some grey-headed elders, or a shandyran with a load of laughter-loving gipsies. It is a continual never-ending procession, a Triumph, in fact, of ease and comfort and rational pleasure, such as may put Mantegna, in the big place yonder, into the shade.

But the Lion Gate of Hampton Court stands invitingly open, with its avenues and leafy recesses, and benches under the shade of tall trees. The gate itself is an excellent example of old ironwork, and dates from the end of the seventeenth century, when this part of the grounds was laid out in its present form. Close to the entrance is the Maze, for generations the delight of young people. Even now we may hear the voice of the keeper of the Maze as he gives directions to bewildered wanderers whose heads and shoulders may be seen above the green box hedges. This wooded enclosure is called the Wilderness, and its main avenue leads diagonally to a doorway, through which is to be seen the bright sunshine that basks upon the terraces and gardens beyond. And passing through the gate, you come to a strange-looking building that has the appearance of the cooling-

room of a brewery, with its long and open windows, but which is in reality the tennis-court.

This court is said to be the very oldest in the kingdom, all others having been framed upon its model. Henry the Eighth used it frequently, and was an adept at the game. Here, too, a famous match was played between the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Robert Dudley, Queen Elizabeth looking on and keeping the score. It was when the Queen's passion for the handsome Dudley was at its height. Lord Robert, hot and perspiring with his exertions, took the Queen's napkin from her lap, and wiped his face with the Royal napery. The Duke, jealous and indignant, struck at the favourite with his racket. The quarrel was appeased by Elizabeth's influence; but she never forgave the Duke, it is said, for his over-solicitude for her honour, and that when he afterwards came under the executioner's axe, all thoughts of mercy were barred by that unfortunate stroke in Hampton tennis-court.

Beyond the court we get a full view of the great front of the Palace, where all the great state apartments of King William the Third are to be found. The façade was designed by Christopher Wren; but he was probably hampered in his work by the formal requirements of the Dutch King. Anyhow, the result is not very happy, although there is a plethoric kind of dignity about the place that harmonises well enough with the trim and formal gardens, the avenues, the fountain, the Dutch canals.

There is one little bit of the eastern front, nearest the tennis court, with a mullioned window and round, projecting frontage, that is evidently a remnant of the Cardinal's, or, perhaps, of Harry's work; and, indeed, the rebuilding, under Sir C. Wren, was not so extensive and thorough as it appears at first sight, and was in many parts only a fronting and recasing of the old building. But, unfortunately, the only part open to the public—with the important exception of the Great Hall—is that which contains the state apartments of William the Third's time, which are interesting enough in their way, but in which we miss the picturesqueness, the romance, the air of mystery and perhaps of crime, that belong to the old palace of Wolsey and the Tudors.

And yet there is something of the charm of Sir Christopher's work in the fountain court and cloisters—cool and pleasant in

the noontide heat. It was a fountain court probably in the original palace, and one side is only masked by Wren's frontage, behind which are many of the original rooms and galleries; and there is a solid block of buildings beyond, to the north that is, with courts and openings here and there, that is pretty much of Tudor construction, although patched, and altered, and renewed, to meet the domestic requirements of many generations of tenants. Here is the mysterious, haunted gallery, connecting the old "Queen's apartments" with the Royal chapel. The gallery is haunted, it is said, by the shrieking ghost of Queen Catherine Howard.

The Queen was a fascinating, deceitful, delightful little creature, who had been sadly neglected in her youth and corrupted by debasing companionship; but full of the delight of life and shrinking sensitively from every touch of pain. Yesterday she had been the petted toy of her cruel husband, to-day she was doomed to the fearful fate that awaited Harry's discarded wives. In the horror of her position, surrounded by rough and brutal soldiers of the King's guard, she found a momentary chance of escape, and rushing through the long gallery, ran to seek her husband, who was at that moment hearing mass in the chapel, to cling to his knees, to soften with her tears that heart of adamant. The guards at their utmost speed followed the poor distracted creature. Just as she reached the King's closet, they overtook her and dragged her back, her frenzied screams resounding through the Palace. The gallery is now used as a kind of lumber-room; but still the shrieks of the agonised Queen are to be heard at times. Anyhow, in Mr. Ernest Law's interesting volume, "Hampton Court in Tudor Times," there is recent testimony to that effect.

Another spectre haunts the Palace whose "raison d'être" is not so evident. This is the ghost of Mrs. Penn. Penn, an old lady in a long grey gown and hood, and hanging sleeves. Mrs. Penn was the nurse of King Edward the Sixth, and died of small-pox, in the reign of Elizabeth, during an outbreak of that disorder in the Palace, which almost cost the life of the Queen. Mrs. Penn seems to have rested quietly enough for nearly three centuries, until, in the year 1829—when old Hampton Church was pulled down—her tomb was broken into and her dust disturbed. Soon after, mysterious noises were heard in the south-west wing of the Palace, among the

ancient rooms and corridors of the Cardinal's Palace. Search was made into the source of the curious noises, and an ancient chamber was discovered, where there was an antique spinning-wheel, and sundry objects of ancient furniture. The treadle of the wheel had worn a hollow in the oaken planks beneath, as if the wheel had been driven for all the long centuries since it was first placed there. And from the time these objects were discovered and removed, as if the woman's occupation were gone, old Mrs. Penn has been in the habit of roaming about, frightening maids and their mistresses, and once even driving a bold hussar, who mounted sentry in the gateway, almost out of his wits.

Before we leave the more recent part of the Palace, which has fewer tragic and ghostly memories, we must take a hasty glance through the state apartments, which now form a series of picture-galleries, but which still retain some of the furniture and belongings of their former Royal occupants. Here is the King's Grand Staircase, imposing enough, more or less adorned overhead with Verrio's sprawling effigies. This brings us to the Guard Chamber, whose windows overlook the private gardens with pleasant views of the Thames and the Surrey Hills, and which is hung appropriately enough with portraits of the Admirals and Generals of old times, and with battle-pieces of an ancient character. Then follows a vista of stately rooms, presence-chambers, and audience-chambers, hung with pictures interesting both historically and artistically. Altogether, on the walls of the whole series of rooms, are hung over a thousand pictures, including many unique portraits of historic characters, with examples of the great Italians, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Titian, of the Spanish School also, and with the Flemish and English masters strongly represented.

Where the King's rooms end, the Queen's rooms begin, and the whole enables one to realise the stately existence of the monarchs of the period, who lived a good deal in public, and whose going to bed, and getting up in the morning, were in the nature of solemn functions. The Queen's drawing-room looks over the formal gardens and the Home Park with its long avenues of limes, which Charles the Second is said to have planted. There were waters and fountains in his time; and the general arrangement of the grounds is rather after the pattern of Versailles

than of the Dutch type, with which it is generally associated. But William the Third, who lived more at Hampton Court than at any of the other Royal Palaces, added canals and other adornments. It was while William was inspecting some of the works being carried on in the Park, that his favourite pony stumbled over a mole-hill and gave the King the fall from the effects of which he died.

Queen Anne also favoured Hampton Court, and her veritable state-bed still appears in the Queen's bedroom, with hangings of Spitalfields silk. With the Queen's Staircase the more ancient part of the Palace was once connected. Of Catherine Howard's ghost we have already heard. But there is another gallery, the Silverstick Gallery, which is haunted by the figure of another of Henry's Queens. On the anniversary of the birthnight of Edward the Sixth, the spectre of Jane Seymour, who died soon after giving birth to the Prince, is seen to ascend the staircase and make its way towards the gallery in question. She is clad in white, flowing garments, and carries a lighted lamp in her hand; pale and faint as if just rescued from the grave, and with an air of painful solicitude.

The most interesting part of the Palace, perhaps, is the fine clock court communicating with the fountain court, and which outwardly remains much as the great Cardinal left it, except that one of the sides has been refronted in Italian taste by Sir Christopher Wren. This court is now adorned by the curious astronomical clock over the gateway, whose quaint dial, with figures of the earth, the moon, and the sun, and surrounded with the signs of the zodiac, dates from the sixteenth century, and is one of the oldest in the kingdom. About the clock, too, there is a legend. It is said that the clock stopped on the night of the second of March, 1619, when Ann of Denmark, the Queen of James the First, died, and that the death of any important resident in the Palace always stops the clock. The rooms about the central gateway, with their fine oriel windows and the adjoining wings, were at one time, it is supposed, occupied by the Cardinal himself, and his more distinguished guests. And here, if anywhere, the haunting presence of the great churchman should be manifested. But no one is recorded to have met with that stately figure in its scarlet robes.

Still the memory of the Cardinal is

preserved in a very creepy, gruesome manner. You shall be an inmate of one of the old rooms of the Palace, and peacefully sleeping in your bed, when in the dead of night you awake with a feeling of awe and fear. There is something slowly creeping along the walls; and a light reveals the presence of an enormous spider, with red, dusky body and great hairy legs, measuring as much as five or six inches across. It is the Cardinal spider, and tradition associates it with Wolsey himself, as though he peopled the place with his familiars, which reveal themselves now and then in this awful fashion.

From the clock court to the river gateway all the buildings now belong to the Cardinal's Palace. The clock gate leads into another court, the outer or base-court of the original Palace; a quadrangle, surrounded by buildings of collegiate character. Here were the lodgings of the Cardinal's numerous guests, each being a double lodging with inner and outer chamber, and opening upon a common corridor which ran along the whole length of the building. A noble house was kept by Wolsey, and every night two hundred and four-score beds were made up, the furniture of most being silk, and all for the entertainment of strangers, while each room had its own service, and its inmates were supplied with manchets of bread, and a goodly supply of wine to supplement the regular meals which were served in the Great Hall.

The Great Hall, as it at present exists on the west side of the clock court, seems to have been left unfinished by the Cardinal, and to have been completed and adorned by his successor in title, King Henry the Eighth. It is a noble hall, with a fine hammer-beam timber roof, richly decorated with pendants and elaborate carvings. The walls are hung with tapestry of the best Flemish make, setting forth the story of Abraham in mediæval fashion, and due to the looms of that town of Arras, which gave its name to such hangings. The adjoining Presence Chamber is hung with tapestry still more ancient, and darkened with age; its subject, the Triumphs of Petrarch, is almost unrecognisable in the dim light. And here is a fine oaken mantelpiece from Hampton Wick, with the Cardinal's profile carved in medallion.

A wonderful builder was the Cardinal, paying with Royal hand, but exacting the best of workmanship and materials from all concerned. Before his time the history of Hampton Court presented no remark-

able features. The Conqueror granted the Manor to one De Saint Valery, and the descendants of the latter alienated it to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. The Knights of Saint John had at one time a preceptory here; and the Manor House and its adjoining curtilage bore the title of Hampton Court, long before the Cardinal cast eyes upon it. Wolsey was recommended to the place by the reputation it enjoyed for healthiness and purity of air, and he obtained a lease of the whole Manor from the Order for a rental of some fifty pounds a year; the Prior and convent covenanting to supply four loads of wood and timber yearly to repair Hampton Weir from their Manor of Saint John's Wood. The Cardinal, on acquiring the site, set to work with his customary energy; he enclosed the whole demesne with a brick wall, some part of which still remains along the Kingston Road and elsewhere; he dug a moat about the site, he drained it perfectly with great brick drains, and brought an abundant supply of pure water from Coombe Hill in Surrey, conveyed in pipes beneath the bed of the river. In 1516 the building was so far completed that Wolsey entertained the King and Queen at dinner in his new house. And from that time forward King Henry was constantly in the habit of visiting his Chancellor, sometimes in disguise, with mockings, and mummery, and all kinds of pranks. In 1525, when the King's jealousy of his great Chancellor began to appear, Wolsey gave the whole to the King, Manor, Palace, furniture, hangings, plate—as magnificent a gift as ever a Monarch received. But the Cardinal seems still to have used the place constantly as a residence till his final downfall, when he was ordered to confine himself to his neighbouring seat at Esher.

The news of the Cardinal's death found the King shooting at the butts in the park, and from that moment Henry began to build and alter and remodel the place after his own heart. The King had kept his honeymoon with Ann Boleyn at Hampton Court, and still in the fervour of his passion, he adorned every vacant place with her badge, the falcon, combined with his own, the portcullis, or the Tudor rose. Gilded vanes and leaden finials showed everywhere the initials of King and Queen twined lovingly together. Then there were jousts and tournaments in the tilt-yard, which Henry had made, where the horses of the hussars are now stabled,

witnessed by the Queen and the beauties of the Court

Whose bright eyes
Rain influence and judge the prize.

It was in Hampton Court, in one of the old chambers, that Ann Boleyn surprised the King in amorous dalliance with her attendant, Jane Seymour. Presently from Richmond Hill, not far distant, the King was anxiously listening for the shot from the Tower that should announce the death of Ann, and leave him free to wed the new love. And if it be as a punishment that the dead are compelled to revisit at times these glimpses of the moon, then there is no doubt that Jane Seymour's ghost may be fully accounted for.

Considerable trouble and expense were caused by the necessity of knocking out the memorials of Ann and inserting those of Jane in the embellishments of the Palace. But a few of the former were overlooked, or permitted to remain. The fan vaulting of the clock gateway, for instance, bears her badge, the falcon. King Harry's matrimonial achievements are also emblazoned in the stained windows of the Great Hall, and although most of the glass is modern, yet the heraldic devices, and the arms and cognizances of Harry's brides, have been carefully and accurately reproduced.

As we stand in the old courtyard associated with so many memories, alike joyous and sinister, a door is suddenly flung open, and a youth in white flannels precipitates himself across the area. Quick as thought, a girl appears in hot pursuit, a charming youthful figure in white, that pauses for a moment on the threshold, turns back with a toss of the head, seeing that the chase has escaped, and vanishes in the darkened interior. Thus appeared the fair Geraldine to the gallant Surrey in the dead long ago, when the sun shone as brightly as now.

Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine.

After Henry's death, Philip and Mary spent their leaden honeymoon at Hampton Court, and Elizabeth in her time visited the place occasionally. James the First's Queen died here, we are told; the quaint old clock yonder knows something about that matter. Charles the First loved the place and brought here some of his artistic treasures; and here he spent some gloomy weeks in captivity. Cromwell, too, lived much at Hampton Court; but there are few reminiscences of him, traditional or

otherwise. But Charles the Second and the beauties of his Court were often here, and those who wish to people the Court with their ideal images, have only to visit the King's bedchamber, when all their voluptuous charms are depicted in milk and honey by Sir Peter Lely.

After the beauties of Charles the Second's graceful, if dissolute period, succeeded the stiff Dutch madames of the reign of William and Mary. Mary's favourite walk we are told was under the wall of the Palace near the river, where she would stalk up and down at a great pace, followed by her ladies in waiting. The people of the neighbourhood who watched the procession from a respectful distance, named the place Frow Walk, and this name, corrupted into Frog's Walk, still remains as a memory of those distant days.

The purlieus of the Court are as orderly as the interior. Everybody goes to see the private gardens and the great vine which dates from 1769, and the fruit of which is reserved strictly for the Royal table. There are the orange-trees, too, which date from the early Georges. George the Second was the last reigning monarch who occupied the Court as a residence, and from this time, for some reason or other, the Palace has been deserted altogether by Royalty. But the pond-garden carries one back to the early days of the Palace; and the stables by the green were built in the reign of Elizabeth.

In Elizabeth's time we are told the walls about the Palace were all covered with rosemary. Our flowers and creepers at the present day are incomparably more showy and luxuriant; but we shall enjoy the beauties of Hampton Court all the more if we carry with us the mystic sprig of rosemary; the remembrance, that is, however vague and shadowy, of the scenes that have passed within its historic walls.

LESLIE DERRANT.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE passes so quickly and the end comes so soon, that, if there was not eternity to fall back upon, existence would hardly be worth having. This is true, no doubt; but as we certainly have eternity before us, it is clearly a truth of no importance. Besides, when we are brought into the world we cannot say, "I will live," or "I will die," life is forced

upon us, and we must bear it as we best can. To some it is a joy to be thankful for, to others a burden to be endured. For my own part, I admit I like to live; it suits me, and I feel a dread of the time when the fashion of life I understand must pass into another more beautiful, but still unknown and strange.

I enjoy living. I make complaint only of the swiftness of time, it flies too fast. It is but morning, and lo! it is night, and I must enter the kingdom of sleep. I wonder do other people's days vanish as do mine?

Years ago, I once found the days long enough; but I was young then (by comparison only with what I am now), and my wits were more nimble. At that time I became engaged, ostensibly, as governess to Leslie Derrant, really as mentor, safe confidante, and judicious friend.

I liked Hurst Lodge at once. It was a substantial red-brick house, with wide mullioned windows, basement well above ground, and a stately flight of broad steps, shaped in the segment of a circle, ascending to the hall door.

As I drove through the park that sunny afternoon, the rich warm glow of its walls and the glittering of its windows seemed to give me a kindly welcome, and I thought that people who lived in such a bright and beautiful home could not be sad or sorry for long together.

A dainty little lady met me in the hall, and graciously wished that my stay in the old house might be happy. She was small of stature and slight, as upright as a poplar, of dark complexion. Kind brown eyes looked at me with the frank friendliness of a child, her eyebrows were brown, but her hair was a beautiful soft white. To call it snow or silver would be to libel its exquisite tint.

"Leslie and my husband are not here to welcome you," she said. "I contrived their absence because I wanted to have a little chat with you alone. It was so good of you to come. My cousin told me if any one could manage our dear Leslie, it would be you."

"I was glad to come," I replied; "I had let my servants with my house, and I was contemplating a stay in the Black Forest and then a year's travel. This will be a greater change for me, and I always had a longing to try how I should feel earning my own living; but, you know, I really must be simply the governess to everybody here. Mr. Wyatt and his

niece, I hope, believe that I have never been anything but a governess since my husband died."

"I have never told them otherwise; but will you not have some refreshment?"

"I had a cup of tea at the Junction, thanks."

"Leslie has not been with us much more than a year. She is the only child of Mr. Wyatt's only sister, and when her parents died it seemed fitting that she should come to us. But we are a very quiet couple, and, being childless, do not well understand girls. We found that Leslie was dull, and when a friend offered to take her to London with her daughters last season, we let her go gladly. I did beg my friend to be very careful of her, though I felt a little ashamed of myself for doing so; but a young girl of that age is a great charge."

"Yes," I assented, and she went on with her tale.

"Leslie wrote and told us how she was enjoying herself, and how kind people were to her. My husband and I talked over her gay doings, and thought that perhaps some one would love her, for she is very sweet, and we decided that we would not care about his position or wealth if he were really a good man, for Leslie has enough for both. We never said anything about her fortune, but I find it was known in London. Well, we never heard of any lover. Leslie came home, all joy and smiles, and her uncle joked her about a sweetheart. Then she blushed and said with a radiant face, 'He is coming, and if you do not declare him to be Prince Charming, I shall not believe you to be my own dear old uncle;' and she ruffled up his hair, as she used to be fond of doing, and kissed him.

"'He must be very charming indeed, if he is to get you.'

"'He is,' she answered; then lifting her little head and looking quite stately she said, 'We are engaged, and he is coming down directly to ask your consent and approval.'

"'It might have been asked sooner,' my husband said gruffly.

"'He had to ask me first, and then a week or two did not seem to matter, so he waited till I came home. Don't be vexed, uncle dear.'

"No one could be vexed with her, so he smiled and said, 'I am a bit disappointed that you should have got engaged without my consent.'

"I knew you would give it me; you always do everything to make me happy; besides, he told me that in such a solemn thing as marriage a girl must follow the dictates of her own heart only."

"I felt a little frightened at these words. They seemed almost to imply opposition from us. And, as you know, my fear came true. My husband made enquiries about him at once, and when he came down was obliged to declare that he could not countenance an engagement. Leslie was miserable at first, but is more cheerful now, and hopes to bring us round; if not, she will abandon us for him. He is a gambler and a flirt, holds all women lightly, and it is doubtful if he really loves Leslie. We have told her this, but she thinks we speak with prejudice; if you can make her understand it, we will bless you."

"I will not see a girl sacrificed if I can help it. I will do my very best."

I was just ready to come down to dinner when there was a tap at my door, and Leslie came in.

"I am very glad to know you, Mrs. Markham," she said in a low, clear voice that charmed me at once; "it is very kind of you to come and read with me. I hope we shall be great friends. I am come, now, to show you the way to the dining-room."

We went down the broad stairway side by side, so I could not examine my companion critically. In the dining-room I was introduced to Mr. Wyatt, a small, round, homely little man, with rosy face and rosy crown, a fringe of grizzled hair falling to his shirt-collar. He welcomed me kindly, wished me joy of my pupil, and added jocosely, "She is an obstinate little puss."

"Oh! pray don't prejudice Mrs. Markham against me, uncle."

There was a little ring of pain in her voice, so I smiled at her, to assure her he could not do that, and then I saw how very lovely she was. A complexion of the most delicate fairness; a face rather long, but too wide at the brows to be called oval; a well-formed nose; and a mouth that seemed made for smiling, the lips arched with such readiness and beauty; dark grey eyes that smiled with the mouth, and yet had a touch of sadness in them; brown hair that was swept from her face in a soft, fluffy cloud; a round, white, slender throat; a slight, graceful

figure; and over all an indefinable expression of youth, health, and refinement; and there is Leslie Derrant as I saw her that first evening.

My heart went out to her at once, and I think she liked me a little from the very beginning of our intercourse.

We read together, especially in Italian. We were both fond of drawing, and made sketches of old trees and all the prettiest bits of scenery in the park. We rode, sometimes accompanied by Wyatt and a fine young fellow, Philip Harrington, a neighbour, who I soon saw would have been glad to be more than a friend to Leslie, sometimes with only a groom; and we trudged along the pretty lanes, or over the breezy down, making friends with children and dogs wherever we found them. We were always busy, and Leslie was mostly cheerful.

A month had passed and Leslie had not yet confided to me her trouble. "You have done the girl a world of good," Mr. Wyatt said with beaming face. "I cannot feel grateful enough to you for coming," whispered Mrs. Wyatt; but I was not content.

When Mr. Wyatt refused Charles Pennell's suit, and begged Leslie to give him up, he had not forbidden her to receive letters from him—he had feared such prohibition might lead to deceit. And once a week a letter came that brought a blush of pleasure to the girl's face. She always put all letters straight into her pocket, and often went into the garden to read them. One morning I came upon her in a little dell in the park, with one in her hand. There was such dejection in her attitude, that I cried involuntarily:

"Leslie, dear, what is it?"

She raised her head, and the eyes heavy with tears, and the little quivering mouth, were all my answer.

"You must tell me what grieves you so," I said, dragging the little head down on my shoulder. And then she told me the story of her love, and of her great hope that in time her uncle and aunt must see Charles as she did.

"I can wait," she said, "wait for years, if necessary; but men are of more irritable nature, and he finds waiting very hard; he declares," and she touched his letter, "that this continued separation is wearing him out; that he must see me, must know the limit to this waiting. If I will not tell him, he shall think that I, too, am growing to believe him too humble, too poor for

me. I think him too humble, too poor! Oh! he is brave, he is honourable, Mrs. Markham, and if I only had a brother who could go about and find out all his good deeds, the errors that have come to my uncle's knowledge would be as nothing."

"I wish some one could. Your uncle would be glad to find his judgement mistaken."

"Cannot you help me; you have friends in society?"

Her earnest belief in the man, her patience in her sorrow, touched me deeply. I longed to make her happy.

"I will do what I can," I said, but a fear that her uncle's objection was probably wholly just made me add: "But if the answers to my enquiries are not quite favourable, you will hear them all the same?"

"Certainly, I am not afraid."

Her uncle was coming towards us, so we were silent.

After luncheon I watched Leslie ride away, accompanied by her uncle and Mr. Harrington, and I wondered at the contrariness of fate in preventing a union between them.

"If it might have been, it would have made us so happy," said Mrs. Wyatt, who had also been watching the departure.

"Is it possible that there has been malicious exaggeration in the reports you have received about Mr. Pennell?" I asked.

"I fear not."

"I love Leslie as if she were my own child," I said, "and I wish you to let me act in her interest without letting you know what I do in the result. It will give me more influence with her, and if anything comes out against her lover, she will feel it less if unknown to you."

"You are right. Do as you will. In all things you have my fullest confidence. I only wish to see Leslie's future happiness secured. Mr. Pennell's name is never mentioned between us. The last time I spoke of him she drew away from me, and turned proud and cold. Oh! the pity of it."

I felt the pity of it keenly as I turned from the dear, sad old face to begin my independent investigation.

As Leslie passed to her room to take off her habit she looked in at me. A pile of letters which I had written attracted her attention at once, and she said, "Thank you, thank you so much. I have such great hopes that something very good will come of them." The glad smile on her beautiful face, and the grateful look in her eyes, lingered long in my memory.

CHAPTER II.

MANY days passed before my first answer came. It was from the Honourable Mrs. Chetwynd, and this was the little bit I read to Leslie: "The girls and I have been staying at Rosebank. Mr. Pennell was there, making himself very agreeable with everybody. He is a good shot, good dancer, good tennis player, admirable at charades and private theatricals; altogether a great acquisition at a country house. We found him charming."

"Of course," said Leslie, "everybody does that really knows him," and that little commendation of her love made her bright and merry for several days.

I was rather afraid of the effect of the next letter. It was:

"I fear there is not much to be said in praise of Mr. Pennell. He is too fond of cards, and B. and S. My husband says he lost rather heavily a few weeks ago, and is a little reckless in all things."

I did not venture to look at Leslie after reading this, and was surprised when she said quietly:

"Just what he says of himself, as to cards and fondness of excitement, but all that will be changed when he has a home of his own, and I think it better to lose your own money than win other people's, don't you?"

"I have a great dread of play. I have seen families ruined by it," I replied.

The next I let her read herself. It said:

"We were staying at Mount Erroll about a fortnight ago. Mr. Pennell was there, charming as usual, and paying so much attention to Mattie Selwyn that I should think he meant something, only he must marry money. Poor girl, I am quite sorry for her, she did not seem to imagine that he could be only amusing himself."

I heard a little sigh, then Leslie handed me back the letter without remark.

Mr. Pennell's letter to Leslie that week was a little behind time, and was short and peremptory, as I gathered from what she told me of its contents. He said she was cruel to him, and that he must know when the end of this waiting was to be, for he was tired of it.

I implored her to settle nothing.

"I will tell him that waiting is hard for me also," she answered.

A letter that I had about this time took

me to London, where I did a stroke of business that I hoped would be very beneficial to all at Hurst Lodge.

The day after my return, Leslie and I were sitting alone in our reading-room. I laid some letters wide-open one upon the other, and passed them to her.

"Read them, dear, please."

She read one through, looking rather mystified. When she came to the end, she said, "Charley"—that was all the signature—and blushed crimson.

"Read one or two more," I urged.

"They are love-letters," she said, as if this were full reason for her not doing so.

"Never mind; read on. Do you not know who wrote them?"

"No; suspicion is not knowledge."

"I do. Look."

I found a page as the letters lay on the table beside her, on which there was the name, "Charles Pennell."

"I have no right to complain that I was not his first love," she said sadly, and pushed the letters from her.

Vexed at the failure of my scheme, I threw the letters into the fender, and lighted a vesta to burn them.

"Does she not want them?" she asked.

"No; they are mine. I bought them."

"And you wonder that he ceased to love a girl who could sell his letters?"

Her indignation was beautiful.

"He could not foresee that she would do that. He treated her heartlessly, and she has grown reckless, and is leaving England to-day."

Leslie answered nothing. I felt quite crestfallen, and was silent, too. Presently she came to me, put her arm on my shoulder, and said:

"You are a dear, good creature, but so misled—so mistaken. Some day I know you will own yourself wrong, and then I shall not know how to love you enough."

I had other letters telling of Mr. Pennell's debts, improvidence, and so on, which Leslie read because of her promise to do so; and I began to think that they were producing an effect, because she began to look pale and anxious.

But one day when we were near a gate in the park, she said to me:

"Charles proposes to wait outside with two horses, that I may slip out in the gloaming and ride away with him."

"Oh, Leslie, you will not," I cried.

"Never. I will go to my wedding openly. But his constant urgency wears

me out. I must promise something. He will be content if I say I will marry him when I come of age."

"That is soon, in a few weeks. Oh, wait, my dear girl, wait a little longer!"

"He wants me," she said simply; "indeed I think he really needs me, he is poor and I am rich; if he is to be my husband, is it not right that I should do all I can to help him?"

"He is working upon your feelings, he knows how good you are. I know the world, and, believe me, a few weeks' more delay cannot injure him; it is impossible. Promise him that you will settle everything the day you come of age."

"I will, and I hope he will be content."

How shall I save you, my poor darling! I thought. He will win you as much through your generosity as your love. Already he trades with his sins for your compassion; he fears he cannot keep quite straight without your sweet support. I know the cant of such persuasion. And when a woman loves a rake, she always believes herself his sole chance of salvation, yet never compasses aught but her own ruin. Has he changed his tactics, because his love is so played out that he cannot even make it look grand on paper? I gasped with delight as this idea shot through my mind, it opened another possibility of rescue for my darling. Again and again I declined to ride because of the pressure of my correspondence. I would not trespass on the evenings; Leslie and I were scrupulous in devoting them to the old couple, who were the kindest of hosts and guardians, and showed nothing of the anxiety and trouble that I knew were pressing heavily upon them.

Soon my writing ceased, and my attitude was that of the conspirator, standing, fuse in hand, ready at a given signal to fire the train and explode the mine I had so carefully prepared. I waited and waited for the signal, the days passed wearily; it was then I learned that Time is sometimes leaden-footed, and is forced to fold his wings and creep along.

At last my signal came. I went to Mrs. Wyatt and said: "I want to take holiday for a couple of days to visit a friend in Norfolk, and I should like to take Leslie with me."

"By all means, dear friend; the change will do you good. I have thought you looking harassed lately." The dear, kind old face looked quite pleased at the idea of pleasure for me.

I went to Leslie and said: "I have to visit an old school-fellow, just for a day or so. It is a long way, and I cannot bear travelling alone. I wish you would come with me, it would be doing me a great favour."

"I will come, of course. You know I would do anything for you—in reason." The beautiful eyes had a little reproach in them as she said the last words.

When we were seated in the train, Leslie told me she meant to enjoy herself thoroughly, and was resolved to think of nothing that could trouble her. And throughout our long journey she was interested in everything; found humour in little incidents that seemed to me trivial; laughed merrily, and was altogether so gay and joyous, that more than once the feeling came over me that I must be travelling in a dream, and should soon wake and find myself alone in my room at Hurst Lodge.

We drove about all the next morning, visiting the Town Hall, several churches, one not very ancient ruin, and, best of all, the market, a picturesque old place, with heaps of flowers, and pretty cone-made baskets, holding ferns, that took Leslie's fancy greatly. She bought one for her aunt. We wanted to make the most of one day, so lunched at a little roadside inn, and then continued our drive, and were home about five to an early dinner, after which we walked in the garden.

My friend's residence was a semi-detached villa, so the garden was much wider than the house. And on this extra width was a lawn of softest turf; the wall was rather low, but above it was green lattice-work, covered with creepers, and beyond, a corresponding grass-plot for the next house.

We all walked close to the creeper-covered wall, for the sake of the fragrance of the flowers; and when my friend was called away, Leslie and I continued to pace up and down. The girl was still very cheerful, and kept me amused by her bright little speeches; but all the time I was straining my ears to catch the sound of voices on the other side the wall.

"If we could bottle up some of this air, it might prove a new elixir, for surely it has made me grow younger. I feel like a giddy school-girl to-day."

The change in tone of the last few words told me that Leslie had recognised the voice that I only heard.

It said in clear penetrating utterance:

"I could not keep away longer; if you

had not consented to see me I must have come without."

"What is the good?" that was all I could hear; the girl's voice sank so low. Leslie walked on unconsciously, and I with her, and step for step we kept pace with the speakers on the other side of the wall.

"It is true," he replied. "I must not bring you to my poor estate—but you love me, Maud, and I love you. We can, at least, be friends a little longer."

"Will that make parting easier? No, Charles, let us say good-bye to-night."

"I cannot. I will never say it. I will lose all things sooner than lose you—Maud, my love, my darling!" There was a kiss.

Leslie gripped my arm. "He never loved me so well," she said hoarsely, as she turned towards the house.

We went into a room with windows looking upon the garden. Leslie sat away from them. She managed to take a cup of tea and say a few words about to-morrow's journey with fair composure. She begged to be excused retiring so early, as her head ached. I followed her to her room. She was taking off her dress with trembling eagerness. She let me help her. "Oh, do not speak of him, I cannot bear it," she said, in a voice of agony. I kissed her for answer. She felt a tear upon her cheek. "Do not grieve for me," she said. "I have no tears. I shall be quite myself to-morrow."

I could not sleep for remembrance of the face I had left on the pillow; it was so beautiful and terrible in its depth of despair. What would the old people say when they saw it, they, who loved her so dearly—that the woman they trusted her with had broken her heart? I began to be afraid of what I had done.

The next morning Leslie spoke to me without constraint, and as I glanced at her there was a worn, little smile on her face that seemed to say, "See, I am getting over it," and the look that was so awful to me was gone. Still there was such utter sadness under her pathetic attempt at cheerfulness, that my friend could not help crying as she wished her good-bye, and excused her emotion by Leslie's resemblance to a school friend now in India.

Very dull was our journey home. Leslie's far-away, unchanging gaze as she looked at the scenes that had so charmed her two days before, went to my heart. The ferns in the cone-basket were our only distraction, and I rejoiced that the delicate fronds

required such constant care and attention to preserve them from damage. Mrs. Wyatt met us, bright and hopeful as we parted. I read her disappointment as she looked at Leslie, though she never spoke of it.

The days went on in their old tranquil fashion. I was always ready to ride, for I had given up letter-writing. Mr. Harrington was with us frequently, and I liked his chivalrous, almost reverent admiration for Leslie. I do not think she was conscious of it; but she had some regard for him as her uncle's great friend, and often talked with him pleasantly.

She would not hear of any festivities on her coming of age, not even a treat to the school-children. She was very calm, and I knew she had decided upon her course in life; but her settled sadness assured me that she did not expect to be happy.

When her birthday dawned, my first thought was, will she marry him in spite of all? My sweet old lady's hand shook when she took her cup at breakfast. Mr. Wyatt's pink forehead was pale with apprehension. We were all in dread of what we might have to hear. Leslie Derrant had now absolute power to dispose of herself and her fortune as she pleased.

There were many gifts for her, the fairest from Mr. Harrington, a beautiful china basket full of flowers. She only looked at those of her uncle and aunt. After giving them warm thanks, she still lingered near them with white, resolute face. We all felt she was gathering strength to speak her decision. I could hear my own heart beat. This tense expectancy was more than the old man could bear. He pushed back his chair; the sound roused her.

"Uncle," she cried, "I am going to do as you wish, and you must let me grow old under your roof."

"My darling, God bless you!" He caught her in his arms. Her head rested upon his shoulder. I looked into her face, and I knew that if there is a grief that kills, such grief was hers.

We clustered round her; she gave one hand to her aunt, the other to me. She wished to show us that the words she had spoken were to us as well as to her uncle, to include us in her loving, grateful thanks.

We spoke incoherent words, but she understood us. We were so rejoiced, yet so sorrowful.

Later, she took me to her room and showed me a copy of a letter she had sent to Charles Pennell.

She told him quietly and firmly that she could not marry without her uncle's consent, that she had no hope of obtaining it, and after much thought had decided that they must part. She regretted that she had come as a disturbing influence in his life, trusted that he would soon forget her, the duration of their friendship having been so short, and that he would be happy himself and give much happiness to others.

"It is a beautiful letter," I said. "But if he writes or comes?"

"I will not read his letters. I will not see him," she cried passionately.

Mr. Pennell did write. I returned his letter unopened. Leslie was always pale and sad. She tried hard to keep up an interest in people and things, but the effort was beyond her strength. Her attempts at cheerfulness were most touching; her health was failing; she clung to me, and when I proposed to take her abroad, consented at once. Her uncle and aunt were glad that she should go with me. She made her will, and said what a pity it was a girl should have so much to leave. She told no one how she had disposed of her property. Her uncle and Mr. Harrington accompanied us to the vessel. She said something very kind and gentle to the latter at parting; she had learned to understand his love, and to know something of the loss she had made through the wilfulness of her own heart.

We passed the winter in the South, moving from one beautiful place to another in the hope of finding interest or amusement, but she drooped always.

"I cannot uproot my love," she said to me. "It will not die until I do."

And I knew that its death would come soon. I sent for her uncle and aunt, and they came and stayed with us until the end. We buried her in a little foreign cemetery that she had fancied, and Philip Harrington was one of the mourners, and strewed sweet flowers from his home upon her grave.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE after another the dancers began to stream into the little room, attracted by its look of cool dimness. Madge found herself overwhelmed with compliments on the taste she had displayed in the decoration of her boudoir.

"There is such a delightful air of mystery through the arrangement of the light," said one.

"And the position of the mirror is most effective," said another.

Madge gave back but short and absent answers in acknowledgement of the compliments; her eyes were fixed on the white, startled face of the girl who stood with clasped hands, staring blankly into the dim mirror.

"Take me out of this room," Madge heard her say to Lance, in low, unnatural tones. "I am tired, I have danced too long."

Lance was startled by the tone in which these words were uttered. It brought back to him the stony, tuneless voice in which, in the midst of the crashing storm, she had told him that there were some whom not poison, nor flood, nor fire could harm.

He made way for her through the crush, thence through the ball-room into the outer hall. Here there was of necessity more air and space—save for an occasional servant passing they had it all to themselves.

"You are feeling faint with the heat?" he asked anxiously. "Come outside on

the terrace for a few minutes—it's a glorious night—stay, let me get you a cloak."

All sorts of cross lights met here in this vestibule; a stream of light poured forth from the inner hall, where the strains of the inspiring military band proclaimed that dancing had recommenced; yellow and pink light from the lamps on the staircase in a bewildering stream met this and crossed it, and through the high windows, one on either side of the hall-door, a little beyond this glare, there fell on the tessellated floor, patches of faint moonlight, just discernible, nothing more, telling of a glorious golden moon on high.

If it had not been for those coloured lamps and cross lights, Lance must have seen how ashen-white and rigid Miss Shore's face had grown. As it was, though her voice had startled him for the moment, it did not occur to him that anything ailed her more serious than a passing faintness, caused by the heat of the rooms and the prolonged waltz.

He opened the hall-door. It showed an outside picture of a garden drenched with moonlight, which set the seal of tawdriness at once upon the dazzling and illusive light indoors. He turned to take a cloak from a stand.

"It's a night to tempt even Midsummer fairies out of their acorn-cups," he said. "I don't believe that even in your sunny South you'd outshine such a moon as this."

There came no answer; he turned sharply to see if she were following.

There was at this end of the hall a narrow archway, half-draped by a curtain, which led to a second staircase leading to the upper floor. Neither this staircase nor the passage to it was lighted, and the archway showed a dark oblong in the light of the

hall. Just within it stood Miss Shore, her grey draperies fading into the shadowy dimness behind her. She was turning from him as if she wished to leave him without so much as a word of excuse or regret.

He sprang towards her. "You are not coming?" he cried in a disappointed tone.

"I am going to my room," she answered in the same stony, tuneless voice as before.

"You will come down again in a few minutes?" he pleaded.

With one foot on the first step of the staircase at the end of the passage, she waved her hand to him.

"Go back and dance," was all that she said.

If Eurydice, as she faded into the shadows whence she had emerged, had bidden Orpheus "go tune his lyre," it might have been in much such a voice, with much such a look in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXV.

LANCE went back to the ball-room, but not to dance. He made straight for Madge.

"Miss Shore is ill, I fear; will you go to her?" he whispered.

"I will send my maid at once," said Madge, promptly giving an order to that effect.

It was not far off midnight now. The doors of the supper-room were at that moment thrown open, and Madge was called upon to assist Lady Judith in the marshalling of her guests.

The dowager, who was placed under Lance's charge during what seemed to him an interminable repast, vowed that in all her experience of ball-suppers she had never before sat side by side with so singularly taciturn a young man.

Within an hour after supper Lady Brabazon and her party departed. This relieved Lady Judith of a large number of the more distinguished of her guests, and gave her leisure to discover how terribly she felt the heat, and how deliciously tempting was the thought of a feather-bed.

"I shall creep away quietly," she informed the lady by whose side she was sitting, in a voice that reached to the other end of the room. "I shan't be missed, Madge does the honours so well."

After the departure of the Brabazon party, the roll of carriage wheels in the

drive continued at intervals till daybreak. But long before the "orange light of widening morn" set the birds thinking of their matins, Madge found her appearance of feverish gaiety very hard to maintain. She fought her increasing lassitude vigorously, however, and did her best to keep up the brilliancy of the ball to its end.

Not so Lance, he played his part of a "son of the house" very badly indeed. Restless and ill at ease, he wandered aimlessly from room to room with so absent and discontented a look on his handsome face, that some of the young ladies who knew his dancing capabilities began to say hard things of him.

Madge caught sight of him once, as she flitted across the outer hall, speaking to her maid. She guessed in a moment what the subject of his enquiry must be.

"Is Miss Shore better?" she asked him, as the girl disappeared, her own curiosity on the matter not one whit less intense than his.

"She said she was all right, and desired the girl not to disturb her again," was Lance's reply; but for all that, he appeared far from satisfied on the matter, and he took no pains to hide the fact from any one.

The last hour of the ball tried Madge the most. As a rule, she took her balls very easily, danced but little, and vanished from the scene early with her dress nearly as fresh as when she put it on. But to-night mental and bodily fatigue had come hand in hand, and now at the eleventh hour the double strain became all but insupportable.

Sir Peter, blithe as a cricket, insisted on leading off "Sir Roger de Coverley" with her.

"Forty years' difference between us, my dear," he said gaily. "But for all that I don't feel like going out of the world yet!"

No, nor yet like going out of the ball-room, if that meant going to bed, for when Madge, at the bottom of the line of dancers, whispered to him, "I simply must go; I can't put one foot before another," he chose immediately the youngest partner he could find. And he kept the dance going with such spirit, that as one by one the couples, yielding to fatigue, disappeared to their rooms or to their carriages, the tired musicians whispered to each other that the old gentleman left bowing to the last young lady on the floor must be strung on wires, not muscles, for he seemed

as fresh at the end of the evening as he did at the beginning.

Madge, as she entered her dressing-room, dismissed her sleepy maid. Then she went on to her bedroom, and, too tired even to lift her hand to her head to remove the jewels from her hair, flung herself in her ball-dress on the bed. Her head ached and burned; her ears were filled with the twanging of the band, her eyes with pink light and dancing colours. But not the loudest of twanging music could shut out from her ears the echo of a startled voice with a piteous note in it, nor the most dazzling of light and colour shut out from her sight a rigid, ashen-white face, with a look of terror in its eyes.

The candles on the toilet-table had burned low; long straight lines of grey light came through the half-turned venetian blinds; the chill air of early morning swept in through a half-open window at the farther end of the room. Something seemed to stir and rustle in a large easy-chair, which was placed near this window with its back to the room.

What was it? Madge wondered, raising herself on one elbow and looking around her. Was it a breeze springing up and foretelling a storm, or had old Roy taken refuge in the room from the racket of the ball and curled himself up to sleep in the easy-chair?

She peered into the dimness curiously. It is wonderful how unlike itself in its noonday prettiness a sleeping-room will show in the half-light of dwindling candles and growing dawn. Shadows flickered across the ceiling, and seemed caught back again by invisible hands into the dark corners whence they had emerged. Thence they seemed to creep out once more to play hide-and-seek round the tables, and among the high-backed chairs.

Madge shaded her eyes with one hand. Was that a shadow rising slowly from the big easy-chair beside the window and approaching, not flickeringly, but with easy gliding motion?

Then a sudden chill fell upon her, as in that graceful gliding shape she recognised Miss Shore, clad, not in her ball-dress but in the grey travelling dress and beaver hat in which Madge had first seen her. Her heart failed her; she would have liked to shout aloud for help, but voice she had none.

Her hand failed her too, it was powerless even to ring the bell beside the bed. Nerveless and helpless, she sank back on her pillows, hiding her face in her hands.

Miss Shore's voice, low, clear, cold, told her that she stood beside her, leaned over her in fact.

"I have been waiting here to say good-bye to you," it said. "I have also a word to say beside good-bye if you will listen."

If she would listen! Madge felt that choice she had none, her feet would not have carried her across the floor had she essayed flight. This strange, wild girl, who had failed in an attempt at murder through chance, not want of purpose, must work her will now whatever it might be.

"You took me in a stranger; you gave me shelter and food—for that I thank you," she went on in the same low, cold monotone. "You turn me out into the night, into the darkness and loneliness—for that I thank you not—no, for that I hate you—I wish you evil."

Madge shrank farther back into her pillows.

Miss Shore resumed:

"When I am gone you will say, 'I have won! I have saved that man I love from an evil woman!'"

She broke off for a moment, then suddenly raised her voice to a passionate cry:

"Oh, you with your go'd and your jewels, your home and your friends, are you the one to say 'this is evil, that is good'? You are what you were made to be, you call that good; I am what I was made to be, you call that evil!"

Again she broke off, and now her voice sank to its former low, cold monotone. "But I did not come here to tell you this. No, I came to say to you, 'you have won so far!' I go back into the darkness and loneliness whence I came, you will stay here in the light and the happiness. You will win back the love you have lost; you will say, 'I have conquered.' Wait! At the very moment of your victory I will stand between you and your joy, as you have stood between me and mine."

Madge heard no more. Worn out with the heavy strain of the past twenty-four hours, her senses left her.

And outside, the grey expanse of heaven was broken up into a hundred massive, rugged clouds, to let out the rainbow glories of the morning; the great plumed trees waved in the summer breeze, and a whole orchestra of wild birds broke into their hallelujah chorus, as if desolation, despair, and death were words without meaning in so fair a scheme of creation!

CHAPTER XXVI.

VERY few of the guests made their appearance at the breakfast-table on the morning after the ball. Sir Peter and one or two of the most youthful of the party had things very much to themselves until close upon the luncheon hour. Madge sent down a message that she had a very bad headache, and was reserving her strength for the villagers' sports in the afternoon and tenants' supper in the evening.

These sports and the supper formed the staple topic of talk among the house party until another item of news was announced, which altogether put these into the shade—nothing less than the sudden disappearance of Miss Shore. It was not until nearly noon that her flight was discovered. The discovery was made through Lance's instrumentality. He had sent Madge's maid, about breakfast time, to make enquiries as to the young lady's health, and to present on his part a nosegay of freshly-gathered forget-me-nots. The maid came back with her flowers, saying that Miss Shore was sleeping and did not wish to be disturbed.

This was her version of the fact that her repeated knockings brought no response.

Lance waited awhile impatiently, grew discontented with his fading forget-me-nots, and gathering a nosegay of exotics, went himself to the housekeeper—a somewhat important personage in the establishment—and commissioned her to present them herself to Miss Shore, with enquiries from him as to whether she felt rested from her fatigues of overnight. Evidently he had not the slightest wish to conceal his anxiety on the young lady's behalf.

The housekeeper came back in a few minutes looking rather scared, and bringing the startling news that, not receiving any response to her rappings at Miss Shore's door, she had ventured to turn the handle and look in, when, to her great surprise, she found that the room was empty and that the bed had not been slept in.

Lance, for a few seconds, refused to trust his own powers of hearing. Then, after desiring the housekeeper to go to Sir Peter and report the fact to him, he made straight for Madge's room.

Madge, in her loose peignoir, opened her door to his summons. She knew well enough what lay behind it, and he, if he had not been so preoccupied with his own

thoughts, must have seen how white and haggard she looked.

Ten words told her the story.

"Do you know anything I don't know, Madge?" he queried impatiently; "did you see her after you left the ball-room, or did she send you a message?"

Madge evaded his questions.

"Let us go to her room. She may have left a letter or written message," she said, herself trembling at the bare thought of the possibility of such a thing.

At the door of Miss Shore's room they were met by Sir Peter, bent on a like errand. The three entered the room together.

They found that the bed, as the housekeeper had stated, had not been slept in. On it was flung carelessly the ball-dress of overnight, strewn with sundry faded sprigs of stephanotis, which had been worn with it. A small portmanteau stood open beside the bed, with its contents tossed about as if some things had been hastily abstracted. On the toilette table glittered the gold—to its last half-sovereign—which Madge had paid on the previous morning for the pictures; but never note or written message of any sort with all their searching could they discover.

The gold caught Sir Peter's eye.

"Ah, that's a good sign. She must have had plenty of money in her purse or she wouldn't have left that behind," he said cheerily. "Depend upon it we shall get a letter from her in the course of the day explaining——"

"Madge," interrupted Lance in an odd, quiet tone, "do you mind looking through that portmanteau and seeing if there are any letters there, or anything that will give us a clue to her people or friends?"

Madge immediately complied. One by one she carefully turned over the contents of the portmanteau. It was a fruitless search. The box contained nothing save articles of clothing, most of them unmarked; but one or two embroidered with the name "Erelka."

Madge related the circumstance of a handkerchief being found with the same name upon it.

Sir Peter's eyes grew round and rounder.

"Most extraordinary——" he began.

Lance interrupted him:

"Of course you will at once communicate with the police and offer a reward for information of any sort?"

A sudden impulse seized Madge. "Don't

let that be done," she said in low, nervous tones, addressing Lance. "Whatever else you do, don't do that."

Lance stared at her blankly.

"Why not? What else on earth are we to do? Of course, I shall start for Lower Upton at once, and follow up any clue I may get there; but the police would do more in a day than I should do in a week."

"My dear boy," cried Sir Peter, aghast, "you mustn't dream of such a thing. Let Stubbs go." He broke off for a moment. "Ah, by the way, he can't, he's off already to Carstairs—had a telegram late last night—so he told me this morning." Here he turned to Madge: "A very dear friend of his at Carstairs had been suddenly taken seriously ill, and wished to see him."

Madge said nothing; only she grew white and whiter, and her eyes drooped.

"But it is easy enough to send some one else to make enquiries"—here he turned to Lance: "Your servant is a trusty fellow, send him—but I couldn't get on without you to-day at all—you'll have to be umpire in all the races and the vaulting and jumping—"

Lance gave him one look. It said:

"Talk of such things to a man whose soul is on the rack!"

But his lips said only:

"I'm afraid you'll have to get some one else to act umpire. I start for Lower Upton at once!" and he left the room as he spoke.

Madge followed him hastily into the outside gallery.

"Lance," she said, in the same low, earnest tones as before, "let her go! Be advised! Don't set the police on her track; don't hunt her down yourself."

He stared at her stonily.

"For her sake, if not for your own," she implored.

His face grew pale as death. This was clothing with a body a spectre of dread that more than once before had stood in his path.

"For her sake!" he repeated hoarsely.

"Madge, if you know anything about her that I don't know, tell me at once—do you hear?—at once, and be done with it."

Madge was silent. When she had laid her plot she had not taken thought for such a contingency as this, so was unprepared to meet it. After all, she was a bad plotter, and was acting very much on the spur of the moment now.

"Come, Madge, speak out," he said; and now his voice grew stern and peremptory.

Still Madge was silent. If she were to tell him the story the newspaper paragraph told, he might be quick enough to discover the source of her inspiration for the mirror picture, and might hate her for ever for the deed she had done.

He stood still, waiting for her answer.

She clasped her hands together once more. "I beg—I entreat—" she began.

"No, not that," he interrupted. "Give me a reason—a simple, straightforward reason why I am not to go in search of this young lady—a guest in our house, with every claim to our courtesy."

A reason, a simple, straightforward reason! She could have given him one had she dared. "My love; is not that reason enough?" she would have liked to cry out of her full breaking heart. "The love that led me to sacrifice myself in a hateful marriage; the love that is making me do unworthy things now; the love that will send me to my grave should you choose this young woman or any other but me for your wife!"

A hot rush of tears came to her eyes. She stumbled forward and clung to his arm.

"Lance, Lance," she cried passionately, "I can't give you a reason. There is one—a strong one—"

"Give it me," he interrupted doggedly. "It is all I ask of you."

"It would be impossible!" she cried, her tears almost choking her. She broke off for a moment, and then her voice rose to a loud passionate cry. "Oh, Lance, Lance, will you not trust me after all these years of—of companionship? It is not of myself I am thinking now—not of Miss Shore even—only of you. I beg—I implore you, let her go, or your life, your whole life, may be wrecked."

Something in her tone startled him. If his heart had not been full of the thoughts of another woman, he must have heard the cry of wounded love in this one's voice.

As it was, he only thought that she was strangely excited, and was using language which she was not warranted in using.

He tried to disengage his arm from her clasp. "You are talking wildly, Madge; be reasonable."

His words stung her. Yet she clung to his arm.

"Is it unreasonable to implore you to

think of your life in the future—to try to save you from the wiles of an evil woman—”

Here he coldly and firmly released his arm from her clasp.

“That will do, Madge—you’ve said enough for one day,” he said sternly.

As if struck by a sudden thought, he went back to the room they had just quitted, and came out again in a few seconds with one or two of the sprays of the dead stephanotis in his hand. Then, without another word to or look at Madge, he went.

She stood staring after him through her blinding tears. This was the man whom she had accused of treating life as a jest, and of never being in earnest from year’s end to year’s end! Well, he was desperately—it might be fatally—in earnest now, not a doubt.

THE DEVEREUX.

“YES, I know,” says Dry-as-dust, “but it’s all a myth. Lord John Thynne used to show the very ring, did he? Well, Clarendon, writing in 1641, is the first to mention the ring story, and he rejects it as ‘a loose report.’ Manningham, who was keeping a diary in 1600, does indeed refer to a ring; but his ring is one given to Elizabeth by Essex, and by her worn till her death. No; the ring story comes from ‘A Romance of the Most Renowned Queen and her Great Favourite,’ published in 1650, and republished again and again in the eighteenth century. It was dramatised; and the *Sieur Aubery du Maurier* reprinted it in French; and Lady Elizabeth Spelman got over the difficulty of Essex entrusting such a precious token to the wife of his deadly enemy, by saying—on the authority of her ancestor, Sir R. Carey—that Essex told his ‘boy’ to give it to Lady Scrope, the Countess of Nottingham’s sister, and that the stupid fellow gave it to the wrong sister. Anyhow, the story is apocryphal; Ranke has declared against it.”

Well, I will stick to it, nevertheless; and I think most of my readers will prefer the persistent English tradition to the scepticism of the German historian. I do and will believe that the ring went wrong; and that the Queen, maddened at the loss of her cousin and prime favourite, did give the Countess a most unqueenly shaking, crying out in her agony, “God

may forgive you, but I never shall.” It was a murder; and the murder, too, of a man of old blood; for the Devereux—d’Evreux, from that bright Norman town with the pretty little flamboyant Cathedral full of splendid stained glass—really came in with the Conqueror, and got a slice of land on the Welsh border, in Hereford. There was a Devereux—Sir John, the second Lord—who went with Du Guesclin to Spain, on that romantic expedition which expelled the hated Pedro the Cruel. But the Black Prince came in, and Pedro’s gold outweighed the prayers of the Spaniards. So the Prince declared against Henry of Trastannare, and called Devereux and Du Guesclin’s other English volunteers to join him, their liege lord. By-and-by Devereux was Governor of the Limousin, and was with the Prince at the sack of Limoges.

In 1461 a Devereux married Lord Ferrers’s heiress, and though he died fighting for Richard at Bosworth, his son by Cecily, co-heiress of Bouchier, Earl of Essex, became Lord Ferrers of Chartley, and by-and-by Viscount Hereford. He was a sailor-officer, commanding the *Imperyal Carrick*, one of Henry the Eighth’s big ships; and his grandson Walter, after some squabbling with Leicester, got the Queen to grant him a large piece of Ulster, and, more marvellous still, to undertake to find half the army for conquering it. She also lent him ten thousand pounds, a large sum for that day, but took care to secure a first mortgage on some of his estates. His grandmother was a daughter of Grey, Marquis of Dorset, so that he was the Queen’s kinsman; but she insisted, nevertheless, that if the money was not repaid in three years, the estates should be hers. Essex had great hopes; Carew, the Norrises, and Lord Rich joined him. Ireland was nearer than America; and, though there was no gold, there was land and cattle, and “natives” who might be made to work for Englishmen, as the Spaniard was making the West Indians work for him. But the Ulster Irish were not so unwarlike as the Indians; and Essex was soon in the same plight as the man who sold the living bear’s skin. Of course he sowed dissension among the clans; the O’Neil, whom the English had made Baron Dungannon, joined him; so did another O’Neil, Sir Brian MacPhelim. But the head O’Neil, Tirlough Luineach, elected successor of Shane, was not to be caught by the shallow pretence that Essex

had only come to drive the Scots out of Antrim, and stood on his defence. The volunteers, who had not expected hard knocks, began to go home; and, defeated in a raid into Tirlough's country, Essex felt he must make a new money arrangement, and begged Elizabeth to take two hundred and fifty pounds a year in land in discharge of the ten thousand. She would not let him off his bond, and his debt to her hung as a burden about his son. But she sent him a few men, with whom he waited about in Carrickfergus till disease had reduced his army to two hundred. He was then glad to escape to the Pale, having played a hero's part in sharing his men's sufferings, spending his nights in rooms full of the dead and dying, but having done nothing towards planting his colony. Later in the year (1574), having got the O'Donnells to side with him against the rival clan, he made a raid into Tyrone, "carefully burning all the O'Neils' corn" and massacring such old men, women, and children as could not escape him. This partly satisfied the Queen, who was anxious that "something should be done;" and its cruelty was a matter of course. His next exploit, however, surpassed even the usual limit of "Irish atrocities." He wanted to make an example of somebody, and Sir Brian MacPhelim was the only chief who was friendly enough to accept an invitation. So a rich feast was prepared at Belfast, at which Brian, his wife, and brother, and retainers were royally banqueted. Suddenly Essex's soldiers rushed in and slew every Irish guest save the chief, his wife, and brother. They were taken to Dublin, hanged and quartered. Essex trusted that "this little execution hath broken the faction, and made them all afraid." But it did not make them more anxious to place themselves under English government; and Deputy Fitzwilliam at last persuaded Elizabeth to order Essex home.

Something, however, he would do before evacuating Ulster, and as the Antrim Scots were really worse enemies, because more stubborn than the Irish, he determined with the help of the latter to drive them out. Marching himself by land, he sent Norris with three ships—one commanded by Drake—to Rathlin Island, where the chief of the Scots had sent for safety the women and children. For four days the place held out against Norris's guns. Then it surrendered on terms, which were broken, as they had been by Lord Grey

and Raleigh some years before, when Fort del Ore, near Dingle, capitulated. The defenders—almost all old men, the clan being on the mainland looking out for Essex—were killed, and then the women and children were hunted (and smoked) out of the caves in which they had taken refuge, and all slaughtered.

The Queen regarded this exploit with special gratification. Mr. Froude quotes the despatches which testify to her joy. This was Essex's last achievement. With his gore-dripping laurels he went over to London, and, despite the sinister influence of Burghley, got his Irish estates confirmed by the Queen, who also made him Earl Marshal of Ireland.

He was not happy at home; for his wife, Lettice Knollys, after more than twelve years of marriage, fell in love with the Earl of Leicester, whom she married less than two years after Essex's death. Kind people, of course, said he had been poisoned.

His son Robert, a delicate and precocious boy, succeeded, his grandfather Knollys told him, "to lands insufficient to maintain the state of the poorest Earl in England." While at Cambridge, he was actually driven to complain to his guardian Burghley that he had not enough of decent clothes for his use. Before this, when ten years old, he had been brought to Court, where, as the Queen's cousin, he insisted on wearing his hat in her presence. She, on the same plea of cousinship, wanted to kiss him, but he stoutly refused; and it was not till ten years after that his stepfather persuaded him to reappear at Court, hoping to use his "goodly person"—he had grown up very handsome—as a counterpoise to Raleigh. His bravery at Zutphen had made him popular; and it was soon said of Elizabeth:

"Nobody is with her but my Lord Essex; and at night my Lord is at cards or one game or another with her, that he cometh not to his own lodging till birds sing in the morning."

Yet already he began to show his temper. When the Queen ill-treated his sister "to please that knave Raleigh," he left the house where both were staying and rode to Sandwich, resolved to go back to Holland, and hardly yielding to the remonstrances of Sir R. Carey, whom Elizabeth sent to appease him. He got jealous of Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, and husband of one of his sisters. Blount was wearing on his sleeve a gold chess-queen, given him by the Queen.

"Now I perceive every fool must wear a favour," growled Essex, and a duel was the result.

"By God's death," remarked Elizabeth, "it were fitting some one should take him down and teach him better manners, or there were no rule with him."

Never happy at Court, Essex escaped in 1588, and sailed in the *Swiftsure* for Portugal, leaving Norris and Drake to follow. But, though he was first ashore, wading through the surf; and then, riding up to the gates of Lisbon, challenged any of the Spanish garrison to single combat; he went back as soon as he got Elizabeth's peremptory order for his return. Poor fellow! she wanted the three thousand pounds that she had lent him; and he had to sell one of his manors to satisfy her. Cecil had begun to thwart him; and his secret marriage with Sir Philip Sidney's widow, Walsingham's daughter, made the Queen furious. Essex shunned the storm by going over to help Henry of Navarre against the League.

At last the Queen sent for him. They had a week of "jollity and feasting," and she wept when, under strict injunctions to avoid all personal risk, he went back to his command. He had with him his Chartley tenants, and knighted nearly two dozen of them—this was one of the counts in the indictment on which, by-and-by, he was condemned to death. Home again, he fell in with Francis Bacon, a struggling barrister, who thought himself ill-used by the Cecils. Bacon advised him to give up foreign wars, and "secure domestical greatness." Essex tried hard to get his new friend made Attorney or Solicitor-General; and, failing in both, he gave him land at Twickenham, worth one thousand five hundred pounds. Bacon's brother, Anthony, became his secretary, and Essex House soon rivalled the Foreign Office in the quality and quantity of its intelligence. It was from information received that Essex was able to warn Elizabeth of the plot to poison her, in which her Jew physician, Roderigo Lopez, was the chief agent. The whole thing is obscure; for there was absolutely no reason for Lopez's treachery, and Elizabeth was quite justified in calling her informant "a rash and temerarious youth;" but Essex brought such proofs that, plot or no plot, Lopez was put to death. This drew Elizabeth closer to Essex, and in 1556, he was allowed to sail against Spain, which had just taken Calais, and seemed generally formidable.

The Queen took leave of him in a pathetic letter, and sent him a prayer of her own making. Just before sailing he showed his unselfishness by writing several letters to try to get Bacon the Mastership of the Rolls.

His aim was threefold: to cripple Spain by capturing the Indies' fleet, to harry her coasts, and by seizing Cadiz to "leave a thorn in her side." Even here Essex was thwarted; the council of war appointed Raleigh to lead the attack on Cadiz; and Essex had to content himself with thrusting his ship, the *Ark Royal*, close to Raleigh's. At last he got leave to do what he had wished to do at first—make a land attack with three thousand men; he dashed at the Spanish soldiers and drove all before him into Cadiz market-place. The town surrendered, and next day the citadel. "The Earl," wrote Raleigh to Cecil, "hath behaved himself both valiantly and advisedly in the highest degree; without pride, without favour; and hath gotten great favour and much love of all." Yet it was surely ill-advised to allow pillage, and lay the blame on the Dutch allies; and to have seized at Faro the library of Osorio, the learned Bishop of Algarve, was hardly atoned for by presenting it to the Bodleian.

The main objects of the expedition were lost; Cadiz was not retained; and, though Essex begged to be allowed to stay behind with twelve ships, the treasure-fleet was not waited for. It sailed into the Tagus two days after the English had gone home. As it was, the prizes were only valued at thirteen thousand pounds. Elizabeth grumbled, and with characteristic meanness haggled over the distribution of the money.

But Essex was the hero of the hour; sermons were preached in his praise, amid the applause which in that day greeted popular sermons; his popularity "made the old fox Burghley to crouch and whine," though Cecil, now Queen's Secretary, was as ill-disposed as ever, and said, "I am more braved by him than ever I was by any one in my life." And now Bacon, who had probably already gone over to the side of the Cecils, began plying Essex with advice. He was to give up military ambition; to remove the impression of his being self-opinionated; to disguise his feelings; to yield his personal likings at the Queen's will—all very easy for a cold, crafty nature like Bacon's, but wholly impossible for Essex, unless he was to become other than himself.

Then came the ill-fated Azores expedition,

on sailing for which he wrote to the Queen in terms of adulation excessive even for that time, and Cecil replied: "The Queen is now so disposed to have us all love you, as she and I do every night talk like angels of you."

What with storms and restrictions in the sealed orders, the fleet did nothing. Raleigh parted company, and took Fayal, a feat which Essex had reserved for himself. A reprimand to Raleigh from the council of war must have been poor consolation to his chief for being done out of the one little success of the expedition, for the treasure-fleet sailed by in the night, and though the English pursued, they only captured four heavily-laden merchantmen. Essex landed at Saint Michael's, where nothing could be got but oranges, and sailed home, saved from a large Spanish fleet that was way-laying him by the same storms which had harassed him all through. The Queen received him coldly, reproaching him for unkindness to Raleigh, and touching him where he was most sensitive by making Lord Howard of Effingham Earl of Nottingham, "for his services at Cadiz." This was certainly unfair, for whatever glory was gained at Cadiz was due to Essex. He was the more galled because the new Earl, being High Admiral, took precedence of other Earls, even of him who by two descents was kin to Royalty. Essex sulked, and called for a trial by combat between Nottingham, or any of his sons, and himself, and when Elizabeth heard about it, she took his part. Burghley, she said, had misled her, and her cousin was quite right in being indignant at the loss of position. She tried to make Nottingham yield the "pas," and when he declined, she made Essex Earl-Marshal, and thus secured him precedence after all. Did this encourage him to turn his back soon after on the Queen in the Council? Not only so, but, if Raleigh is to be believed, he said: "Your conditions are as crooked as your carcass." Elizabeth gave him a violent box on the ears, crying: "Go and be hanged, you unmannerly knave!" Then he put his hand to his sword, and said he would not brook such treatment from her father. How far the story is garbled we know not; Raleigh was sure to make the worst of anything Essex might do; and three months after he received a formal pardon, protesting all the while that the Queen had nothing to complain of, and that he was the injured party.

And now came the turning point of his life. "Study Ireland," said Bacon, his evil genius; and so when the crushing defeat of Bagenal by Hugh O'Neil made it needful to send over troops and a good General, he would go, though he felt that failure was almost certain, and though the eagerness of the Cecils to ship him off ought to have warned him. He was as pleased as a boy at having almost sovereign power and an army of eighteen thousand men; but the Dublin Council, doubtless moved by Cecil, at once began thwarting him. His plan—the best—was to dash at once into Ulster. "No," they said, "you can't victual your army there." So precious time was lost in a military parade through the South.

At Arklow, where alone there was any fighting, his new troops did not stand fire; and as he returned he was attacked by Rory O'More in what the Irish call "the pass of plumes," from the number of gallants whose feathers were scattered in the skirmish.

After decimating the troops that had been beaten at Arklow, and shooting Piers Walsh, one of their officers, Essex at last marched north with four thousand men, all he had left. Elizabeth pursued him with scolding letters; first he was making too many knights; next she protested against Sir Christopher Blount, his mother's third husband, being on his council; worst of all, he had made Southampton master of his horse, although the fellow had secretly married a maid of honour, a far worse sin in Elizabeth's eyes than "compromising" half-a-dozen of them.

Now Hugh O'Neil had been brought up at the English Court, and was in all respects the very opposite of the typical Ulster chieftain. He had been made Earl of Tyrone, and was cultured after the peculiar Tudor fashion. So when he had persuaded Essex to meet him quite alone, each riding his horse six yards into the river which sundered their armies, Essex may well have thought:

"What quarrel has England with this man? He only wants his rights, as I should in his case." And at a second meeting peace was arranged, even freedom of worship being granted to "Papists," though Essex chaffed O'Neil about his insistence on this point. "Thou carest as much for religion as my horse here."

Tyrone undertook to force the lesser chiefs to accept England's suzerainty, and to bring over also his great rival, O'Donnell; and Essex "went to take

physic at Drogheda"—the Irish climate seems to have agreed badly with the English of that day.

Elizabeth was furious to think that the arch-traitor should be let off so easily. Her letter was so violent that Essex hurriedly swore in some Lords Justices, gave the army to Ormond, and went post-haste to London, rushing into the Queen's bed-chamber, travel-stained as he was, at ten a.m. The Queen received him kindly—whenever he could see her alone, he was always sure to get on well with her—and later in the day gave him a "tête-à-tête" of an hour and a half. Then Cecil saw her; and when Essex came again, her manner was quite changed, and next day he was confined to York House on various charges, one of them being forcing himself into the Royal bed-chamber. The day before his wife had had a child, but he was forbidden to see her, and was cut off from all his friends. He fell ill; but the Queen was implacable, though by-and-by she sent eight doctors to report on his case. On Christmas Day, 1599, prayers were put up in the city churches for Essex's recovery and restoration to Royal favour. He sent a New Year's gift to the Queen, who returned it; and Lady Rich, his sister, was refused leave to see him. Only the very critical state of his health prevented his being brought before the Star Chamber, though he wrote a piteous letter begging to be spared that indignity.

Meanwhile Bacon, professing to work for Essex, was really doing his uttermost to aggravate the charges against him. The trial did not begin till June, 1600, the charges being: The journey into Munster; the dishonourable treaty with the arch-rebel Tyrone; the contemptuous leaving of his command; the promoting of Southampton; the lavish making of knights. Having their cue to find the prisoner guilty, Coke outdid himself in coarse violence, and Bacon followed with petty slanders about Essex having allowed Hayward's "Henry the Fourth" to be dedicated to him in words only applicable to Royalty. Essex forced Cecil to admit that he was clear of the charge of disloyally yielding to Tyrone; nevertheless the Lord Keeper sentenced him to be dismissed from all offices, and imprisonment in Essex House during the Queen's pleasure. The history of the trial is obscure; only a fragment of Bacon's report survives.

Symes Morison probably tells truth as far as he knew it; but (despite Mr. Sped-

ding) it is almost certain that "Tyrone's propositions," on which document the accusation mainly rested, was one of those malignant forgeries, "at which," says Mr. S. L. Lee, "the highest dignitaries of Elizabeth's Court habitually connived."

Essex's imprisonment was not severe. His health again failing, he was placed in charge of his uncle Knollys in Oxfordshire, and, after several humble letters, full of the grovelling flattery in which she delighted, the Queen, at the end of August, set him at liberty. But the estrangement seemed complete. To congratulations on her accession anniversary, and other letters, he got no reply. There seemed nothing for it but to do as he had often threatened to do before—remove by force the men who stood between him and his kinswoman's favour. He had many adherents; but news that he had been betrayed led him to hurry on his rising. The City, he felt sure, was with him, and would help him to put pressure on the Cecils; but when he got to Fenchurch Street, not a single citizen had joined him; the Sheriff, a professed friend, had disappeared, and he found Cecil's brother proclaiming him and his adherents traitors. A rush to Whitehall showed him that all the approaches were barricaded. The Bishop of London, with a troop of soldiers, attacked his two hundred men. Essex House was besieged, and, instead of sallying out sword in hand and playing the hero's game, as he did at Cadiz—"the most brilliant exploit of English arms," says Macaulay, "between Agincourt and Blenheim"—he surrendered on condition that his followers should get fair treatment. His trial is Bacon's condemnation.

Of course Essex was condemned; though had he begged for pardon, Elizabeth would probably have relented, in spite of Raleigh's cruel letter to Cecil urging him not to relent.

The ring story I have already dealt with. To Biron, Henry the Fourth's envoy, the Queen spoke very bitterly of Essex; and she thanked James the Sixth for his servile congratulations that rebellion was suppressed. Bacon published an "apology" which only sets his character in a yet baser light; but all eulogies of the Earl were rigorously suppressed; what were written had to be published at Antwerp, where there was something like a free press.

Poor Essex! Of his really sweet nature, his letter to his fellow sufferer Southampton, and his prayers to Lords

Morley and De la Warr to be forgiven for leading their sons astray, are evidence. He wrote love-songs—"There is none, oh none, but you," and "Change thy mind since she doth change," and a few more are preserved in manuscript collections—and he largely patronised the drama. Naturally, Southampton's friend would be intimate with Shakespeares.

There is only one more Devereux, hisson, the "Essex" of the Civil Wars, in whose favour his father's attainder was reversed by James, in 1604. At fourteen, James, who thought his father had been done to death, married him to an heiress of the Howards. But while the lad was away on the grand tour, his wife fell in love with James's handsome favourite, Carr. James deserted Essex, making Carr Earl of Somerset, that Lady Essex—who, dressed as a page, had held his horse while he fought her husband, and who was suing for a divorce—might not lose rank by marrying him.*

This Essex was the last of his race. His conduct in the Civil War everybody knows. "Stone dead hath no fellow," was his advice as to Strafford, so convinced was he that the King's promise to give up his adviser could not be trusted. Charles showed his folly by trying to win Essex over by honours and compliments; but he went straight on on the constitutional line, showed his father's bravery when a regiment was running away at Edgehill; made the great blunder of carrying his army into Cornwall, where it had to surrender; and anticipated the "self-denying ordinance" by resigning. He was then very ill; and dying not long after, had a splendid state funeral. So end the Devereux.

A MILL ON THE DARENT.

As a rule, there is an obvious reason why particular industries should be centralised in particular places, and we at once understand why this should be a cotton centre and that a hardware centre; why this should be famous for iron-foundries and ship-building and that for its glass-making; why there should be special neighbourhoods for the production of pottery, or bricks, or cider, or cheese, or bacon, or fruit. But, on the other

hand, to the uninitiated outsider it would appear that chance or tradition has as much to do with the clinging around certain localities of certain industries, as any particular adaptability of the locality. For instance, he does not at first sight understand why Nottingham should be famous for lace-making, or Coventry for ribbon, or Buckinghamshire for chair-making, or Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire for straw-plaiting, or the country around Norwich for weaving, or Kent should remain as it always has been, famous for paper-making.

Of course there are reasons—as a rule, historical—for these seemingly accidental concentrations; but in the case of the Kent paper-making trade the reason is simple and practical—that in Kent there is an unlimited supply of pure spring water, which can be used without filtration. Papers that are made in Kent could not be made in any other part of the United Kingdom, as it has been found impossible to obtain elsewhere water of sufficient clearness to produce the brilliant purity of colour for which the Kentish paper is famous.

The first paper-mill in England was probably at Stevenage, in Hertfordshire; but there is historical evidence that paper-mills existed at Dartford, in Kent, early in the reign of Elizabeth. They have never deserted the neighbourhood, and, so famous have the mills built on the Cray, the Darent, and the Medway become, that there is hardly a corner of the world where Kentish paper, like the Newcastle grindstone, is not to be found.

Snugly situated on the banks of the pleasant Darent river—nay, over the river itself—is the particular mill which we have chosen as a type—that of Messrs. Spalding and Hodge, standing within the parish of Horton Kirby, and known by that name, although close to the Farningham Road station and the village of Sutton at Hone.

There has been a paper-mill on this spot for more than a hundred years; but, between the Georgian mill which depended upon the little Darent for its motive power and upon a rough Kentish road for its means of transport, and its descendant of to-day, fitted up with the latest steam appliances and close to a busy main-line of railway, the difference is enormous.

After passing through an arch of the railway viaduct, which forms an imposing, although hardly a beautiful, entrance to

* It is some consolation that Carr and Lady Essex, accused of Sir T. Overbury's murder, ended by hating one another as vehemently as they had loved. For years they lived in the same house, poor, wretched, without exchanging a word.

the premises, we are at once transported from the tranquil world of shady lanes, hop-gardens, fruit-grounds, and orchards into the busy, active sphere of advanced modern industry. Immense ranges of buildings surround us; tall chimneys rise up on all sides; but rarely is the sweet country air tainted by exhalations from them, for the coal used is smokeless; the clang of hammers, the puffing of steam, the ceaseless whirr and thud of mighty machinery salute the ear; grimy men with bared arms peer forth from caverns lit by the lurid glare of a score of furnaces; great waggons pass us—those which we meet, laden with packed paper on its way to distribution all over the world; those which overtake us, filled with coals, or bales of rags and esparto grass.

On our right, behind us, is a peaceful oasis—a broad sheet of water wherein swans glide, reflecting the handsome front of the mills and washing the grassy slopes of the gardens attached to the private residence of the mill proprietors—and beyond this again rise the wooded hills leading away past an ancient church tower and the fine old Elizabethan mansion of Franks, to the pretty village of Farningham, ever dear to those who love “the contemplative man’s recreation.”

But we are here to see a paper-mill, and not to go into ecstasies over Kentish scenery, so we enter the first room, after having been informed by way of introduction that the manufacture of paper consists of six stages: washing, disintegration and reduction to pulp of the washed material—be it esparto grass or rags, or a mixture of both—the spreading of the pulp into layers, the draining it, the drying it, and the pressing and cutting of the paper.

In this first room the esparto grass, which principally comes from the Mediterranean coast of Spain, is being thrown by girls, with handkerchiefs bound over their heads as a protection from the dust, into a winnowing and disintegrating machine, which tears the wisps asunder. Hence the grass, now in bunches like hay, ascends up an inclined plane to the washing and boiling room; the winnowing machine, by crushing and separating the knots and excrescences, having prepared it for more complete reduction.

At the same time the rags—carefully chosen linen rags for the fine paper which alone is made here—have been boiled with caustic soda, and are ready to pass into

a cast-iron cistern, wherein they will be thoroughly disintegrated by a rapidly revolving cylinder set with blades, at the same time that they pass through pure clean water obtained, not from the river below, but from artesian wells.

Rags and grass, when thoroughly disintegrated, drained, and reduced to pulp, now pass to the bleaching-room. Here in large, round cisterns, we see the esparto grass in the shape of a yellow pulp slowly turning round and round under the engine which is in the cistern, helped on its way by the occasional application of a wooden shovel wielded by a dexterous hand. The pouring in of chloride of lime converts the yellow esparto mass into loose, white pulp; its condition at the conclusion of this, the second process, being that which is technically known as “half stuff.”

From the bleaching-room the “half stuff” descends to a large apartment, or rather gallery, where are the “beating-engines.” Rag pulp, however, retains chlorine longer than does esparto pulp; and, before it passes to the beating-engines, must lie in solution for some hours, in order that it may again be drained and pressed.

In the beating-room the “half stuff,” still in round cast-iron cisterns, receives the sizing matter which is necessary in the case of paper designed for printing purposes, this sizing matter being a mixture of pounded alum and resin, and also whatever colouring that may be required—generally a deep ultramarine—which is poured on to it through square sieves before the mixture assumes the consistency of smooth, firm pulp, into which it is beaten by the rapidly revolving engine in the cistern.

From the beating-room the smooth pulp passes through a machine, which clears it from knots and unevenness of surface, into a trough, and from this trough it flows over a broad moleskin band on to an arrangement of wire-cloth situated in the last, and to us the most interesting, room of all.

This fine wire-cloth is an endless band passing over small rollers, and as the pulp slowly passes over it—in appearance not unlike gelatine coloured white—it receives a “jogging” movement, which serves to drain it completely.

From the wire-cloth the pulp passes under a “dandy roll,” which impresses upon it the water-mark; and from under

this roll it emerges in a tolerably compact condition, no longer pulp but paper, although delicate and brittle, and passes between two larger cylinders or rollers, covered with thick felt, which harden and solidify it still more, and serve to expel every atom of moisture which may not have drained through the wire-cloth.

After this, all that remains to be done is to dry the paper, which, after leaving the felt-bound rollers, has attained sufficient elasticity and strength to be independent of any support in the shape of endless strap. The drying process is carried out by means of a system of rotating steel cylinders, heated internally by steam, in and out of which the length of paper winds until it is finally caught upon a wooden roller at the end of the room, in the shape of the smooth, white, firm article of commerce. Practically, with such splendid machines in use as we see before us, there is no limit to the "web" of the paper manufactured. Indeed, Messrs. Spalding despatched to the Melbourne Exhibition, as a specimen of what could be done, one "web" which was nine miles and a half in length; and the piece might have been prolonged almost indefinitely.

From this interesting room the rollers of paper are taken to a large, cheerful, airy gallery, occupied almost entirely by women and girls, where the "webs" undergo the final processes previous to their despatch into the world in the shape of printing or writing paper. The paper first passes through a press and automatic cutting-machine, emerging down an inclined board in the shape of large sheets of paper, into the hands of small girls, who, at this work of receiving the pressed and cut paper, and making it into piles, serve their first apprenticeship to the business.

These piles of sheets next pass to older girls, who stand at a long counter, and who, with a seemingly marvellous dexterity only begot by constant practice, count the sheets by fours and pass them to the packer, the tier-up, or the envelope-maker. This dexterity and accuracy of counting by finger we have only seen equalled by the Chinese "shroffs" of oriental business houses, who, counting by "fours," as do the Kentish paper girls, calculate a thousand silver dollars, rejecting at the same time all bad or doubtful coin, in less time than a European would require to count a hundred.

Here we cannot refrain from making the observation that our notions of the presence

and appearance of the "mill-hand," as derived from portraits of that lady as she exists in the great industrial centres of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and as therefore applied to the entire community by an inexperienced outsider, received a pleasant contradiction at this Kentish paper-mill. Without a single exception we noticed that the women and girls were neat, clean, pleasant-looking, and decidedly contented. From the nature of their occupation, those employed in the first, or winnowing room, were coarsely attired, and somewhat more dishevelled in appearance than those engaged in the cleaner and less energetic occupations of the last room; but there was nothing of the rough about them, and certainly none of the boisterous and more or less language-garnished familiarity which greets even the most powerfully-escorted visitor to the North-country mill.

In the case of writing paper, the "web," as received from the drying-room, after having been pressed, must go through further processes of sizing, and glazing, and cutting to pattern, all of which are performed by the most rapid and exact of perfected modern machinery.

Envelopes are turned out of a complicated little machine in an astonishing manner, the folding and gumming of the previously-shaped paper being done with what strikes the unaccustomed observer as almost magical rapidity and accuracy.

It may be interesting to readers to know that the whole of the paper used in the production of this journal comes from the manufactory of which we are attempting to give a description.

Naturally a community such as that connected with these Horton Kirby Mills, numbering some four hundred souls, forms a small colony per se, and must, therefore, be to some extent self-dependent. Hence, in addition to the paper-making staff proper, we have engineers and firemen, carpenters and blacksmiths, forming a strong company of their own, and associated entirely with the splendid sets of engines, which are well worthy of minute examination.

Outside the paper-making buildings proper are the carpenters' shops and the smiths' department, wherein are not only the endless repairs inseparable from such an establishment done, but many of the component parts of the various engines, such as the wooden rollers, which receive the paper in its last stage, made.

Nor should the packing-room be omitted

as unworthy of attention. Here the finished paper is pressed by hydraulic power, when intended for export, and packed apparently with such security and tightness as to defy any attempt at unpacking; whilst the paper intended for home consumption naturally requires less exact treatment, but not less skill in the art of compressing a good deal into a small space.

Here we take leave of our Kentish paper-mill, after a visit all too short for the amount of interest and instruction compressed into it; and as we compare our handful of esparto grass with the smooth, white paper into the likeness of which it can be converted, we involuntarily pay a tribute of respect to the marvellous ingenuity, precision, and perfection to which science has brought what, in the days when the Paston Letters were written, was the crudest of arts. Here, too, we may fittingly acknowledge the kindness and patience with which we were shown over the mills, and initiated into the mysteries of paper-making.

HIS MODEL.

"Got a model for it at last? You've waited long enough."

"Found her last month."

"Working hard?"

"Very."

The two men were walking slowly, but they had reached the next street before his friend spoke again to the painter.

"Going to let me see it?" he said.

"Yes, if you like. Come any time, I'm nearly sure to be there, and ten to one you'll see the woman too."

"What's she like?"

"What I wanted exactly. Her face is perfect. Odd though, she is—more odd than most of them."

"How so?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's her eyes, I think. This is my corner. You'll turn up, then?"

"Yes, to-day possibly. I'm not doing much."

The painter walked quickly, after he left his friend, down a long, narrow street, till he came to a row of studios. He let himself into the second of the row—a long room, full of suggestive bits of colour, odds and ends of drapery here and there, and one or two curious old oak chairs and brackets. No one was there. The painter was ten minutes before the time he

had appointed for the model of whom he had spoken to his friend. He pulled into the middle of the room from one corner an easel with a canvas on it, and taking the covering from it stood looking at it, one of his hands resting on the easel. It was not a large canvas, but the story he had chosen to tell on it was strong. The central figure was that of a woman. She stood, a tall, white figure, half-leaning against an old, grey wall, to fall the next moment beside it in death; her white draperies were stained with blood; a dagger had been flung from her dying hand, which grasped and crushed in the agony of death the crimson roses growing over the grey stones. Not far from her, in the background, seeing only each other, were the man who had given away, and the woman who had taken, the love that should have been hers and hers only. "Death," he meant to call it. It was one of those pictures, the first sight of which makes a mental impression which is a life-long possession. The drawing was wonderful, and the colouring perfect, but the painter's gaze concentrated itself on the splendid, white, drawn beauty of the face, and the frown with which he first uncovered his work deepened on his forehead. "Not an atom right, yet! Am I going to get the right thing there? I will have it—somehow. I can't—ah," with a change in his voice, "good morning," as a tall, slender woman came in.

"I am not late?" she asked, eagerly.

"No," he said, "I was early here. I'm ready for work, though."

She moved with a curious, graceful noiselessness to one corner of the large room, to lay on one of the oak chairs the shabby little hat which had partly hidden, but could not spoil, the high white brow, and low-growing, beautiful, yellow hair. In a few moments she wore, instead of the black dress, which was even more shabby than the hat, the flowing draperies he had painted, fastened at her waist with a silver girdle, and, with part of her long, wavy hair falling over her shoulders, stood before the painter, a face and form which had needed and received, in his picture, but little idealising. Her eyes were not the most noticeable thing about her at the first glance. They were very dark, unusually so for a fair woman, and there was something terrible in the light which could shine in them sometimes, so vividly that every other feature of her face seemed insignificant. She came to the end of the room

where he waited, and he began his work. Once or twice an impatient sigh from him broke the silence, and each time she raised her eyes to his face. They had a bright, intense light in them, but she said nothing, and he never saw the look.

The painter worked hard and long, and it was growing late in the afternoon. His model had silently watched him, had moved where he asked her, had stood as he wished her to stand, for two hours, when the door of the studio opened quickly and a high-pitched woman's voice said :

"May I come in?"

"Come in, yes," he said, rather impatiently, without turning his head, and a dark, small woman came across the room, a large silver *châtelaine* she wore jingling gently as she walked. She was very pretty, faultlessly pretty, and perfectly dressed.

"I'm sorry," she said, when she reached the painter and stood beside his easel. He stopped working, and turned towards her with a look on his face which was not vexation, not bitterness, but something of both. Yet the tone in which he said, "Yes—what is it?" was patient.

"I'm sorry," she repeated in a low tone. "You know I never do want to worry you here—I hardly ever come, do I? But I forgot to ask you for that cheque, and I must go to Madame Rose to-day. You know you said you'd take me on Tuesday to—oh, thank you," as taking his cheque-book out of his pocket, he tore a cheque out hastily and gave her.

"It's blank," she said.

"I told you——" she began, then suddenly breaking off as she turned to go, "Oh, is this the picture I heard the Professor asking you about on Thursday? I'm not sure if I like it"—going two or three steps back to look at it—"it's so dreadful. It's your great picture, isn't it? Will it sell, do you think?"

"It's not finished," was all he answered.

"Of course when it is finished, I mean. I must go, I'm so sorry to have interrupted you. You'll be home to dinner?" and without waiting for his answer the perfectly dressed little figure, with the jingling *châtelaine*, was gone out of the studio again.

He turned back to his work. He had not had time to look again at his model; had he looked at her, the burning light of the dark eyes would have startled him.

Then the door opened again, and the man who had walked with him to the

studio that morning came in, saying cheerily :

"I told you I should turn up. Hallo, is that it?"

He came up to the picture, and walked first to one point, then to another, to get on it the light he wanted. He found it at last, and stood perfectly still for a long five minutes, it seemed to the painter. Then he came close to him, and putting his hand on his shoulder, said heartily :

"That's all right; you know it is. Except—do you think you've got the agony of death—in the face, you know? I shouldn't have thought it was strong enough."

He did not wait for an answer, but gave a curious glance at the woman with the dark eyes, as he chattered on with his friend about small technical details. Then, breaking off abruptly, he said he must go; and as the painter accompanied him downstairs said :

"Odd, did you call her? I never saw such eyes. But what a perfect face!"

The painter came back to the studio in a few moments to find the tall, beautiful woman, his model, standing with one hand on the easel, looking fixedly at her own counterpart. She turned to him abruptly when he came in.

"What is it you want in it?" she said. "It is true, the death agony is not there."

He was so surprised that he could not at first answer; but the dark eyes were fixed on him, and feeling as if the words were drawn out of him without his consent, he said :

"No; I know I cannot get it—cannot realise it. Every day it seems nearer, and then farther from me, and I must have it. I must have success. I cannot do without it. Heaven knows I have nothing else."

The dark eyes looked him through and through, and, it seemed to him, forced the words from him. The next instant, when she had turned her head and stood looking at the sky outside, he felt as if he had waked from a dream. How otherwise could he have spoken thus to a woman he knew hardly at all—only as his model? More quietly he went on :

"I suppose I ought to see it—the thing itself. Of course I've studied death; but a passionate death like this—it's impossible, of course." She looked at him again, and he finished hurriedly : "All my work is nothing without it. I must get it."

It was late, too late for any more work,

he said. She dressed quickly, again putting on the shabby black hat over her glorious hair.

"Wednesday, for an hour, at the same time," he said.

"Wednesday," she answered, nothing more, and was gone.

Alone, quickly, along narrow back streets she walked, until she came to the dark little room which was hers. She sat down in the window without one glance at anything in the room, only taking off her hat and dropping it beside her on the floor. One elbow was on the window-sill. She rested her head on her hand and sat perfectly still, her eyes on the fading sunset.

Our lives can come so very near to each other and never touch.

How was he to know—the man she had left half an hour ago—how near the longings she had made him speak of came to her? How was he to know that the weeks during which she had been his model, had been for this woman one intense storm of passion; that she who had used her beauty to deceive one man after another in her short, restless life, now, for the first time, loved too wildly and passionately ever again to give one thought or look to any man on earth beside; that to stand for one day in the place of the woman who had given half a glance at his work that afternoon, this woman would have given her soul? He would never know, or care to know. Never know, either, the thought which gave her face, as she looked steadily out at the sunset, an expression it had never worn before. Her eyes flashed, and into her face came a deeper and deeper colour, but she did not move, only her hands held each other in a grasp which grew tighter and tighter.

He wanted something. She could give it him. Life, which had been valueless to her, grew suddenly priceless. She, and she only could— On Wednesday, he should have it.

For more than an hour the painter had been working on Wednesday, then remembering the time he had told her was over:

"To-morrow I'll go on," he said.

"No, not to-morrow," she answered. "Now!"

He was so engrossed with his work, and so expecting some ordinary response from her, that he did not, at first, realise what she had said. A moment later he did; the odd tone of her voice ringing suddenly

in his ear. He looked up quickly. The wonderful dark eyes were fixed on him—held him fast. They lighted a face white with the whiteness of death. Once more they flashed—at his voice in a choked, terrified exclamation. Then their light was gone. He had reached her too late; the dagger fell from her hand; there was a quick gasp, one long, quivering sigh, and when he raised her in his arms he had seen the death agony of "a passionate death."

"Not seen his great picture! Why, where have you been, my dear fellow? Oh, only a fortnight home. Thought it was more. My memory's going—over-work! Third room of course—come along. Fine, isn't it? Wonderful, that death agony in the face. Did you hear—Oh, you didn't! Odd thing—awful! His model stabbed herself before he had finished it. Thinking of it turned her head, I suppose. It's twice the picture it was, though—saw it in March. He's made his name now, that's certain."

A POPULAR RESORT.

WOULD you have an Arcadian valley where rural simplicity reigns in full force? You may find it within a dozen miles of the General Post Office, and within the beat of the Metropolitan Police. Such a one is the valley of the Brent for many miles of its course. Here is a spot that railways have never penetrated, nor, in the days before railways, had it ever heard the twanging horn of the stage-coach. It is doubtful, indeed, whether even a carrier's cart has been seen in this part of the valley. Roads are few, and they lead a long way round. Finger-posts exist, some of them indicating "London" among the villages to which they show the way; but these are not numerous, and it is easy to lose your way between Greenford Parva and Magna, and to wander far without meeting anybody to put you in the right way. Greenford Parva, by the way, is the stately and official title for Perivale—which some say should be Purevale, on account of the purity of its air and the limpidity of its waters—while Greenford Magna justifies its description by extending, from one end to the other, perhaps a couple of miles, but with little more than a dozen of houses to show by the way. Something about the little River Brent

seems to bring calm and seclusion wherever it flows. Here you come upon primitive little bridges, with footways elevated so as to keep out of the reach of the floods; there you lose sight of the stream as it winds its way through the meadows fringed with silvery willows and darker alders. And yet, if you start with the Brent from where it loses itself in Father Thames, the character just given to the stream will seem singularly inappropriate. Brentford seems to be a favoured seat of all kinds of unpleasant manufactures, and its one long street has nothing attractive about it. And yet you may catch a glimpse of orchards, cottages, and pleasant meadows, beyond the factories and gas-works, which may suggest that old Brentford, in the days of its early monarchs, say, was a pleasant place enough, and a capital worthy of its rival kings.

Anyhow, there is pleasant country between Brentford and Hanwell, with Heaton and Osterley Park close at hand, all well wooded and cheerful; and the River Brent comes wimpling through the meadows, a quiet country stream, before it joins the canal and goes into business towards Brentford. There is a pleasant lane, too, that leads past Hanwell Park, with its tall elms, and lush grass, and weedy avenues leading to the old brown stuccoed house, all empty and deserted—a grassy winding way that comes out at Greenford.

It was Greenford a thousand years ago, and it is Greenford still, only the ford has been supplemented by a couple of humble wooden bridges crossing the two channels of the Brent, which manages to take up a good deal of room about here, and leaves abundant traces on the green, rank herbage of the floods it sometimes indulges in. In fact, the river requires elbow-room, just because it makes an elbow—and a very decided elbow—at this very spot. The stream comes almost due west, as if it meant to join the Colne before it reached the Thames; but it takes a swirl round by the green ford, and then marches almost due south for Brentford. And just at the elbow is a little country inn retired from the highway, with a green about it that slopes down to the river, upon which a number of ducks and geese are preening their snowy plumage.

Through trees and hedges you get a glimpse of the river, as it pursues its way on its changed course between banks of the most vivid green. On a bench by the

ale-house door, some haymakers are resting and refreshing themselves. The little house shines white against the dark foliage beyond, and its sign, swinging far in advance from a tall post, shows against the dun yellow of a huge haystack that is growing bigger and bigger as the loaded waggons come in from the fields. Other mighty stacks have been finished and thatched, and almost hide from sight the farmhouse and its new brick buildings. Then there is a glimpse of a road that runs up the hill, cool and pleasant in the shade of tall trees, and of some old-fashioned houses, roofed with red ridge-tiles, that make a one-sided street of the country road.

It is an "annus mirabilis" for green Greenford this year of grace, eighty-eight; August well in and the corn harvest just due, and here we are in haymaking time. Hay and grass seem to be all in all in this happy valley. There was a good deal more ploughing done here in the days of the Conqueror than now; for then a large proportion of the land of the manor was arable, and six or seven teams of stately oxen might have been seen at work on the brown fields. And in the early part of the century, when Lysons compiled his "Environs of London," there were still nearly three hundred acres under the plough. Now we have changed all that—there is nothing but grass to be seen all along the wide fields.

It is something of a walk from the ford to the end of the village, where is the church and the vicarage, with a few scattered houses and a cottage or two, where, in the windows, may be seen a small store of sweets, with cottons and needles, and such items of village traffic. Every cottage has its little garden, gay with all kinds of flowers; and, indeed, flowers seem to flourish with great luxuriance all through the valley. And Greenford Church is a small and ancient building, mostly of flint, and roofed with red tiles, with a wooden porch and tower, very homely but taking; and some ancient monuments are within.

Little altered, indeed, is the place in all probability for all the centuries since the Conquest; no, nor for long years before; hardly at all, perhaps, since King Ethelred gave the manor to the Abbey of Westminster. It has been Church property ever since; only in the sixteenth century it was transferred to the Bishop of London, and to this circumstance is due some part of its unchangeableness.

From opposite the church a field-path leads to Perivale—a path through many fields, and all of the largest possible size; in some of them lines of men are tedding the hay; in others, the grass is still uncut. There are stiles of the good old country pattern, and on this broiling day, especially grateful is the shade from the hedgerow trees and the rest afforded by the broad-backed stile. Out of the grassy plain rises a chain of hills, of a really commanding aspect, the chief of which, tufted with trees, among which appear the roofs of houses and tall chimney-stacks, is known as Horsington Hill. Then we have

The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,
The willow-tufted bank. . . .

And from the top of the high-arched bridge there is to be seen a slow procession of gaily-painted barges that have loaded, perhaps, at the London Docks, and whose voyage may end at some smoky, busy Midland town, but which are here enjoying the dolce far niente of this calmest and most peaceful of vales.

The field-path ends at last in a country lane just at the foot of the hill that has been such a conspicuous object all the way; and the lane abuts upon a highway where there is a farmhouse, and a duck-pond, and more big haystacks, and this is Perivale. Past the farmhouse opens out another field-path, and this way lies the church, which is smaller than Greenford Church, but of much the same character, with its homely wooden tower and air of hale antiquity. Here we have the canal again, taking a graceful sweep through the fields, and we might follow the tow-path to Paddington, with a view of Kensal Green by the way from its grassy banks. Or the foot-path will take us directly across to Castle Bar, Ealing, where lamp-posts make their appearance, and cabs are to be met with, and the varied resources of civilisation are at hand.

Or, again, we may follow the course of the Brent up to Twyford, which is as green and pleasant and secluded as any part of Brent vale. The name of Twyford Abbey suggests ruins and monastic traditions; but if ruins there are, they must be built up in the modern house, and except for a little church in the grounds which serves the neighbourhood, there is nothing of an ecclesiastical character to mark the spot.

Above Twyford, the river, still avoiding the busy haunts of men, passes between Wilsdon and Neasdon, and rises somewhere on the borders of Barnet Heath

—at least, so people say, and the Ordnance Map confirms it, although we may have a private opinion that this part of the river course has never been thoroughly explored. Even the region we have just traversed with so much pleasure is almost unknown, except to the most enterprising pedestrians. There was one Hassell, an artist who fifty years or more ago made a sketching tour along the Paddington and Grand Junction Canals, and published the result with a description of the route in a volume which is now rather scarce. Well, this route should have brought our artist into the very midst of our Arcadian valley; but he abandons the track when on its verge with a crude remark to the effect that beyond such a point the route affords no interest. Has anybody since explored this sweet valley, and recorded the result in permanent form? If so, the result has escaped the researches of the present writer.

Between the source of the Brent, however, and that undiscovered region in the Wilsdon and Neasdon quarter, where the river must be put to it to escape the enterprising builder of the period—between these two points we come again upon the river under widely changed conditions. It seems comic to talk of seclusion or tranquillity in connection with the Edgware Road, and yet, there it is. The busy and dusty Edgware Road escapes from shops and emporiums; it leaves behind nursery gardens, villas, terraces; its omnibuses grow fewer and fewer. It takes some formidable heights in its course, it trundles down Shootup Hill, and scales the pleasant heights of Cricklewood. The road to Dollis Hill is passed, and fields and hedgerows are struggling hard in a losing battle with bricks and mortar. And then the road takes a rise and dip, and we are unexpectedly in a lake country. Soft, green hills encompass a wide expanse of water, the influx of which we cross by a low, arched bridge. The upper end of the lake is lost among the hills. White sails catch the furtive gleams of sunshine, and shine forth out of the soft watery distance; gay pleasure-boats dimple the placid surface of the lake. Here a foot-path winds up a green hillside; there, beyond the bridge, stands a house, which has every appearance of one of the old-fashioned coaching inns of the olden time, with stables, great outbuildings, roomy courtyards; but so far from being grass-grown and deserted, like the most part of its con-

temporaries, here it is in full tide of business. What torrents of ale pour from spouting beer-engines; how crowded the bars; how thronged the restaurations! What vehicles drive up to the hospitable doors; what ostlers and helpers are busy with the sheeted coach-horses! Here are beer-gardens, pleasure-gardens, tea-gardens—all with gay flower-beds, and soft parterres, and grassy lawns sloping down to the water's edge; and if all the world of London does not find its way to the pleasant scene, on fine summer evenings—when such there be—it is a numerous section of it that finds the materials for a happy day among the varied resources of the place.

This is the Welsh Harp—the old Welsh Harp—and its name was probably given to it in compliment to the Welshmen who used to come in such throngs to the great cattle fairs at Barnet and elsewhere. Our artistic precursor, Hassell, relates how, wandering in these parts, he came across great herds of wild black Welsh cattle, on their way to the fair, attended by Welsh drovers almost as dark and wild, whose picturesque costumes, vivid gestures, and unknown tongue, were in strange contrast to their placid English surroundings. The lake, however, which gives so much importance to the place as a pleasure resort, is of origin comparatively modern, having been formed in 1838, it is said, to supply the locks of the Regent's Park Canal, then in process of construction.

But was there nothing in the way of pool or mere, already existing, to form the nucleus of the lake? At the head of the lake, which is nearly three miles in length, stands the village of Kingsbury, which, as its name implies, was once the seat of Royalty; perhaps of one of the petty princes of the Saxon Heptarchy. It has an interesting church, small and ancient, whose walls contain Roman bricks and tiles, and which bears traces, it is said, of pre-Norman masonry. The adjoining pool would account for the choice of the site for a hunting lodge and pleasure house by the Saxon Princes—as aquatic in their tastes as their descendants. Anyhow, the waterfowl seem to recognise the place as an ancient haunt. Tern, snipe, plover, gulls, widgeon, and other aquatic birds resort to the lake, and rare and curious birds are occasional visitants. There is good store of fish, too, in the waters: jack, bream, perch, and carp, which often attain to Royal proportions, and the Harp is the

head-quarters of sundry angling clubs, while multitudes who love an occasional day's fishing, take tickets for the preserved waters of the lake.

Our first view of the Harp and its surroundings was obtained from a railway carriage on the Midland line, where there is a station named after the hotel—a carriage thickly packed with Bank Holiday excursionists, some of whom were going on to Saint Albans, while others alighted to join the assemblage at the Welsh Harp. But the road was the wonderful sight—the long stretch of Edgware Road, up hill and down dale, thronged with carriages and vehicles of every kind and degree. Here are loaded omnibuses; here are great four-horse vans clustered thickly with passengers; here are landaus, britzskas, and vehicles of ancient build, that see daylight perhaps only on Bank Holidays; with gigs and dog-carts, pony traps and donkey carts, all occupied by a lively and musical crowd, who sing and play, and exchange lively sallies with passers-by, the ladies being even more ready and quick of repartee than their companions. Cyclists, too, whirl past in scores, and parties of equestrians come pounding along on horses hired for the day, and at a pace which has evidently been arranged beforehand between the sagacious steed and his master at home, and which the rider has little power to alter. Along the road, in every open nook, appear tents and booths, with flags and streamers fluttering in the breeze.

And now comes rattling down the hill and over the bridge, with a merry blast of the horn, the "Wonder" coach for Saint Albans, while the horses for the change troop amiably out of the stable yards, and everybody is on the alert for one of the events of the day. There are three minutes for refreshments while the horses are being changed, and the coachman emerges with a red, red rose in his button-hole, which was not there before, and thus, with the cognizance of the house of Lancaster displayed, the coach departs for Saint Albans.

But in a general way the vehicles halt for a good deal longer than the conventional three minutes, at the hospitable doors of the Harp. All kinds of stray performers take advantage of the general halt, to claim attention—jugglers and mountebanks, gipsy fortune-tellers—but strange to say, no card-sharpers or purse-trick men. Either the police are too vigilant, or these knights of industry pro-

claim a truce with the world in general to-day, and keep Bank Holiday themselves.

But if from all this festive bustle, we turn aside to the field-path over the hill, at once the ancient charm reasserts itself. How quiet the place is, how secluded, how thoroughly rural in spite of all the passing crowd! The greenshelving banks of the lake, indeed, are crowded with holiday-makers, flags wave and music plays, and there is a confused sound of shouts and laughter, as swings go up and down, and cars revolve, and all the fun so dear to holiday-makers proceeds at full blast. But through it all come the soft whisper of the breeze, the gentle plash of the water against the shore, the sound of a creaking oar, the twitter of birds in the hedgerows, and the cawing of distant rooks who are keeping, too, their Bank Holiday.

Here we see that a wide creek makes from the main body of the lake, and winds up a subsidiary valley, giving variety to the outline of the lake, and enhancing the effect of the wide sweep of waters. Flanking the creek, and stretching down to the edge of the lake, has been pitched a volunteer encampment, the white tents gleaming pleasantly on the green sward, and the red coats scattered cheerfully around. Solitary fishermen, patient and motionless, are reflected here and there in the placid waters; but where the public way abuts on the lake, and fishing is, perforce, free, a ferried rank of anglers stands shoulder to shoulder. Where there is water enough to float a cork and morsel of quill, there is to be found a group of anglers and a little fleet of floats.

As the day wears on, the festal note becomes even the more pronounced, although the cloudy skies threaten showers, and the wind rises fitfully and drives angry little waves in foam upon the shore. There will be coloured lamps lit up by-and-by, more music, more impromptu dancing, more fun of the fair. Fireworks will blaze in the air, and rockets will cast a glow over the waters, while the old, dead Princes who lie under Kingsbury Church might almost be expected to turn themselves uneasily and wish themselves alive again, to join in the racket.

PANSIE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.
CHAPTER I.

"WELL, Pansie, all I can say is that I'm awfully sorry," said Mr. Lancelot

Selfe, a young man clad in flannels, who was sprawling at full length on the turf by the side of the tennis-ground of an old Sussex manor-house, one calm evening in late August.

"Awfully sorry about what?" asked Pansie Wyman—nineteen, brown-haired, and brown-eyed—who was seated on a camp-stool close by the young man.

"Why, that we've had our last game of tennis for goodness knows how long; that you're going away; and that I've got to be buried alive in this dull, little, out-of-the-way place with those two old gals."

"Those two old gals! Hush, Lancy! You ought to be ashamed of yourself for speaking of the two dear old aunts in that disrespectful way," said Pansie.

"Well, of course I'm very fond of them, and all that, especially as they are my only relations in the world, and are so kind to you, but it's rather hard lines for a fellow to be condemned to exchange the society of one with whom he—with whom he——"

"Well, with whom he what?"

"With whom he has fallen head over heels in love," said Mr. Lancelot.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Pansie in mock astonishment. "And who asked you to fall in love?"

"Who asked me? Nobody. Who made me? Why, you," replied the young man. "I'm clean bowled, and that's the long and short of it; and now, just as we are beginning to understand each other, you have to go back to Athena House."

"But surely you wouldn't have me turned out into the world a half-educated, gawky, bread and butter miss, would you?" asked Pansie.

"Well," replied the young man. "If you're half-educated, gawky, and bread and butterish, all I can say is, education be hanged!"

Mr. Lancelot Selfe was a young barrister, who had been invited by his aunts and sole relatives, the Misses Julia and Aurelia Penless, to spend the long vacation with them at their Sussex house. Pansie Wyman was an American, and had been sent to England to finish her education at Miss Sage's famous school, Athena House, Sussex Square, Brighton, by her father, a retired Colonel, who now occupied a responsible position on one of the lines of railroad which run through the gold and silver districts of Colorado and Nevada. The Misses Penless were distant relatives of

the Colonel, and under their care he had placed Pansie, his only child, the result being that the young lady, being of a lively and intelligent disposition, as well as an exceedingly pretty girl, had captivated the young Englishman, and had learnt to reciprocate his feelings towards her in a way which was very apparent to the two maiden aunts.

"Time we went in to dinner," said Lancelot, after a pause. "The aunts will be working themselves up into a frenzy."

So the pair sauntered slowly up through the pleasant gardens, until they came in sight of the three-gabled, red-brick house known as Furnace Court—a name which recalled the ancient iron industry of Sussex—at the door of which could be discerned the figures of two elderly ladies.

"There they are," said Lancelot. "Pansie, prepare to bow your head to the storm. I say, Pansie, why is your father so down on Englishmen?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied the girl. "He's a prejudiced warrior of the old Union school, and he can't forget the part your people took in the civil war."

"Then I wonder he sends his daughters to be educated amongst us," said Lancelot.

"Well, I've wondered that too," said Pansie. "But I believe there's more bark than bite in him, and all the time that he pretends to hate Britain and Britishers he admires them."

"And I suppose if I were to ask you to be my wife, he'd——"

"Lan—ce—lot!"

"Pan—sie! Well?"

The girl became absorbed in the study of her own feet; but Lancelot could see the colour mounting to her face. So he continued:

"I suppose you wouldn't have me if I were to ask you?"

But before Pansie chose to reply they were at the house, from the porch of which Miss Aurelia Penless was glaring at them through a pair of black spectacles.

"Mind what I say, you young people," was the greeting of the maiden aunt. "One of these fine evenings you will catch your deaths of cold. You go and make yourselves hot over that stupid tennis, and you come sauntering back in the chilly air in defiance of all hygienic rules and regulations."

"Bless your heart, aunt!" said Lancelot, "we've finished playing a long time."

"Then why didn't you come straight home?" retorted Miss Aurelia. "Pansie,

if I send you back to Athena House with a cold, I shall have such a letter from Miss Sage to begin with, and such a doctor's bill to end with, that I should never forgive myself."

"Don't you fret yourself, auntie!" exclaimed Pansie, throwing her arms round Miss Aurelia's neck and kissing her, her favourite method of getting everything her own way at Furnace Court. "Where's Aunt Julia?"

"She's dressing for dinner, and as it wants but ten minutes to seven, you had best go and do likewise," replied the mollified Miss Aurelia.

That evening after dinner when, according to custom, the little party separated into two groups, the elder and the younger, there were two very serious conversations held.

The conclusion at which the aunts arrived over the bezique table was that matters between Pansie and Lancelot had gone far enough, and that it was the most fortunate thing in the world that Pansie was going back to Athena House the next day. Up to this vacation, the notion that Pansie would captivate any man had never disturbed the peace of mind of the Misses Penless, for she had returned from the last term but one a lanky, unattractive, awkward school-girl; but when she came home for the midsummer holidays, after a long term of nearly four months, they were astonished to see what an alteration for the better time had wrought in her, and would certainly have hesitated before inviting a young man like Lancelot Selfe to spend his vacation with them, could they have foreseen it.

Not that there was anything objectionable in a match between the young English barrister of good means and the pretty American girl, from an ordinary point of view; but that they were under the strictest injunctions from the other side of the Atlantic to keep a strict watch on Pansie, and they had sufficient reasons for keeping on friendly terms with Colonel Wyman.

The conclusion at which the young couple arrived behind the shelter of the piano, was that they were destined for each other, and that neither could conveniently exist without the other; that school was a tyrannous institution for a girl of nineteen; that maiden aunts, however kind and useful in other ways, were rather troublesome when a courtship was in progress; and

that it was almost criminal to yield to the unreasonable prejudices of parents.

The evening post delivery was an important event at Furnace Court, and it would have almost amounted to sacrilege for any one to propose an adjournment to bed before the hour of its arrival, which was usually as the clocks were striking ten.

The budget upon this evening was small, but important, comprising two American letters, one for Miss Aurelia Penless, the other for Pansie.

Pansie opened hers and read comfortably enough until she came to a paragraph which made the colour fly from her cheeks, and which was as follows :

"And now, my dear girl, as I calculate this ought to reach you just about the time when you will be returning to school after the midsummer vacation, let me exhort you to make the most of the few weeks before you, as it is my intention to remove you from school at Christmas, in order that you may return to America. I shall look forward to seeing a finished, accomplished young lady; and there is some one else here who is anticipating your arrival quite as anxiously as I am. Of course I mean Mr. Jem Forrest. I see no reasons whatever why, with the extraordinary advantages you have enjoyed, you should not be ready to take your place at once in the distinguished society of which Mr. Forrest is so prominent a member."

"In other words," commented Pansie, after she had read out this paragraph to Lancelot, "I am to go home at Christmas to be married to a man of my father's choice, and of whom I know next to nothing."

"But who is this Mr. Jem Forrest?" asked Lancelot.

"Nobody seems to know exactly who he is," replied Pansie. "He lives in good style, and goes into good society, and I seem to remember having heard his name associated with silver mines. But really, Lancy, I know as little about him as you do."

"Is your father under any obligation to him?" asked the young man.

"None that I know of," answered Pansie.

"What sort of a looking fellow is he?" asked Lancelot.

"Well, of course, he's ever so much older than you are," replied the girl. "But there is such a strong resemblance between you, that in an uncertain light or at a

distance, a stranger, or indeed any one who did not know you as well as I do, might mistake one for the other."

"Really? Or are you only chaffing?" said her lover.

"Really," said Pansie. "So that at any rate it will be a faint consolation to you to know that I shall have a decent-looking man for a husband."

"Nay, now you're chaffing, and the matter is far too serious to be laughed about. Tell me, Pansie, what shall you do?"

"I leave it in your hands, Lancy," replied the girl. "Of one thing you may be sure, that I love you and you alone, and that whatever happens, no other man shall be my husband."

"Thank you for that speech, my darling," said the young man, seizing the girl's hand and kissing it, a proceeding which, being observed by Miss Julia, brought about an immediate dispersal of the party to their several bedrooms.

CHAPTER II

PANSIE returned to Athena House, Sussex Square, Brighton, in due course the next day. She went off sadly, and in disgrace; sadly, because she knew not when she should see Lancelot again; in disgrace, because, in the presence of her aunts and the entire household of Furnace Court assembled to bid her good-bye, she had been the willing and unblushing recipient of a sounding kiss from the young gentleman.

But her reception at Athena House partially atoned for what she had undergone. There she was the acknowledged sovereign of some thirty young ladies, who looked up to her as the arbiter of fashion, as the leader of all fun and amusement, as the referee in all disputed matters, and as the handsomest and cleverest girl in the school. Moreover, strange to say, she had not a rival, much less an enemy, amongst them; for, despotic as she was, her despotism was of so gentle and winning a nature, that whilst everybody admired, nobody was jealous of her. She was popular, too, with the rigid Miss Sage and her teachers, who only complained that she was clever enough to afford to be idle.

But every one remarked a great change in Pansie when she returned from the midsummer holidays. She seemed to have lost the high spirits and the irrepressible

fun which had so helped to make her popular. The thousand and one little matters which formerly interested and amused her, seemed now to have no charm for her; she was silent and depressed. More than once she was discovered in tears; and Miss Sage herself remarked that her favourite pupil seemed to be more indifferent about success, and less brilliant than before.

At first a great many solutions were offered. Pansie was taking to heart her approaching departure from a country in which she had made so many friends, and which she had learnt to regard almost as her own. She had received bad news from America; she had quarrelled with the two maiden aunts of whom everybody had heard, and whose peculiarities she exhibited with such exquisite mimicry. But when it was noted that she wrote a great many letters which she posted surreptitiously, instead of consigning them to the common receptacle of Athena House correspondence, suspended to Miss Sage's desk, the real reason for her changed demeanour was patent, and it was whispered about that Pansie Wyman was in love.

The next thing to be found out was the object of her affection. She was eagerly watched as the school took its usual constitutional along the Marine Parade; but there was no Adonis who seemed to gaze after her in particular, although there were plenty of young bucks who made a daily duty of inspecting Athena House as it proceeded demurely along as far as the Aquarium and back.

Young ladies are keen logicians when they have a symptom or two given them by way of premises, so it was concluded that Pansie had fallen in love during the holidays, that she had thereby incurred the wrath of her aunts, and that her low spirits arose from these circumstances. The interest which this occasioned in the little world of Athena House may be imagined, but there was no surprise. The only wonder was that a pretty, clever, accomplished, vivacious girl like Pansie Wyman should have so long remained scatheless, and, as she was still imitated in spite of her altered demeanour, a regular epidemic of love set in, and there was not a girl at Athena House with the smallest pretensions to good looks, who did not become melancholy, who did not take to reading poetry, and who did not profess admiration for one or other of the aforesaid young Marine Parade loungers.

Miss Sage of course knew nothing of this. Never having captivated a masculine heart herself, she was not versed in the ailments of those who had, or who pretended to have, and she attributed the alteration in Pansie Wyman's manner to grief at approaching departure from England in general, and Athena House in particular.

But an accident very soon opened her eyes to the real state of affairs.

Several petty larcenies had taken place in the school of late. Many of the girls complained that they missed little articles from their desks and boxes. Suspicion was at first pointed at a certain liveried youth who opened the door, waited at table, and performed sundry menial offices in the regions below, and who was known by the name he called himself, William. But one morning, Miss Sage, descending to the schoolroom, met Susan, the housemaid, hurrying along the passage with a highly-coloured face suggestive of confusion, and her hand concealed under her apron.

"Susan," said Miss Sage, "what have you been doing?"

"Please, 'm, I hanswered the post, that's all," replied the damsel, with still heightening colour.

"It isn't your place to answer the post," said her mistress. "William does that. What have you got under your apron?"

"Only a letter, 'm," replied Susan.

"Let me see it," said Miss Sage.

The girl hesitated, and her hand fumbled uneasily in its hiding-place.

"Come, come, show it to me," continued the mistress, her suspicions now fully aroused.

So Susan, seeing that further resistance was useless, handed to Miss Sage a letter addressed, in a big, bold, masculine hand, to Miss Wyman.

"What business have you with Miss Wyman's letter?" asked Miss Sage.

The girl looked sheepishly at the floor-cloth, and made no reply.

Miss Sage examined the letter again. The postmark was "West Strand." The writing was certainly not that of either of Pansie's aunts, and she knew of no gentleman with whom the young lady was on terms of corresponding intimacy.

"I require an explanation at once, Susan, if you please," she continued, "or I shall be obliged to infer that you are acting dishonestly."

At that moment Pansie came hurrying up. When she saw the attitudes of Miss

Sage and Susan, she divined the cause and looked confused.

"Miss Wyman," said the mistress, "Susan has been keeping a letter of yours."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Pansie, falteringly. "It's all right, I am expecting news from—from a friend of mine, and as William is so slow in delivering the letters, I asked Susan to be good enough to get mine at once, and bring them to me."

Miss Sage made no remark, but handed Pansie her letter with a look which sufficiently expressed what she thought about the matter.

"She'll go and write to the aunts," thought Pansie, as she hurried away, "and then——"

Miss Sage did write to Miss Aurelia, and by return of post received an answer detailing all the circumstances of Pansie's little love affair, with which we are familiar, and warning Miss Sage to keep a strict watch on the girl's movements. The results were that Athena House, for the future, took its airings in the comparatively deserted direction of Rottingdean, and that Miss Sage took the letters from the postman herself.

She, however, said nothing more about the matter to Pansie, for she was sensible enough to argue that, so long as the girl did not set a bad example to younger companions by carrying on an open flirtation at school, it was no business of hers, if a young lady of a sensible age should carry on a love affair away from it.

But, one evening, a second accident made her aware that the love-making process was being carried on very much nearer her than she had imagined.

The half-dozen senior girls at Athena House occupied separate little partitions, instead of sleeping in a large room with others. Every other one of these partitions had a window looking out into Sussex Square. One of these was tenanted by Pansie Wyman.

Miss Sage had wakeful nights, for, being a contributor to the "Poet's Corner" of a local newspaper, her fits of inspiration seized her when released from the worry and turmoil of the schoolroom, and, especially when the moon shone over the sea, she would sit at her open window and meditate until long after Athena House was wrapped in sleep.

She was thus occupied a night or two after the discovery above recorded, when

she heard voices—a male and a female—engaged in earnest conversation close by her, and the female voice was not to be mistaken for that of any one but Pansie Wyman.

Gently craning her neck out, she espied the figure of a man standing out in clear relief against the pavement below, his head upturned, and his words unmistakeably addressed to an inmate of Athena House.

Miss Sage saw all this at a glance, withdrew her night-capped head, and silently passed along the dormitory occupied by the senior girls. Her surmise as to the owner of the feminine voice proved correct, and she heard an animated conversation being carried on between Miss Wyman and the cavalier on the pavement outside.

The method of dealing with such a serious breach of all orthodox laws of propriety and school discipline, of course, required consideration, so Miss Sage paused until the voices ceased and the window was shut, and then retired to consult with one of the other mistresses as to the course to be followed.

The next morning, when the girls assembled in the schoolroom for prayers, Miss Sage entered with that expression of countenance which, experience had taught the young ladies of Athena House, betokened a disturbed and irritated state of mind. Instead of commencing the prayers in the usual style, Miss Sage stepped to the front of her desk and scanned the rows of faces before her, as if in search of some one. Then she said in a grave voice:

"Has not Miss Wyman descended from the dormitory yet?"

It being evident that she had not, Miss Sage rang the bell for Susan. William, the boy, answered it, and announced that Susan was not up.

Miss Sage's face darkened, and she said: "Go and knock at Miss Wyman's door and acquaint her with the hour."

The boy disappeared, but reappeared shortly with a white, scared face, saying:

"Please, 'm, Miss Wyman ain't in her room, and nobody don't know nothink about Susan."

Miss Sage rushed from the room, returned in ten minutes, and hurried through the prayers.

During breakfast it was whispered that Pansie Wyman and Susan had both left Athena House, and had taken their luggage with them.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII

SIR PETER'S birthday festivities had never before so nearly approached a failure as they did on this, his sixty-third anniversary. No one had ever before realised how much they owed their success to Lance's buoyancy and high spirits. Even Lady Judith—impervious though she generally was to outside influences—was conscious of a limpness and want of spirit in the day's proceedings. She put her finger at once upon Lance as the sole cause of the dejection that prevailed generally.

"If that young man, my dear," she said to every one she could get to listen to her, and occasionally to the same person twice over, "if that young man would only consult his elders a little more and his own inclinations a little less, it would be much better for him and for those about him."

She took Miss Shore's disappearance—in due course made known to her—very lightly indeed. It was what she had expected from the very first, she averred. She had always been opposed to the admission of another protégé into the house—the protégés Sir Peter had already were but little credit to him. From this she rambled on to similar instances of flight which the records of Sir Peter's benevolence afforded:

"There was that little imp of a page, in town, my dear—really nothing better than a street Arab, but Sir Peter would have him dressed in blue cloth and buttons—well, he had no sooner got some decent clothes for himself, the little thief, than he

disappeared, and to this day he has never been heard of! And there was that housemaid—a girl taken out of a union—she seized the very first opportunity——"

But at this point her listeners, as a rule, would themselves seize the very first opportunity to disappear, and Lady Judith had to begin all over again to the next person who approached:

"There was that little imp of a page, my dear," and so forth.

It was entirely owing to Sir Peter's energy that things went even so well as they did. He surpassed himself in activity that day. One or two of the younger guests, who had volunteered to act as umpires in the villagers' sports in Lance's stead, declared that their office was a sinecure, for Sir Peter saw the beginning, and end, and middle of every race himself. The marvel was that he didn't enter himself as competitor in every one of the "events" of the day, the greasy-pole business and all.

"If I were only half-a-dozen years younger I would show you all how things ought to be done," he said in confidence to one of the ladies of the party.

"Gracious Heavens!" thought the lady to herself, "it's a blessing he isn't, or he'd want a keeper!"

No one wondered that Madge was pale and silent throughout the day. It had been a generally received notion among Sir Peter's and Lady Judith's friends that young Mrs. Cohen and Mr. Clive would make a match of it. Every one had remarked his unmistakable admiration for, and attention to the stranger-guest overnight, and now his sudden flight in search of her excited considerable comment. Every one decided that Sir Peter's conduct in thus introducing an utter stranger to

his home-circle, had been reprehensible in the extreme, although of a piece with his usual eccentric benevolence, and confidentially stated their conviction that the reason for the young lady's flight would no doubt be speedily enough discovered in the loss of one of Mrs. Cohen's jewel caskets.

It was more or less of a relief when the last health had been drunk by the farmer tenants with "three times three," and the lights in the tents had begun to be put out.

Madge lingered last and latest in the grounds, pleading headache and need of fresh air. Indoors there was no one to extemporise a dance or tableaux vivants, so the guests dispersed to their rooms sooner than they otherwise would have done. Had they lifted their blinds somewhere between ten and eleven at night, they might have seen Mrs. Cohen walking up and down the terrace in the moonlight. But not alone; her companion was Mr. Stubbs, and their talk was of his hurried journey to Carstairs.

His voice was low and apologetic, hers low and vehement.

"I thought it the best thing I could do, madam, under the circumstances," he said. "My friend at Carstairs, Mr. Symons, is in a private enquiry office; I have commissioned him to take the matter in hand and to communicate at once anything that comes to light."

"I gave you no authority to commission any one to act in the matter. My orders to you were plain enough—to charge yourself with her departure, to supply her with money, to ascertain exactly where she was going, what she would do," was Madge's answer.

"I am very sorry, madam; I can only repeat that I am very sorry. How she got away without my seeing her I don't know. I stood outside the Lodge close to the gates till morning—looked into every carriage as I thought. You see there was almost an incessant roll of carriages between two and four. There were so many hired ones, too—she must have gone away in one of these—and stayed at the station till the first train left for Carstairs. I cross-questioned every one of the men at Lower Upton—in general terms, that is, not mentioning any special guest from The Castle—and they told me that a large party went on by the first train to Carstairs."

"From Carstairs possibly she has gone on to the North."

"Or she may have gone South—say to Liverpool."

Madge turned sharply upon him. "What makes you say that?" she asked, suspiciously.

He shrugged his shoulders. "It would be the most reasonable thing to do if one wanted to get on board a steamer quickly."

"What makes you think that she wanted to get on board a steamer?" she asked.

"I have not the slightest reason for thinking she wished to do so, madam. It was only an idea that occurred to me, and I uttered it on the spur of the moment."

They made one turn up and down the terrace in silence.

Mr. Stubbs was the first to break it.

"About that hundred pounds, madam," he began.

Madge got her thoughts back from their wanderings with difficulty. "Yes?" she said, absently.

"I've been thinking that as you may possibly require my services again—"

"How do you know I may be likely to require your services again?" she queried, sharply, but perhaps a little nervously also.

"I am only suggesting the possibility of such a thing, madam. Unforeseen circumstances might arise necessitating a sudden journey on my part or the expenditure of money—"

"Keep it," said Madge, contemptuously, and suddenly bringing their interview to a close. The look on her face, as she said this, might have been interpreted by a thin-skinned listener to convey the intimation: "Consider yourself paid and dismissed."

But Mr. Stubbs was not thin-skinned, so he rubbed his hands together and chuckled to himself: "There's more fish in the sea than I've landed at present."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"WHEN once that girl is out of the house, things will be all right between Lance and me," Madge had said to herself over and over again, as she had worked out the details of her plan for ejecting her.

Well, the girl was out of the house now, and there was little likelihood of her ever returning to it, yet "things" were as far off as ever from being "right" between Lance and herself.

Sir Peter's birthday guests had departed, and the household at the Castle had resumed the even tenor of its way. A week had passed since Miss Shore's disappearance, and not a scrap of intelligence had been received concerning her. From

Lance there had come a hurried half-dozen lines—addressed to Sir Peter, not Madge—giving a brief account of his movements: his visit to Carstairs had been without result so far as Miss Shore was concerned: he was now on his way to Edinburgh. He had ascertained that the first train leaving Carstairs, after the Lower Upton special train had arrived, had been the Edinburgh Express; he had therefore determined to start at once for that city, and intended stopping at all intermediate stations to make further enquiries. He gave an address at Edinburgh, to which letters during the ensuing week might be addressed, and begged that any news that might reach the Castle concerning Miss Shore should be at once telegraphed to him. He said nothing whatever of having called the police to his aid in his search, so Madge concluded that in this respect her entreaties had carried more weight than she had dared to hope they would.

Sir Peter as usual took an optimistic view of the situation.

"It's very good of him to take all this trouble for an utter stranger—eh, Madge?" he said, doing his utmost to dissipate any slight cloud of jealousy which he fancied might have arisen in Madge's mind. "It's real goodness of heart, that's what it is, and has saved me a world of trouble."

Then it suddenly occurred to him that the "world of trouble" would have been a world of delight to him, since it involved a journey to the North with license to get out at all intermediate stations—a dozen times of getting in and out, say, for once.

So he added after a moment's pause:

"Not but what I think Lance might just as well have put off his journey for a day or two, so that I might have gone with him. I took a great interest in Miss Shore, and nothing would please me better than to hear good news of her."

Madge, according to all showing, ought to have been exultant and jubilant, now that her little plot had so far come to a successful issue; instead, after one day of wild energy, she relaxed into a nervous and ill-at-ease frame of mind, shunned the mere sight of Mr. Stubbs, and seemed ever on the watch for the arrival of ill-omened telegrams.

During that one day of wild energy she did her best to sweep all traces of Miss Shore out of the house.

The beautiful grey ball-dress, left lying on the bed, seemed to tell all over again

the story of its wearer's triumph and defeat; the small portmanteau seemed like an evil omen of its owner's return to claim her property. Madge gave orders that both should be locked up safely in a store cupboard, in case, she said, Miss Shore might write for them.

Then she fell to work on her little boudoir; had the mirror and the picture which faced it removed from the walls, and, together with Miss Shore's water-colour drawings, carried to a lumber-room, alleging to Lady Judith as her reason for so doing, that she had another plan in her head for the decoration of her boudoir; and finally she changed her bedroom—the one she had occupied from the first day of her coming to Upton Castle—for another on the other side of the house; and gave orders that a certain high-backed easy-chair, which she was in the habit of occupying, should on no account follow her to her new quarters.

These things done, she drew a long breath, as it were, and tried to look ahead at the dangers that were threatening.

Time was getting precious—any day, any moment a second Australian letter might arrive, and Mr. Stubbs would need to have explicit instructions on the matter.

Evidently the same thought was in Mr. Stubbs's mind also.

"I suppose you know, madam, that the Australian mail is delivered fortnightly?" he said to her on one of the rare occasions that he chanced to be alone in the same room with her.

Madge's only answer was an angry frown, and the sudden stretching out of her hand to reach a book which lay on the table beside her.

She might, however, as well have tried the effect of a frown on a spider about to net a fly, as on Mr. Stubbs, at that moment.

"Time is pressing," he went on, eyeing her stealthily from beneath his half-closed lids. "The great thing now, it seems to me, is to get Mr. Clive back——"

But here Madge, with her book in her hand, cut his sentence in half by leaving the room.

How she hated and despised herself for the alliance which she had formed with this man. Sometimes she felt herself almost driven to wish that instead of calling in his aid she had had the courage to tell Lance outright her own suspicions respecting Miss Shore, and the foundation on which they rested. Second thoughts,

however, seemed to show her at one glance the danger and the uselessness of such a course. The story of a Corsican vendetta—after all it might be nothing more—might be alluring, not repelling, when confessed to by beautiful lips, and might have supplied a young man, chivalrous and hot-headed to the last degree, with an excuse, rather than otherwise, for his chivalry and hot-headedness.

Her brain grew chaotic with its pressure of thought; she felt herself incapable of deciding upon any settled course of action. Sometimes she could almost persuade herself that the whole thing from first to last had been a dream. With Miss Shore's pictures, easel, and portmanteau safely locked up out of sight, the romance seemed to be swept out of the house, so to speak. It would have been almost possible to have forgotten the episode of the coming and going of "that girl in gray," in the leisurely comfortableness of everyday life at Upton, if only Lance would return his old, cheery, light-hearted self, and Mr. Stubbs could at once and for ever be dismissed to that low stratum of society whence he had emerged.

She grew to hate the sight of that man; she shunned him on every possible occasion, and did her best to make him understand that his presence was distasteful to her. This was a lesson, however, he seemed incapable of learning. Let her snub him as she pleased, morning, noon, and night, he never failed to seize every opportunity of endeavouring to make himself agreeable to her. He even went so far as to send up, nightly, by her maid, little notes reporting, as a rule, that there was nothing to report.

"Through my friend at Carstairs, I am still making enquiries but can learn nothing," sometimes these notes would run.

At other times it would be, "Nothing fresh from Australia," or "Correspondence this morning satisfactory."

Madge used to tear these notes into a thousand pieces when she had read them, and would stamp her foot at herself literally as well as metaphorically for having soiled her hands with such a tool.

But one night there came a note which she did not tear into morsels, but sat staring at stonily instead with thoughts all in a wild whirl of dread.

"Important and terrible news," it ran. "Can I see you at once? Sir Peter has gone to bed—the study is empty."

Dreading she knew not what, Madge

hastily made her way down the darkened staircase to the study, at whose door stood Mr. Stubbs in the patch of light made by the single lamp on the writing-table.

He closed the door behind her as she entered and began a profuse series of apologies for the untimeliness of his message, but he had only just had time to open and attend to his correspondence which had arrived by the morning's mail—

Madge interrupted his apologies. "Tell me your news at once," she said, feeling that another moment of suspense would be intolerable.

He spread on the writing-table before her a newspaper, and just as he had done on a former occasion, laid his finger on a paragraph.

The newspaper this time was a Liverpool daily. The paragraph ran as follows:

"The body of a young woman was taken out of the Mersey yesterday at daybreak. It was dressed in grey travelling dress, grey cloak, grey beaver hat with feather. In the pocket of the dress was an empty purse, and an envelope which bore the name 'Jane Shore.'"

Madge started back with a low cry.

"The newspaper is four days old," began Mr. Stubbs. Then he broke off, startled by the sudden change which had swept over Madge's face.

"It's my doing—mine," she said in a voice that sounded strained and unnatural. She clutched at the table for support. At the moment it seemed as if her senses must leave her.

"I entreat you to calm yourself, Mrs. Cohen," said Mr. Stubbs, venturing to approach her.

Madge's senses came back in full force.

"Stand back!" she cried, passionately. "Do not dare to come near me—you who urged me on to this—this deed of murder."

He drew back, a curious expression flitting over his face. "Wait," it seemed to say, "you'll be glad enough of my help before long."

But his lips said respectfully:

"After a night's rest, madam, you may be able, possibly, to see the matter in another light, and to discuss with me the advisability of conveying the tidings at once to Mr. Clive."

Madge did not hear him. She raised her hands on high, clasped convulsively together.

"I call Heaven to witness," she cried in the same reckless passionate tone as before, "that I never thought of this when I drove her from the house."

Then she bowed her head, and with feet that stumbled as they went, left the room.

SKETCHES IN TENERIFE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

At first, I was for making the journey by myself. It seemed as unnecessary as unwise to encumber myself with a guide—who was sure to be ignorant of the country he professed to know, who might fall ill and need all manner of exacting attendance, and who would certainly be hampered by scruples—religious and otherwise—which would deter him from entering a town or village at festival time. But Lorenzo Despacho, from whom I hired the mare, put pressure upon me.

"It is fifty leagues, señor. The mare is a good mare—Caramba! though it is her master that says so. But suppose she were to lose a shoe?"

"In that case, my good Lorenzo, we must replace it," said I.

"Without doubt, señor; but how? And who will look after her corn? How will you know that she gets more than half what you pay for? Not by the aspect of her stomach, señor; for it is a world not altogether good, and there are many evil ways of swelling the mare's stomach without properly nourishing her. And you do not talk Spanish well enough, señor—if I may be pardoned for being so uncivil—to relieve yourself from a difficulty, when you are among strangers."

"Well—in effect—what am I to do?"

"Take the boy José with you, señor. He will be a comfort to you—Ave Maria!—I should think so. Whenever you are in trouble, he will shout—and the boy can make his sister, at work in the fields a mile off, hear him quite distinctly—he will call to some one and ask, and the way will be made clear, without doubt. As for the mare, she has an affection for José, and will do at his bidding what I do not think, señor, she would do at your bidding, good, quiet horse that she is! And, for the cost, it shall be only a shilling the day the more, which is, of course, nothing."

I did not want the boy, as I have said; but he came nevertheless. He was not

quite new to me, for only the other day, in visiting the parish church of Porto Orotava, I had seen him, in company with some other little boys, amusing himself at the altar with a number of candles as long as himself. One of these boys, a child of twelve, told me he was the sacristan of the church, and, as such, he, with his playfellows, showed me all the ecclesiastical treasures of the building, from the monster Maria behind the altar—already being robed in sad-coloured velvets for the stately processions of Holy Week—to the little glass flagon, silver-topped, containing the residue of some sacramental wine, much bescummed, which had been used I forget how many years ago.

When I had seen the church and its dull old pictures to my content, we ascended to the bell tower to look down upon the town. Here were three bells, the largest bearing date 1671; and I was so interested in this large bell that, when the boy José suggested that I should sound it, I did not scruple to bang the tongue against the sides of the bell in the common way. The tone was loud and mellifluous; but, on hearing it, all the boys, headed by the sacristan, fled down the steps gasping with mirth. However, as it was nothing to me if I had given untimely warning of some holy hour, I stayed among the bells until I had seen enough of the town, and then descended and went off to my hotel. From this experience I fancied José might prove a rogue. On the contrary, however, for, in the matter of separating his hours of business from his hours of play, he was a boy singularly gifted.

We started betimes on a sunny March morning. The mare took kindly to me from the outset, and I have nothing but praise to say of her. José carried my knapsack, for it was unbecoming in a "caballero" to be burdened with aught save a bit of stick, tufted with horse-hair, to use in warfare with the flies. The boy kept his yellow-leather boots on until we were out of the town. Then he slung them over his shoulder instead, and chanted disturbing madrigals at the top of his voice. I learnt to know that whenever I wished to depress the boy's spirits, I had but to tell him to get into his boots. Instantly thereafter his lip fell, and in glum silence he trudged after the mare with the nerveless swing of a south country tramp who has seen all his bright days. But as on such occasions he became also very thick-headed,

failing to understand the simplest remark, however well accented, I was generally as willing to have him barefooted as he was glad to be so.

A few words about the configuration and natural scenery of the island of Tenerife are, I think, here needful for the better understanding of the scheme and pleasures of our little tour. Every one, of course, knows that there is a famous mountain in Tenerife, called the Peak. Some geologists, indeed, say that the Peak is all the island, that, from the shore line of all the fifty leagues circuit, the land rises upwards simply and solely to help in the perfection of the Peak. But this is a disputed point, soluble only by a very minute investigation into the nature and age of the various mountain ranges of Tenerife. The Peak is thought to be a very steep hill. In fact, however, the average angle of its acclivity, from the sea level to the summit, does not exceed twelve or thirteen degrees. It is twelve thousand one hundred and eighty feet high, and the ascent begins at Orotava, about twelve miles distant from it. The last few thousand feet of the climb are certainly a little precipitous. Their gradient varies from thirty to forty-two degrees. Moreover, the soil is a fine, yielding pumice dust, which offers the most insecure of foothold, and the most feeble of leverages for upward movement. It is the cone of Tenerife that one usually sees from the Atlantic, at a distance of from fifty to a hundred miles. The rest of the island is usually mantled in the clouds which the Peak draws around its loins during the greater part of the year. And it is the appearance of the abrupt isolated cone—as it were between heaven and earth—that makes one think the mountain must be as complete as possible a test of the pluck and tenacity of an Alpine climber.

As for the scenery of Tenerife, it is remarkable. You may choose your climate on this small island in the Atlantic as emphatically as if you had a continent at your disposal. And of course the vegetation varies with the temperature. In Porto Orotava, for example, which is a coast town, we lived in the midst of palm trees, bananas, flowering oleanders, aloes, and fig trees. The heat here after early morning, even in March, made movement a decided trial. Not that the thermometer marked a high register, but the air is so dry that one's strength seemed to exhale from one's body in search of the moisture it desired but could not obtain. We lived

here under tropical conditions. The man who was so unfortunate as to die might rely upon being buried the same evening. And as the evenings are delightful in Tenerife, and a funeral procession with its attendance of chanting priests, acolytes with lamps and so forth, is a picturesque ceremony, the dead man might, if he were able, also assure himself that he would be followed to the grave by a large company of friends anxious to do him honour, and to take the air at the same time.

But at an altitude of two or three thousand feet above Orotava, higher up on the slopes of the Peak, the climate is very different. It is colder, of course, and more bracing. Potatoe fields and barley cover the land, and instead of bananas hung with ripe fruit, we have forests of chestnut trees with never a leaf upon them until May is far advanced. We are here, too, in the midst of the obstinate cloud which hangs about the Peak for weeks at a time. From the lower fringe of it we can look down upon the sunlit rocks and sands of Orotava; but above and all round the vapour stays dense and impermeable. It is in this zone of country that the Tenerife goats live and thrive. They descend to the coast towns every day, where their shepherds take them from house to house, and draw the milk from them to order in the presence of each householder. Then they all climb the weary hills to feed themselves into condition for the morrow's milking.

Above the zone of chestnuts is the zone of laurels. After the laurels come the heaths, growing gigantic at a height of from four to five thousand feet above the sea. The bright yellow Canarian pines follow the heaths, and struggle into life among the arid disintegrating lava and powdered pumice which here cover the hot rocks.

But when we have left the red roofs of Orotava some seven thousand feet below us, and have also overtopped the very cloud which girdles the island, there is no vegetation to cheer the eye save the silver-grey bushes of the retama. The Peak rises from the centre of a parching infertile plateau of yellow pumice sand about twenty miles in circuit. In the whole of this elevated expanse, there is not one habitation. The solitary traveller, who from fatigue or other disabling cause here chanced to die, might, by the action of the sun and the pure desiccating air, be transformed into an excellent mummy, ere a wandering goat-herd discovered his body.

So varied is the scenery of Tenerife, and so compact is the island, that in a day's ride one may go from palms and bananas through woods of chestnuts, and thickets of heaths to these same naked acres of lava detritus, where the big refulgent lizards that glide over the scoræ are the only signs of animal life, and where the atmosphere is so rarefied that a weak man gasps for his breath.

One other characteristic of the country must be mentioned—the barrancos. These deep cuts in the body of the land radiate from the old crater or plateau from which the cone of the Peak ascends, and they terminate only at the coast. I do not know how many dozen of them there are in the north, west, and south sides of the island, with depths to be bottomed by the traveller varying from about one thousand five hundred to two thousand feet. Some are dug with sides nearly perpendicular.

In such cases the track of descent and ascent is a perilous zigzag path scratched in the rock walls—a path, moreover, which the prickly pear do their best to expunge by the persistency with which they mat their formidable arms across it. It is prudent to leave horse or mule to itself in these barrancos; one's own feet are a sufficiently onerous responsibility. And to show that the stranger may have his blood upon his own head if he determines to be reckless in these ravines, there are many rude little crosses stuck in awkward places to commemorate this or that fatal accident, and the peasant whom destiny has given you for a temporary roadfellow between two villages, will be voluble with stories about those of his acquaintance who have fallen over the rocks into the dry blue river bed six or seven hundred feet down, just as you might fall if you slipped to the left that selfsame moment. When I had made acquaintance with two or three of the barrancos of Tenerife, I began to bless Lorenzo that he had given me José to hold the mare.

But we were spared these particular trials on the first day of our journey. We were to sleep at a little town called Icod, whither the high road goes nearly all the way. For the most part, we kept about a thousand feet above the sea, with a wall of rock many hundred feet high on the left hand, and on the right a jungle of useful vegetation to the shore-line. The green drapery of the reddish rocks of this precipitous wall was very beautiful. Maiden-hair and other ferns grew large from the

midst of a hanging garden of bramble, wild vines, scrub fig and caroub, and the water-drops dripped from the leaves into a canal, which dispersed the precious liquor among the beans and potatoes on the other side of the road.

There are two small towns between Orotava and Icod—Realejo and Rambla. Realejo is built on a high slope, with a ravine crossing the slope and dividing the town into two parts. It is a pretty place, with its white church-tower rising above the houses, and the eccentric candleabra of the branches of its dragon trees one over the other. It is also famous historically; for here in 1496, the King of the Guanches, or aborigines of Tenerife, resigned his sovereignty, and consented to be baptized, and acknowledge the King of Spain as King of Tenerife also. Poor old Bencomo! He had made a brave, if rather impolitic, fight against the Spaniards for two years. The first battle was a victory to be proud of; for did he not kill eight hundred of the Spanish army of one thousand two hundred? But the natural goodness (simplicity, if you will) of the King of the Guanches forbade him to take advantage of this victory, by driving the remnant of his enemies out of the country which they had so impudently laid hands upon. He allowed them to rest, and recruit their forces from the Peninsula. Nay, more; he sent back to them some score of prisoners, taken in the battle of Matanza, with the message that he did not war with helpless men such as they; and he aided them with food as unselfishly as if he were a Christian knight, instead of a mere barbarian. Two years after Matanza, the Guanches and the Spaniards met at Realejo, for a contest that was to be decisive. And here Bencomo, heartbroken by the losses he had sustained in the death, by war and pestilence, of so many thousands of his subjects, made a compromise to spare further bloodshed, and bowed his head in the camp of Lugo, the "conquistador." It was on the site of the baptism of Bencomo, that, later, the first Christian church in Tenerife was built to memorialise the event.

The old Guanches had a singular aversion to bloodshed and bloodshedders. This was strangely brought home to me as José and I proceeded through the outskirts of Realejo. Set in the middle of a bridge over a ravine, we came to a little square, solid building, with barred windows, like a prison. It was a butcher's shop. I do

not doubt that its isolation was due to the ancient Tenerifan tradition, whereby a butcher was held to be an outcast, and was forbidden to have intercourse with other people. If he wanted anything, he had to stand aloof and point at it. In return for his self-sacrifice in undertaking this degrading office, the butcher had all his needs supplied by the rest of the community. When the Guanches wished to treat a Spanish prisoner with the extreme of indignity, they condemned him to kill the flies which worried the goats in their pasture.

Once only, on our way to Icod, did we descend to the sea level. This was at the cheerless little town of Rambla. It is built on a black promontory of lava, the rough edges and scoræ of which are frightful to behold. Nevertheless, it is not wholly a place of gloom. For the blue sea broke into white foam upon its cruel, distorted rocks; and the industry of the townspeople had erected gardens in the middle of this small wilderness, so that the bright greenery of vines and potatoes, with the dull, red roofs of the houses, and the olive and grey balconies, made a show of colour. Inland, we could track the lava flow up the mountain-side until it was lost to sight among the spurs of the Peak.

I visited the church of Rambla, but with no lively expectations. As a rule, the church architecture of Tenerife has little originality. It is the ambition of every small town to have a fine bell-tower in which the boys may stand to knock the bells at their convenience. After the bell-tower, I think an altar to the Virgin "de la Concepcion" is most fancied. I wonder how many of these figures I have seen in the Canaries, all modelled upon Murillo's beautiful Virgin in the Louvre, but with such variety of execution and adornment! S. Lorenzo is another famous subject for an altar in Tenerife. In some villages they furnish the statue with a large gridiron of Birmingham manufacture, as if the more forcibly to appeal to the sympathies of the people. Indeed, I have seen a young girl on her knees before one such figure, and with a tender glistening of tears in her dark eyes, as she gazed motionless at the saint and the testimony of his martyrdom.

Here at Rambla, however, I was suddenly immersed in an atmosphere of perfume when I pushed aside the heavy, wooden door. It was the Friday before Palm Sunday; and in preparation for the day the pavement was littered with the

petals of roses and red geraniums, and the many little altars of this little church were bedecked with boughs of bloom of various kinds. A number of women were kneeling here and there among the rose leaves; and in the far end, by the altar, there peeped from the eave of his confessional the round head of a priest, who was listening to the murmur of a penitent at his feet. Of course the ladies, for the moment, forgot their devotions when they saw a man in riding dress and heavy boots come crushing amid the flowers on the floor. They fell a-whispering, and smiling, and fanning themselves, and those of them who were very far gone in worldliness felt their faces to ascertain if the powder still lay upon their cheeks in a comely manner. But in justice to them and the Father in his confessional, who peered forth several times with an unamiable expression on his broad countenance, and in justice to myself also, I did not stay long in the little church. Such a curious, unreal, mannikin place of worship I never saw before. From the "coro" in the west, with its banisters spotted with white mould, and its rafters a dull scarlet, green, and gold, to the flash of similar colours in the east of the church, with a little blue added to the prevalent green and gold, the whole seemed to me like a somewhat stale old doll's house, with groups of queer moveable dolls set about the pavement. The very lintel of the porch and the cross beams within the church were coloured with dry-rot, and the flags under one's feet oscillated as one moved from one to another.

It was one o'clock before my mare set her hoofs upon the slippery grass-grown cobbles of the streets of Icod. Though we had done but half a day's work, we were all tired: the animal, of the rough dusty track and the flies; I, of the heat of the sun and the labour entailed in freeing her from the worst of the flies; and José, of an empty stomach. To the Plaza de la Constitucion, where there is an inn, we therefore made our anxious way. The landlady proved to be a kind soul, not unused to English faces, and a little more resolute in her welcome of a guest than a Spanish hotel-keeper is wont to be.

In Icod are two or three objects of interest which a tourist is supposed to come to see. There is a cave, in old times used as a Pantheon for the Guanche dead, and which is reputed to crawl five or six dark miles through the bowels of the land

until it comes to the crater of the Peak. But the mummies and dust of the old occupants of the graves are now gone from it, and no one has yet had the hardihood to worm his way through its toilsome and perilous passages to test the truth of the legend about its length.

Another "sight" of the place is the famous dragon-tree, which now takes rank as the patriarch of its kind in the island. Its age is reckoned by thousands of years. Early in the century there stood in Orotava one of these trees measuring thirty-five and a half feet in circumference at a height of six feet from the ground. Humboldt computed its age at ten thousand years. He spoke at random, no doubt; but as there exists a little dragon-tree known to be nearly four hundred years old, and as this tree is not yet a foot in circumference, it is apparent that this veteran had lived through many centuries. But since Humboldt's time the tree has died of old age and weather shocks; and the Icod dragon-tree reigns in its stead. Many are the legends which this very eccentric species of tree has originated. Even as the Canary Isles are said to be the Garden of the Hesperides, so the dragon-tree is identified with the dragon that guards the golden apples of those happy realms. One antiquarian has assured himself that a keen eye may discern the very outline of a dragon in the pulp of the fruit of the tree.

A French writer goes a little farther and avers that the tree is no tree, but a congregation of living animalcula, six millions of which go to a cubic inch. In truth, however, it seems to be merely a mammoth breed of asparagus, gifted with extreme longevity. As for the dragon's blood, that is the reddish sap of the tree. This resinous exusion was for some time one of the most valuable of the exports of these islands. European apothecaries had as strong a fancy for it as for the mummies of the Guanches, whom they beat with their pestles into various agreeable medicines of price. In appearance the dragon-tree is a most symmetrical candelabra. The gnarled trunk rises free from branches until a certain stage. Then the boughs diverge with extreme regularity, and in their turn beget harmonious twigs tufted with sharp olive-coloured leaves. It is said that tooth-picks made from the dragon-tree have properties beneficial for the teeth.

But to my mind, neither the cave nor the dragon-tree together, are a tithe of the

charm of Icod de los Vinos. It has a wonderful situation on the actual northern slope of the Peak. Imagine a glacial mass proceeding straight from the summit of a mountain to the sea, between high rocks, and with a town built on it half-way in its course: such, in some sort, is the aspect of Icod. In a direct line the cone of the Peak cannot be more than six or seven miles from the houses of the town; and from the white roof of the little inn I looked at the broad swelling mountain, with its snowy cap, closing the upland view, and pronounced Icod divine. Methought it were easy to climb thence to the cone of the Peak in an hour or two; but I learnt that it was impossible. The slope of pumice on the northern side is too steep.

I bore a letter of introduction to a rich citizen of Icod, who came to the inn to see me. He had lived in the United States many years ago; but his English had rusted from disuse, and he was a man of so humble a turn that he chose rather to speak little than to speak ill. I praised the beauty of the place he had fixed upon to cheer him in the autumn of his life. His humour, however, was melancholic, and he retorted that life was hard, very hard! He was a kind man, of whom others spoke well, but, I am afraid, one of those who learn wisdom and acquire self only through much travail of experience. In the evening, I visited him at his house; and I shall not soon forget him as I saw him immured in his lofty, well-filled library, reading there by the light of a single candle. There was a skull on his table, and, when my friend came to the door to meet me, all else was so dark that I saw nothing distinctly except the skull. For the moment, he affected a mood of levity, and talked of billiards and whist at the club; but nature asserted itself by-and-by, and he made many distressful remarks as we paced up and down the moonlit streets.

This worthy, but sorrow-stained man, gave me a card to the Alcalde, or Mayor of Garachico, whither I walked on the afternoon of our arrival at Icod. Garachico is a sad town. Three centuries ago it was rich in noble and conventual houses, and ships from many countries came to its port. The green cliffs of the land fell close to the sea. It was a local vaunt that a man might shoot and fish thereon at the same time. But in 1706, Teide ruined Garachico. A volcano sud-

denly appeared on the high ground, some thousand feet above the town, but perilously near to it. Then came the lava. It surged over the cliffs, and, step by step, surrounded and destroyed the town. Monks and nuns, hidalgos and peasants, hastened away from the doomed place to Icod.

Nor did the lava rest when the town was burnt, and in great part submerged. It ran on into the port, which in course of time it choked, so that thereafter no merchantmen could anchor in the place which had been considered the best harbour of Tenerife. In this way, Garachico got its death blow. It was despoiled of its commercial importance. Every yard of its cultivable land was buried many feet deep under the lava. And the convenient cliff, which had been a glory of the town, was now scarred into ugliness by the congelation of the fiery cascade which had fallen over its lip.

The path from Icod led me down through a lovely valley, bright with the green and gold of orange groves, nisperos, tall maize, sugar cane, vines, and fig-trees. Groups of feathery palms stood from the lower slopes, with the blue sea beyond them. The verdure of the precipitous rocks that hedged the vale was astonishing. They were draped with vines and brambles, falling in long trails unbroken for scores of feet; crimson and yellow flowers bloomed in the rock-sides; and the persevering "verode," a circular evergreen, that seems to exist without a stem, stuck like a plaster to so much of the rock as was otherwise unappropriated. The water, that is the cause of the verdure, was carried from side to side of the valley in a thin, spidery aqueduct of pine-troughs, from the many leaks of which the lower lands enjoy a perpetual shower-bath.

A great rock stands by the road where Garachico begins, and a crucifix surmounts the rock. In the contracted bay, which is now Garachico's apology for a harbour, there is another rock rising perhaps two hundred feet out of the water. On this also a wooden cross meets the eye. Elsewhere are other crosses, scratched on the lava boulders which have tumbled from the mountain heights, or set by the sea in the black volcanic sand, beyond the reach of the tide. Thus Garachico pleads with Heaven that it may be spared future devastation.

The Alcalde of the town told me the story of 1706 with as much feeling and

precision as if he had been an interested witness of the wreck. He entertained me with Bass's ale and biscuits of Huntley and Palmer; and as we sat in the shade on the roof of his house, with a big English retriever at our feet, he pointed out the rigid current that had sped from the bowels of Teide, and dispersed itself among the houses. Anon we visited the parochial church, and here was the mark, fifteen feet from the ground, which the lava had reached in its flow. In the streets are the shells of many fair buildings, with Corinthian pillars, chiselled balconies, and dainty heraldic work over their deserted portals; but there is nothing behind these imposing façades. The remains of Garachico's "Casa fuerte," or guard house, still stand by the sea, with two or three unlimbered guns by its battlements. But it is now a purposeless fort, since the harbour it protected is gone.

The duties of the present recalled Don Gregorio, the Alcalde, from his kindly retrospect of the past for my behoof. We were passing the Municipal Buildings, when a sound that was half-bawl, and half-sob, came to afflict us.

"Caramba!" ejaculated Don Gregorio, taking his cigar from his lips. "What's that?" And he looked down at his dog with such an expression of uncertainty, that the animal barked from sympathy. "Ah, I remember," he added, with a smile, and a shrug of the shoulders.

Calling to a slipshod man, he sent him to the town-clerk for a key. We then proceeded into an overgrown garden of the inner courtyard of a deserted monastic building, and, using the key, Don Gregorio exposed a little space of grassy ground, with a stone seat in a corner, and a wailing, red-faced woman sitting on the seat. No sooner did we appear, than the woman went to the Alcalde's knees, and entreated him tearfully with a torrent of words.

"Oh no! she is not so very bad," said Don Gregorio to me. Then to the suppliant: "Get up, woman, and go to your home!" This, with many benedictory appeals to the Virgin, the woman did not delay to do, taking with her a crust of bread that had lain among the grass. She was the sole prisoner in the prison of Garachico; and Don Gregorio had but yesterday sentenced her to three days' incarceration, upon bread and water, for being drunk and disorderly.

THE AGONY COLUMN.

If there are any mysteries still left in this humdrum world, we may find them perhaps not very far from home. Every now and then some startling occurrence finds its way into the newspapers; and presently there is lifted a corner of the veil that conceals the secret springs and hidden motives of human existence. Generally the revelation is painful. If people shrink from the light, it is mostly because their deeds are of a nature that general opinion stigmatises as evil. There are, indeed, some natures furtive and secretive, who delight to envelope themselves and their surroundings with an atmosphere of mystery, and accompany the most innocent and even laudable acts with all kinds of precautions. There are others whom circumstances, or natural inclinations, have brought into a double state of existence; and still more numerous are the class who seek to hide something discreditable in their past lives by concealing all traces of their former career.

But whatever the motive for concealment or mystery, there generally exists a desire and necessity for communicating with former friends and associates, and no safer and readier means exist than the advertisement columns of the daily papers. And in most of these the class of mysterious announcements has a column apart from ordinary advertisements—a special corner to which those interested naturally turn. For many years the second column of the Times was the great medium for this kind of correspondence, and in many cases publicity was evaded by the use of a pre-arranged cipher. But there are so many skilled cryptogrammatists abroad, who are ready to pounce upon and decipher anything of the kind, however skilfully formed the cipher may be, that this kind of correspondence seems to have gone out of use. And now if we seek to take a representative sample of what is going on in the way of mystery and agony, we shall rather turn to the columns of one of the popular and enormously-circulated daily journals, than to the ancient leviathan of the press.

And a casual glance, even, shows that to the people of mystery mentioned above we must add a very strong contingent of lovers. On the first day of the year the agony column is swollen to double its ordinary size, by greetings from those who,

it seems, have no other means of communicating with the beloved ones:

“Greetings to my own darling Lucy. Impossible to meet. But every happiness possible for the New Year!”

And with such good wishes, which have a certain pathetic interest about them—as of words of love exchanged through impassable prison barriers—are mingled notifications of a less fervid character:

“The gentleman who saved a lady from an omnibus accident in Oxford Street is sincerely thanked.”

That is all. But you wonder if the gallant rescuer of possible youth and beauty will think of looking in the agony column for his meed of thanks, and will duly acknowledge them. There is no further advertisement in this series, so the probability is that the gentleman in question was never enlightened on the subject.

But there is another class of people strongly interested in the agony column—those who hope for windfalls, who dream about legacies, and read with eager belief the stories of people who have suddenly tumbled into large fortunes. Here, if anywhere, may one day appear the announcement:

“Heirs at law wanted to the estate of William Sykes, formerly of Bethnal Green and the New Cut, Lambeth.”

Some there are, too eager to wait till they are asked for. For instance:

“Heirs of Mary Twankey.—J. Twankey will thank the gentlemen who were making enquiries about such to communicate with him.”

Sometimes there is an enquiry of the stereotyped form:

“John Brown, formerly of Brixton, is requested to communicate with Blank, Solicitor, of Lincoln’s Inn, where he will hear of something to his advantage.”

This means a legacy, no doubt; but the concluding phrase recalls memories of the famous Joseph Ady—famous half a century ago as a cunning extractor of guineas from the pockets of simple folk; the “something to their advantage” provided by the artful Joseph proving to be, perhaps, a tract on domestic economy, or something equally disappointing.

Heading the column of agony are usually to be found the advertisements of “Enquiry Offices” and “Next-of-Kin Offices.” For it is a recognised business, that of searching all the newspapers as they appear, and extracting and indexing any names that may be advertised for, as well as the

names of those who in any way appear entitled to receive money. Naturally, these agents demand a fee before they communicate the result of their searches to any who may fancy they have "money coming to them;" and as the blanks are many and the prizes few, the result is often disappointing.

But should you attempt a search on your own account, you will probably soon acknowledge that the business is so eminently disagreeable that it ought to be well rewarded. Even to glance through a single column of a daily paper's issue for a whole year proves exceedingly irksome. Suppose that resort is made to the Newspaper Room of the British Museum. This is an offshoot of the general reading-room of the Museum, and is open to those who are provided with Readers' tickets; but it is situated in a new wing of the building, and you pass through the public rooms containing the King's and the Greville Libraries. Then you pass through a kind of catacomb, where all the dead newspapers are interred, and honeycombed with iron presses containing the newspaper literature of a century or more. Then the Newspaper Room itself is reached—a businesslike-looking chamber, with plenty of desks and tables, and lined with presses containing Parliamentary papers of all kinds in their sombre bindings—the Blue Books of the past, which, by the way, often contain much lighter and pleasanter reading than their outward appearance gives promise of. The searcher's wants are made known on a printed ticket, and presently a small wagon is drawn up to the desk containing three or four bulky volumes, which are, after all, only the year's issue of the daily journal required. Now, if you are a practical searcher, you will verify the contents of your volumes, for there is no absolute certainty that the collection is complete. There are the lost and missing here as well as in other walks of life, and the one missing paper may contain the very information you are in search of.

But for our present purpose such precautions may be dispensed with. Let us take our columns as they come, dive into their contents, and bring to the surface such waifs and strays as may be readily grasped. First of all may be noticed a curious ebb and flow of advertisements such as we are in search of. Sometimes half a column will be filled with more or less enigmatic announcements. Again, they shrink to nothing, or are only re-

presented by such commonplace things as, "Dog lost," or "Five pounds reward for a lost signet ring." Once the Chancellor of the Exchequer heads the column, with an acknowledgement of conscience money duly received for Income Tax. Sometimes the secretary of a hospital returns thanks for an anonymous donation. Then we are among the lovers again.

Maud is called upon most earnestly, and begged to respond more fervently, with allusions to former vows and mutual pledges in the days not long ago, when Alfred was all in all to his beloved. Maud is evidently cooling fast, for no answering billet appears, and after another frenzied appeal, poor Alfred seems to sink beneath his woes. For Maud is again addressed, but from a bed of sickness; he is lying ill of small-pox at No. 3, Surley Terrace, dying and penniless—he has credit with an advertising agent apparently—will she not come to him? But here in his despair, Alfred has "put his foot into it." Not Maud appears to him, but an infuriated landlady, who has chanced to see her house thus connected with infection. "What! you are ill with small-pox, and at my respectable lodgings, that will be ruined with your aspersions!" We may fancy that Alfred's lot is not a happy one for the next few days, and finally there appears, as an advertisement, a humble apology. Alfred's disorder was not small-pox, the house, No. 3, Surley Terrace, has a clean bill of health, and he humbly apologises for the slur cast upon this most respectable house.

Another unlucky advertiser appears to be the father of a family, who for some reason is banished from the domestic hearth, and who, in a spirit of Christian forgiveness, addresses each of his daughters on the eve of her birthday, wishing her many happy returns of the day. An unhappy old King Lear, his daughters have refused to see him, "which appears strange, for you were always fond of your father." Strange, but nevertheless true, for the parent's occasional shots at his several daughters meet with no response.

But we fall suddenly and hopelessly into a maze of mystery and romance, such as even a hardened writer of fiction could hardly venture upon, when we come upon an urgent advertisement for a "young lady missing, with a coronet on her linen, and a cross tattoo'd on her right leg." But this is not the only attempt at personal description. Somebody wants the certificate of marriage of a couple, name un-

known, but the gentleman tall and sallow, with a moustache, and about thirty-five years of age, while the bride was small and fair, with pink cheeks and blue eyes.

It is disappointing not to come upon more advertisements of "Heirs at law wanted," with suggestions of possible wealth to be attained should you turn out to be really the next-of-kin of John Noggins, intestate. It is more common to find a reward offered for a missing will which some person, with something to bequeath, is supposed to have made at some unknown period. And sometimes it is not the will that is missing, but the very corpus of the estate. Here is one who had all the credit of being rich, and all the family affection that naturally followed, and yet he dies and leaves behind not a scrap of evidence that he was anything but a pauper: no deeds, bonds, mortgages, coupons, nothing; but there is the possible chance that he has deposited all such things with some unknown but trusty friend, who is requested to communicate with So-and-so.

There is doubtless the probability that many of our advertisements are not exactly what they seem. For instance, here is one: "A. B.—Come home. Your mother is dying." What a shock for the prodigal son, whose misdeeds have, perhaps, shortened his mother's days, and yet whose one redeeming point is his filial affection! But how if detectives surround the maternal home, and the sad summons be only a ruse of the officers of the law to bring A. B. within their clutches?

And some of the most harmless-looking advertisements may contain perilous matter after all. Some years ago an advertisement appeared purporting to come from one engaged in a scientific experiment, who desired the assistance of some student skilled in medicine. The experiment turned out to be, "How to get rid of life in the easiest manner, without exciting suspicion." The advertiser was a woman still young, who was tired of life and desired to escape from it without fuss or scandal, and the advertisement brought her just the man she wanted, who entered into her plans with zest, and was full of ingenious devices to enable his patient to get rid of life and at the same time provide her benefactor with a substantial reward. All this was discussed in correspondence that was addressed to initials at a Post Office, and the circumstance that one letter was unclaimed and opened at the Dead Letter Office, brought the

correspondents under the notice of the police.

Here is another advertisement which may have some hidden meaning, but which on the surface can be only ascribed to pure benevolence: "Will the man who travelled with his wife and nine children, a tool basket and a bundle, between Stepney and Barking, in a third-class carriage on Tuesday last, send his address to A. B. of C. D., when he may hear of something to his advantage." Of a like personal character is a succeeding announcement: "The gentleman who bowed to a lady in Regent Street yesterday is requested to accept the lady's apologies for not acknowledging his salute." The slight was mortifying, no doubt, but who, having encountered it, would think of looking to the agony column for explanation?

Of a like apologetic character, but mixed with more serious interest, is the following: "'Your wife died two years ago!' The gentleman who was thus addressed by a stranger in Piccadilly towards the end of September last, apologises for the manner in which he received the information, and will give three pounds to have the fact verified." Apparently the brusque but well-informed stranger was not a reader of the agony column, for some days afterwards, the advertisement is repeated and the reward is raised to five pounds.

Again, there is an official announcement from the Island of Jersey. A woman has died there suddenly, and there is no clue to her identity, although she is known to have passed under various pseudonyms, a list of which is given. Not a poor woman either, but one with jewels, and gold, and perhaps also bonds and coupons "to bearer." She is known to have frequented foreign watering places of the highest class, but no one knows anything definite about her, and if any heirs of hers are in existence, they must apply to the Viscount of Jersey.

Among announcements of a somewhat gloomy nature, come the chirpings of lovers again, sometimes pleasant and harmless enough: "Dear Gus, don't come; governor turned queer. Shall ever love you. Ta, ta!" "Sunny Face writes to Will, in full assurance of mutual constancy." "Hero assures Leander that every thought and wish of his are echoed." "Little one" is told that some one is very unhappy about her. All this seems cheerful and harmless enough—the excusable circumvention of stern parents and jealous guardians. But a more gloomy note is struck at times.

The primrose path ends often enough in the gloomy abyss: "How I dread the future! Have you no comfort for me?" Is this not the appeal of some poor heart-stricken creature? And there are the more material woes of abandonment and neglect: "Why do you not write? Everything is gone. The bailiff's in the house; to-morrow we are in the streets." Many are the appeals of this kind that meet the eye in searching the agony column, while grateful acknowledgements of seasonable help and succour, although not entirely wanting, are still comparatively rare.

Finally, it is as well to remark that although the various advertisements quoted have all been drawn from a year's issue of a leading daily journal, yet that names and places, where given, are in every case fictitious.

THROUGH GATES OF GOLD.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THE Lady Betty was swearing. She was not drunk, however. Under the present conditions reigning at the fort, it would have been difficult to have attained to any such indulgence of body and mind. For there was little left to drink; still less to eat; while desperate anxiety darkened every face, and the shadow of death loomed close at hand. Yet, black as matters looked, with hundreds of Indians infuriated with blood-thirst, closing them in on all sides, with only a dozen men to hold the fort and protect the two women shut up there with them, with ammunition running short, with food and water distributed on principles of the strictest economy, with a blazing sun overhead to add to the torture of the long hours with their ceaseless dread and expectation, with no prospect but death at the hands of a cruel, merciless foe; yet The Lady Betty was not swearing at the present conditions of her existence, but at the one other woman shut up with her in that besieged fort.

It would have been difficult to say, looking at her now as she stood within the stockade, drawn back into the doorway of one of the buildings, to avoid meeting the other woman who had just passed by, why she had ever gained the title of "The Lady Betty." The usual tawdry finery, with which she delighted to adorn herself, was faded, torn, and dirty; there being no opportunities in that doomed out-of-the-world fort, peopled only by that

handful of desperate men, for repairing deficiencies of toilette. There was no dignity in the reckless abandonment of herself to the low, vulgar passions that convulsed her. The coarse beauty of her face was disfigured by hate, rage, and desire of revenge.

But some one in her past had given her the nickname, and it had stuck to her ever since. She had been little more than a child then; she was but just a woman now, a year or two still off thirty; but the years through which that name had clung to her might have reckoned as a century, if their experience of reckless life were measured instead of time. The Lady Betty had enjoyed herself after her own fashion.

But this afternoon, in a vague, dumb way, as some maddened, pain-tortured brute might resent the agony of the lash, brought on itself by its own ungoverned passions, she felt that those years of reckless folly had brought their own punishment.

Until a fortnight ago—when this girl with her father had been rescued, and brought into the fort under a hailstorm of bullets, which had cost the lives of three of the garrison, who had made a sortie to save the strangers—The Lady Betty and "the boys" had been the best of friends. She had shouldered her rifle, side by side, with them. She had taken her share in the watches; she had eaten, lived, laughed with them, fearless as they of the death that threatened them. Now all this was changed. Though The Lady Betty, even thinking over it calmly, which she never did—the very thought of these two strangers, whose advent in the fort had been baptized by the loss of three of the bravest and brightest of the boys, filling her with rage—could hardly have defined the change, or how it first began.

The boys were never unkind to her. She knew that they went on short rations, so that she, as well as that girl-stranger, should have more. But this knowledge only made her more furious. Had not she been a good comrade with them? She did not want them to shorten their allowance for her, as they did for that delicate, pale-faced girl, who scarcely knew one end of a gun from the other—at least, she did not when she came. Now she could handle and load one; Sorry Carew had taught her. The Lady Betty set her teeth, as she remembered watching the lessons the girl had begged for. All the boys had wanted

to teach her. But it was Sorry Carew who had given the lesson. As The Lady Betty remembered the look on his handsome face as he stood by her, showing her how to handle his rifle, she drew in her breath with a sharp, short sob, as if that first shot fired by the girl had gone through her own heart.

But though the boys were as good to her, in their rough, familiar way, as they had always been, something seemed to have come between them and her. They were no longer so recklessly cheerful in her society. When she swore, they seemed always afraid that that girl would hear her. They evidently preferred now to keep their lives to themselves, and desired her to do the same.

The old happy-go-lucky familiarity in which, if there were no respect, there was no troublesome question of etiquette, had vanished. This invisible, though perfectly tangible barrier, against which she fretted and raged, was impassable. Once when she had broken out, and stormed at, and reproached and cursed one of the men, asking why they all kept so aloof from her, he had looked perplexed for a moment or two, and then answered her :

"Wa'al, I guess we don't forgit as how you're game," he said, awkwardly, and doubtfully ; "but you see you're a woman, and so's she."

Ah! that "she." How she hated her! It all started from her. The boys only thought of her now. They would have laid themselves down for her to walk over. To get a word or a smile from her they would have gone to their death. It was for her they had given up cursing, gambling, and The Lady Betty. Poor Lady Betty!—it was hard. She who had shared their perils, as well as their pleasures, to be put aside for this pale, quiet-faced girl, who had been a total stranger to their lives a fortnight before. They were ashamed of her, too. They did not care to see her near that proud-eyed girl. They were uneasy if she joined them in her presence. The girl's father would openly show his dislike. He would take the girl away when she drew near them ; he would look as if he feared pollution for his beloved, spotless daughter from the very touch of The Lady Betty's garment. At first The Lady Betty had defied him, as she had defied the boys and forced herself upon them, and taken a pleasure in startling that delicate piece

of goods with her reckless oath-garnished talk. She took a malevolent pleasure in arousing that frightened, shrinking, wondering disgust on the lovely face that had so bewitched the boys.

But even she had, at last, been cowed by the stern coldness and contempt of Mr. Gresham as he turned away with his daughter, and now she avoided them, too. Was it only the scorn and icy hardness of the father which had cowed her? Was not there something in the pitiful, shrinking eyes of the pure girl which—but no! The Lady Betty only broke into more furious rage when she thought of this. That that girl should master her! The rage that desperately defied the thought was full on her at this instant, as Miriam Gresham went by with Sorry Carew. She hissed out a curse after them. The young man heard it ; his face grew white to the lips. He did not look at his companion ; but he knew how the delicate skin had flushed scarlet and then paled beneath the gratuitous insult, and his eyes blazed with fury against the woman who had dared so to hurt her. Yet there had been a yesterday, when his eyes had glowed with a different light as they looked on that woman, and it was the remembrance of that past which touched, with its chill hand of fear, his heart to-day.

They did not speak till they reached that part of the low wood buildings in which rooms had been given her and her father. It was Miriam who broke the awkward silence.

"Why does she hate me so?" she asked, looking up at him with eyes still bright with her hurt. "It seems hard, when she and I are the only women here—and when to-morrow we may be dead."

Her voice caught, and fell into lower tones.

They had not told her what manner of woman The Lady Betty was. She thought her coarse, vulgar, insolent, foul-mouthed, but she believed her honest. Her father and the other men had kept up the delusion, sprung like an angel's fancy from her own pure soul.

"You must not mind her," said Sorry Carew, awkwardly, remembering her faith. "She's brave and she's true. She has faced death with us, and——" he stopped short. As he looked into the girl's sweet, half-indignant, half-pained eyes, he felt it sacrilege to even speak of The Lady Betty's good qualities. Poor Lady Betty!

"I don't mind her!" a little pettishly. She had herself discovered some beauty in The Lady Betty, and she remembered that fact now, as she listened to Sorry Carew's praises, and saw how his handsome face flushed as he stammered and broke down.

"I daresay he thinks her lovely, dressed up in that tawdry, dirty finery!" she thought. And then she remembered how near death was, and her heart grew tender and true again, under the chastening thought.

"Oh, how wicked I am, Mr. Carew!" she exclaimed, her eyes filling with pitying, remorseful tears. "Tell her not to hate me so! Tell her we ought rather to love each other!" And she ran into the house, shutting the door between her and the young man. He stood there aghast, dismayed, bewildered at her tears, at her passionate self-accusation to which he had no clue; his mind refusing any possibility of there being the simplest flaw in her goodness and sweetness. And her message to The Lady Betty filled him with consternation and despair for himself, passionate wonder and admiration for the sender, and shame and angry remorse for The Lady Betty.

CHAPTER II.

BUT each hour brought the doom of that little fort, so splendidly held for so long, nearer. Daring, coolness, endurance, the simple self-sacrifice and unselfishness of these dozen men, who had become so many heroes, were to be all of no avail.

That same night another council of war was held. The Indians would not stay inactive much longer; the only wonder was that they had kept quiet so long. If they had continued the active attack first made, the ammunition of the fort would long ago have been expended. But their inaction gave no ease. It would only be a prelude to worse devilries. Some of the men there, worn out with the ceaseless watching, the intolerable heat, the insufficient food, and the terrible anxiety, would have preferred the rush and shock of a desperate charge, and then have had it all over, meeting death as an honourable friend. But there were the women to be thought of. Already, gloomy shadows darkened the men's eyes as they looked at the beautiful girl. By what dreadful means must she be delivered from the hands of those devils? But the girl had already decided for herself.

"You will know what to do for me, father, when the time comes," she said to him quietly one night, as she bade him "Good-night" in the starlight. He caught her close to him, and kissed her without a word; but she knew that he understood. The men sat late discussing the situation.

If only Colonel Shaw, who must have reached by this time Fort James, could hear of their position, he would hasten to their assistance. Provisions would hold out—dividing them into the smallest portions sufficient to keep them alive—for another four days; ammunition, if the Indians proved troublesome, half that time. But who was to go and hasten Shaw's advance?

It was certain death to leave the fort. Not that any of the boys troubled about that, as he, personally, was concerned. But the loss of each life made the chance of the rest less. And "the rest" always now meant the women, in the men's thoughts. Besides, the discovery of an attempt to leave the fort for aid would, to a certainty, precipitate the plans of the Indians. Shaw would surely soon hear of the enemies' force concentrated at Fort Buff, and advance rapidly to their rescue. There was nothing to do but wait for him. Not that even this hope of his arrival brightened their prospects. Each man knew—though he did not say it—that it was far more than probable that the instant the Indian scouts discovered the approach of the soldiers, their doom would be sealed. The Indians would fire the fort and massacre its defenders long before Shaw could reach them. Nothing but the most subtle tactics on Shaw's side, to disguise his movements, could prevent the catastrophe. If only a messenger could reach him to acquaint him with all the difficulties of the situation!

The men separated, some to sleep, some to keep up the ceaseless, harassing watch, without having been able to decide upon anything better than to wait.

The next day dawned. There were signs of activity once more among the Indians. They rode out singly, or in bodies, from their places of shelter, pointing and gesticulating in enraged derision, towards the fort; breaking out into wild war-whoops, which curdled the blood in the girl's veins. Shots were fired, too, which the men in the fort, though burning to avenge each one with a dozen, dared not return, for not a bullet could be wasted. They would

need them all for the last struggle. The women—or rather Miriam, for The Lady Betty had scouted, in savage mockery, the idea—had been kept inside the building to be out of the way of the shots. The long, weary day passed, the afternoon waned, Miriam, rebelling against her captivity, ventured to disobey orders. As she stepped outside she caught sight of The Lady Betty disappearing into a small shanty, built on rising ground at the other end of the stockade. She looked about her; none of the boys were near. A sudden impulse—for which the girl could never account, unless it were a simple womanly desire for the sympathy of her own sex at this supreme moment of peril—made her run across the space between the building she occupied and the shanty. She reached the door, which The Lady Betty had left ajar. The girl called her softly. There was no answer, and, pushing the door open, Miriam looked in. There was a square opening for a window at the end of the room, and through this opening poured the golden light of the western sun. It rolled in waves of dazzling radiance into the room, and, in the midst of it, bathing her as in a sea of fiery light, stood, rigid, still, gazing through the opening, The Lady Betty. She seemed to be seeing a vision, so pale was her face, so staring and fixed her eyes.

The girl spoke again gently, but the woman did not stir, and Miriam, stepping half-fearfully, for she did not know how she would be received, went up to her. But as she reached the woman's side, and instinctively followed the gaze of her rapt eyes, an exclamation of awed delight and wonder broke from her lips.

Through a break of the wood-lined hills, facing the window, the sun was setting in a perfect glory of red and gold. The whole horizon, narrowed to them by those hills, seemed a sea of fire, which stretched on in liquid, quivering waves of light from heaven to them, as they stood on the earth. And as the girl looked, she forgot the hideous cries, and the whizzing shot, and the horrors that, to them, must wait on death; and a great peace fell on her.

"It is like the golden gates of Heaven!" she cried under her breath. "And we shall pass through them, and then the sorrow and the sighing will seem so short, for they will be no more!"

She was not conscious of speaking aloud. The Lady Betty started; a shudder—was it

of hate and rage, or of a spiritual dread of the mystery of death?—shook her from head to foot.

She turned sharply, staring stupidly for a second at Miriam, her eyes blinded with the radiance into which she had been gazing. Then as she understood who had spoken, her eyes blazed, and she flung out her hands as if to dash the girl aside.

"Git!" she cried, in a hoarse, choked voice, "you shan't take this from me, too!"

But Miriam caught at her hands.

"Oh, don't let us quarrel!" she cried with a half sob. "Be my friend! How can we go through the golden gates with hate between us!"

The woman broke into a reckless, jeering laugh, whose bitterness appalled the girl.

"I've heard on them golden gates! I reckon ez now, they ain't fur sich ez me. Only for fine folks ez you!"

"Oh!" cried the girl. "What makes you so hard? If I have done you any wrong without knowing, forgive me; and take my hand."

But The Lady Betty struck it from her with such savage force, that the delicate fingers were bruised, and a faint cry of pain was forced from the girl. An imprecation broke on the air, and Sorry Carew, who had reached the doorway just in time to see the blow, sprang forward, and caught the poor little wounded hand in his.

"Come away!" he cried, hoarsely, to the trembling girl. "It is not fit that you should be here. Stand back!" He made a fierce gesture to The Lady Betty.

She fell back, mastered by the look in his eyes, and the merciless gesture. But she could not get out of the light that was now filling the cabin.

But the meaning of the woman's dreadful recklessness, of the man's gesture, broke in some strange way—for she had had, in her protected schoolgirl existence, no knowledge of the evil of life—on the girl's understanding. She drew her hand from the young man's grasp, and ran over to where the unhappy woman stood scowling and cowering in the corner of the light-filled room.

"See!" she cried, her sweet voice unsteady, and strained with the passion of infinite pity, that swept as a wave over her heart, and which made it seem as if that knowledge must have come direct from heaven itself. "You cannot get out of the light! It is because the golden gates are open so wide—so wide that there is room for you to enter as well as me."

And then she fled from the room, and the young man did not dare protect her any more.

He went out into the air with a look on his face which had never been there before.

And there was no sound left in the room, save the wild choking sobs of the woman, who had flung herself down in the dust, with the red light streaming full upon her.

CHAPTER III.

It was midnight. There was no moon; but the night was luminous with the starlight; and The Lady Betty, creeping like a gliding shadow from the shanty to the building where Miriam slept, muttered an oath, which she choked immediately, then glanced round with a fierce, half-shamefaced expression, as if defying any one who might have overheard the suppression, to prove that she was growing more virtuous.

But even this faint light angered her, for she did not want any one to see her. Since his arrival at the fort, Mr. Gresham had taken his share in all the duties of their situation, and at this moment he was sharing the watch with some of the others. The Lady Betty knew this, and pushed open the outer door of the building, knowing that there was no chance of meeting him. Miriam slept in an inner room, and to this, with her swift, steady feet, The Lady Betty crept. The girl lay fast asleep in the starlight, shining through a window over her head. The woman with her eager, bloodshot eyes, stood gazing down upon her, with a look in which fierce despair, jealousy, and rage, struggled with gratitude and awe. How peaceful and beautiful she looked! The angels that went in and out of those golden gates, must be like her. She sank down on her knees by the bedside, with a sharp cry, Miriam sprang up, her heart beating till she was nearly suffocated, from the suddenness of the awaking, her eyes full of anguished fear. Were the Indians here at last! Then her eyes fell on the woman, and a different fear seized her. From the exaltation of that infinite pity, a reaction had set in. She was not an angel—only a woman. Young, intolerant, as all youth, strong in its own purity, always is. That afternoon she had been inspired; raised to her highest level—perhaps above it—for she had still much to learn by endurance and suffering. Since

that supreme moment, she had had time to think, and her horror, her bitter scorn of the sin, had overwhelmed her pity for the sinner.

"What do you want?" she asked, her voice cold, unsteady with her fear and dislike.

"I reckon ez how I jess kem to ask you a question," said The Lady Betty in a hard voice, but it was no longer bitter or reckless, though she felt to the quick the change in the girl, who sat up with the starlight shining on her white, proud face. "It mayn't be ez what you'd like to answer. But I ain't foolin'. The Red Skins is sorter too close for thet. Do you love Sorry Carew?"

Miriam stared at her speechless, a rush of scarlet blood staining her face, throat, and even ears. She was revolted, shamed, enraged, half stunned with the shock of the question. Every nerve in her quivered with it. It was as if a rude, brutal hand, had suddenly rent aside the veil that sheltered the modesty and delicacy of her maiden heart.

Love! What was it to her still, but a vague, beautiful fancy, scarcely breathed yet to herself. And now that this woman—this woman should dare——! The Lady Betty stumbled to her feet. She took the girl's silence of intolerable humiliation, for an answer in the affirmative. Such a phase of feeling torturing the girl, was incomprehensible to her—wasted and degraded as all her own finest instincts of womanhood were. For one second, a sense of her own sacrifice—a bitter, wild rebellion against its need—a dreary consciousness of her miserable, empty life, fell on her, and it seemed impossible. In some vague way, she felt, too, in her soul, that this love of hers for Carew had been the one redeeming feature in her own lost womanhood. It had been true. He had soon tired of her, and she had accepted her desertion with an outward philosophy, which had hidden the deepest wound her heart had ever known. The one thing that had kept up her courage to play her part, was a wild, desperate hope that one day he might return to her. Now was she to kill even that hope? And upon her, as upon Miriam that afternoon, a great inspiration fell. She suddenly understood the girl. She was great to love and hate as well as to pity. She felt certain that if she gave her one hint of the past between herself and Carew, the girl would scorn him with the whole force of her untired,

undisciplined nature. A great and fearful temptation convulsed The Lady Betty with such a storm of despair, agony, longing, that she dug her nails into her palms not to cry out the words. And then suddenly upon her poor storm-racked soul, there seemed to shine that golden light of the afternoon, and she remembered how this girl had come to her in it, and touched her with her pure hands, and begged her, The Lady Betty, to enter those golden gates, side by side, with her!

"I reckon ez now I'll try and get through them golden gates," she said, in a faint, broken voice, with a strange little smile flickering across her lips.

She was gone before the girl could speak, or had even understood.

The Lady Betty glided back to her own quarters, where she hastily made a few preparations. Fort James, which Shaw was supposed to have reached by this time, was full seventy miles away. She had made up her mind to be the messenger to him. She had assisted at that conference the night before, and knew how desperate matters were. She knew, too, every peril that would beset her. The country between this and Fort James was swarming with Indians. She would carry her life in her hand; but she did not think of that, she was only a woman, and her loss would be nothing. But her loss might entail the death of the others. She knew as well as the boys that she must not be discovered. How to elude those vigilant foes? But she had spent all her childhood among a tribe of Indians, and was as subtle and as learned in their craft and stratagems as themselves. She must go on foot. She would not risk the boys discovering her plans, by taking a horse; besides, she could, on foot, conceal herself better. Greater safety would counterbalance the greater speed. She would take little ammunition, for not a shot could be well spared; but then—save a bullet for herself, if she were caught—she would need none. She had not to fight, but overmatch her foes by cunning. She would even take no food, for those left behind would need every mouthful.

And now to leave the fort. The boys must not know till she was gone. A great desire to take one last look at Sorry Carew, who had just turned in and lay sleeping only twenty yards from her, in one of the out-houses, shook her cool courage. But she conquered. Where was the good? She had given him up for ever. She was

out of the fort at last; and now to commence that deadly task.

At the third dawn from that night, about a mile, still, from Fort James, a woman staggered and fell at the feet of some of Shaw's men. It was difficult to recognise her womanhood—such a disfigured, dishevelled, tattered thing she was. Her face was crusted with dust and blood, for she had been severely wounded, her lips were black and parched, her feet bleeding and torn. They thought, as they raised her, that she was dead. Under the blazing sun, through the blackness of night; hunted down by her bloodthirsty foes; lying hidden from them for hours in the water, in holes in the ground; creeping out again, to stagger on, starving, fainting from loss of blood, pain, and those awful miles upon miles of march, she had yet brought her message to Shaw.

It was marvellous how she had done it. Nothing but that resolve, which grew as the hours went on, into almost a madness of desire to save Miriam and Carew, carried her through it all. At first she could force no sound from lips and throat; but, at last they understood. Even now, she asked to go with the relieving party, dreading their ignorance of Indian warfare, which might hurry on the catastrophe. But she relapsed into unconsciousness as she spoke, and was delirious when she awoke again. She was tenderly nursed. She was the heroine of the hour—a fact which, when she had recovered a little, she resented with the whole force of her vocabulary.

But the news they gave her one afternoon made her turn her face to the wall, and lie silent and still for a long time. Her friends were saved. She insisted upon getting up and going about the next day. Nor would she wait till the relieved garrison reached Fort James.

The evening before they were to arrive, she left. The sun was setting across the level prairie as she rode out of the fort, and all the west was radiant with its glory. She turned her horse's head towards it, and sat for a moment, with a wistful, rapt gaze in her eyes, looking straight into the radiance, flooding earth and sky, before her.

Then she turned to the people who had come to see her start:

"Tell Miriam Gresham and Sorry Carew ez how I'm goin' towards them

golden gates—she'll know—and I reckon ez how I'll never keer fur to come back."

And she rode away into the golden light. Nor did those who had once known her, ever see her come out of it again.

PANSIE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

ON the verandah of the Burlington House Hotel, at the small Colorado station of Montrose, on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, about three weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, Lancelot Selfe and his pretty young wife, hitherto known as Pansie Wyman, were sitting very close to each other, and looking supremely happy.

"It's like a dream, Pansie," said Lancelot, after a pause in their talk, during which they gazed out into the west, where the sun was slowly sinking behind a bank of purple clouds. "Three weeks ago you were Pansie Wyman, an obscure school-girl, in mortal fear of two old ladies, and now you're the wife of that distinguished young barrister, Lancelot Selfe, Esquire, Brick Court, Temple, free and independent as the wind, and——"

"The happiest woman in the world," interposed the girl. "Although, mind, Lancy, not feeling as if I had quite shaken off all shackles and fear of those put in authority over me. Just fancy if papa were to turn up! I don't know what I should do, Lancy."

"I only wish he would turn up," said her husband. "Why, that's what we've come here for—on purpose to meet the old fellow, and have it out with him. There's one thing, Pansie, whatever he may say and do, he can't turn you back again into Miss Pansie Wyman."

"Yes, it's all very well for you to treat it so lightly," said Pansie. "But you don't know papa. He's perfectly terrible when he's roused. I've seen him work himself into a frenzy over the mere mention of the Alabama; and if he knew that I'd run away from school to marry an Englishman, I can't think what he'd do."

"But, my dear girl, don't you think he knows it all by this time?" said Lancelot. "You trust the old aunts to write off immediately about it! And now look here, let's talk business, and make our

plans. Your father inspects this part of the line, doesn't he? He goes once a week with the bullion train to Frisco, and the cars are generally loaded up here? Very well. This is his day. I want to see him. Get him on to talk about you without letting him know who I am, and gradually bring him up to the climax."

"If he has his six-shooter about him, I believe he'd shoot you," said Pansie.

"Not he!" said Lancelot. "Men don't shoot sons-in-law as if they were jack-rabbits."

"Well, I'm all of a tremble when I think of it," said Pansie, nestling still closer to her husband.

"I'm not," said Lancelot. "Why should we be? I'm respectable; I'm not a pauper; and the only crimes that can be brought to my charge are, that I'm an Englishman, that I've torn a bird from the protecting wings of its aunts and school-mistresses, and that I've done another fellow out of his intended bride."

"Well, dear, of course you know best," said the girl. "At the same time I'm in a terrible fright about it, and if anything was to happen to you on account of me—why, Lancy! Look! Look! There he is! There—walking towards the depôt."

The young man looked in the direction indicated by Pansie and saw a tall, military-looking man, enveloped in a long cloak, and wearing the chimney-pot hat, so dear to the American citizen under all circumstances and at all times and places, who was sauntering slowly along in the direction of the railway station, puffing vigorously at a big cigar.

"Dear me!" said Lancelot, calmly. "That is a piece of good luck only to have arrived here three hours, and to tumble upon the very man we want to see. I must go and make his acquaintance."

"But you won't say anything yet, will you, Lancy?" urged the trembling girl. "You won't let him know who you are, or that I am here?"

"No fear!" replied her husband. "Keep yourself quite easy. Your father and I will be the best friends in the world in a short time."

So saying he went off after the Colonel, followed him into the station, which was a scene of bustle and confusion, as large quantities of metal had arrived from the smelting works at Ouray, South Fork, Antelope Spring, Barnum, and other mining districts, to be transported to San Francisco; watched him saunter about in

a leisurely and dignified way for some time, and finally turn into the Dépôt Saloon.

Here he joined the Colonel, and over a drink got into conversation with him.

"A Britisher, sir?" said the Colonel at length, after a survey of Lancelot's person from head to foot. Lancelot admitted the soft impeachment.

"Travelling around for pleasure?" continued the Colonel.

"Yes," replied Lancelot. "And I've never been so surprised and delighted in all my life."

This evidently produced a favourable impression, as the Colonel drew himself up, looked as if he had personally had a considerable share in producing these gratifying sensations, and said:

"No, of course not. If one of the builders of the Great Pyramid could be suddenly landed in our country, I reckon his eyes would open some, and it must be pretty much the same sort of feeling to you folks from the other side of the herring pond."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Lancelot, smiling. "We're not quite so behind-hand as all that, I hope."

"Behind-hand—no; obstinate—yes," said the Colonel. "That was a real, mean attitude you kept up towards the North in the Civil War."

Lancelot knew better than to engage the prejudiced Colonel in a political argument, so he merely said:

"Ever been to England, sir?"

"No, sir, and I don't reckon I ever shall," replied the Colonel. "I like you, sir; yes, I like you, but—I'm a frank man; there ain't a franker man in the States, but I don't care about your country, sir, and yet I've a daughter who is finishing her education at one of your schools."

"Evidently hasn't heard the news," thought Lancelot, and said:

"Indeed. May I ask whereabouts?"

"At Brighton, sir, in Sussex. Athena House, Sussex Square, that's the locality," replied the Colonel.

"Then you must have a little respect for us," said Lancelot, "to send your daughter so far to be educated."

"Respect—yes, sir; affection—no, sir," replied the Colonel. "What's your lotion, sir?"

"Well, what you've got looks so good, I can't do better than have the same," replied Lancelot.

So the bar-tender mixed Lancelot a julep, and the conversation was renewed.

"Married man, sir?" asked the Colonel. Lancelot nodded.

"Wife with you?"

Lancelot replied in the affirmative.

"Going on with us to-night?"

"Why, I thought this was only a bullion train."

"So it is, but we attach a car for any passengers that happen to be knocking around. It's a good train, for it don't stop between here and Salt Lake City."

"At what time do you start?"

"Four-thirty sharp; awkward time for ladies, but it's worth it."

"But isn't it sometimes rather risky to travel by these trains? I mean aren't they sometimes stopped and robbed?"

The Colonel burst into a guffaw of laughter which almost choked him and necessitated a fresh supply of julep.

"Well, sir, I smile," he replied at length.

"Because under ordinary circumstances that might be. But I reckon since I've been on the inspecting job, the 'boys' have kept quiet. They seem to be sorter afraid of me. Why sir, we don't even take a convoy now with the bullion train, and I remember when we'd as soon have thought of starting without a locomotive as without a score of soldiers armed with Winchesters."

"Well, I must of course consult my wife," said Lancelot. "We were travelling all yesterday, and she may want a night's rest. Does your daughter like school, sir?"

"Yes, she does, and I reckon school's making her more British than American; but she's coming home for good at Christmas, and I guess she'll have to be fixed with a husband," replied the Colonel.

"Perhaps she's fallen in love already in England," said Lancelot, laughing.

"Not she, sir! not she!" said the Colonel. "She knows better than to do that, sir. Besides, before she went away a year ago, she knew there was a spry young chap knocking around her, and she's as good as promised to him. Strange thing, too, you ain't at all unlike Jem Forrest—that's the gentleman's name. You're a bit bigger made, that's all. Fine girl, sir, she is from all accounts I hear. Here's to her, and now if you reckon you'll start by the four-thirty, you'd best be seeing the lady; tell her there ain't any fear of robbers when Colonel Wyman's on board the cars, and get her to sleep. I turn in on board

very soon, so that I shan't see you until to-morrow. Good night, sir."

"Good night," replied Lancelot, and he was about to return to the hotel, when a negro placed a bundle of letters in the Colonel's hand, and Lancelot, urged by some instinct, paused under pretence of lighting a fresh cigar.

The Colonel turned the letters over until he came to one bearing a British stamp.

"Why sir," he said, "if there ain't a letter from the old country. Perhaps I can give you some news."

Lancelot eagerly scanned the Colonel's face as the latter read the letter, and saw the successive expressions upon it, of surprise and indignation.

"I hope there's nothing wrong, sir," Lancelot ventured to remark.

"Read that, sir," said the Colonel in reply, turning away to vent his wrath in a torrent of the fiercest ejaculations and imprecations.

Lancelot read the letter, which was from Miss Julia, announcing the disappearance of Pansie from Athena House, and, of course, affected the greatest surprise.

"What do you think of that, sir?" said the Colonel, returning from the exercise of his anathematical faculties. "A child, upon whom I have lavished all the affection of a fond parent, whose education and travelling has cost me Heaven knows how many thousand dollars, to turn against her country, her father, and her friends, and run off with a good-for-nothing Britisher!"

"The lady who writes does not say anything about his being good-for-nothing," said Lancelot, in a consolatory tone. "On the contrary, she speaks rather well of him."

"That don't matter worth a cent," retorted the angry Colonel. "If he was good for anything he'd write straight to me and ask my permission, instead of taking advantage of a girl being thousands of miles away from home, and running off with her. That's what I think about it, sir; and if I catch that man, I'll—well, I guess it don't do to say what I'll do; but somebody'll have to put on mourning for him. I feel, sir, as if you could knock me down with a bank note, that I do, sir."

To correct which ambiguous feeling he was obliged to order a "cobbler" of extra strength, which he took at a gulp, and professed himself a trifle per cent. better.

To offer consolation under the distressing circumstances seemed to Lancelot to savour of mockery, so he listened a bit to the Colonel's violent tirade against Britishers in general, and the robber of his daughter in particular, muttered a few words of sympathy, and, remarking that it was nearly eight o'clock, wished the Colonel "good night," and returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER IV.

LANCELOT SELFE found his wife in a state of eager expectation as to the results of his interview with her father, and she sprang up and kissed him as if he had returned from the jaws of death. He told her all that had passed between them, of the arrival of Aunt Julia's letter, and its effect upon the Colonel; and said that if she did not feel too tired they would leave by the bullion train at half-past four in the morning, and that during the journey, he would declare himself to the Colonel.

"But Lancy," said Pansie, "papa is sure to discover me on the same train with him. Remember, our cars here are not like yours, there is no hiding away in a snug little compartment to oneself."

"That's all right, my darling," said her husband. "Your father is now going to turn into his car, which forms part of the mail car, to sleep, and he told me that we should not meet until to-morrow. So now do you run upstairs, tell Susan to tumble in for a few hours' sleep, and do the same yourself. I'm going out for a stroll, as it's such a lovely night, and I'll have a good old think over matters."

So Pansie left the room, and Lancelot went out into the moonlit street. Not caring for the bustle and crowd of the town, he turned off near the railway station along a path which led away into the country, and soon he was in a solitary region, of which the silence was only broken by the plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will and the hum of nocturnal insects.

He had not proceeded very far before he became aware that a cloaked individual, who had already passed him once, had re-passed him, and seemed to be generally interested in him. Although Lancelot knew that the old days of mining camp orgies and "free shoots" had passed, he had been warned not to go abroad unarmed, especially after dark, as there were always loafers and rowdies prowling about ready for mischief, and not at all

particular in the choice of their victims. So, when the mysterious individual faced about and approached him, he quietly slipped his six-shooter out of his pocket and advanced ready for any emergency.

The man evidently saw the precautionary movement, for he held his two hands in the air—a familiar symbol of peaceful intentions in these parts—and said in an undertone:

“All right, Captain. I was coming to see you. Just a word to say that the bullion train starts at four-thirty, and has on board forty thousand dollars for the First National Bank at Frisco. Me and the boys will be at the lone hut between Cottonwood and Cisco. The express is there at five after five. Old Wyman’s in charge, and, as we’ve let him sleep so long, there won’t be much shooting. Good night, sir!”

And he disappeared in the darkness before Lancelot could recover his astonishment or frame any sort of reply.

Of course he grasped the situation at once, and saw that the man had mistaken him for some one else, and he turned back rapidly towards the station. At first he thought he would go at once and inform the Colonel of the occurrence; but a happier thought struck him that if matters could be arranged without the knowledge of that official, so much the better.

So he called on the station inspector, and informed him of all that had taken place, impressing upon him absolute secrecy so far as the Colonel was concerned. The man expressed the greatest surprise, shook hands heartily with Lancelot, and told him that everything should be in readiness, and that if he was going to travel by the train he would see some fun.

Then he returned to the hotel, left word with the porter to call him in time, and slipped quietly into bed without disturbing Pansie, who was fast asleep. At four o’clock they were up, and by the half-hour, Pansie and Susan were comfortably installed in the sleeping-car; and Lancelot, who was wide awake from excitement and delight, interested himself in the preparations for departure and defence; and the bullion clerk, who was in the secret, introduced Lancelot to some score of active, muscular, young fellows, armed with Remington and Winchester rifles and revolvers, who were being allotted their positions on the train.

All this accomplished silently and rapidly, the last sacks of mails were hurled

into the car; the conductor from sheer force of habit sung out, “All aboard;” the huge bell of the engine rang out weirdly into the quiet night; and they started. Lancelot and the bullion clerk, each armed with a rifle, took up their positions by the side of the engineer and the stoker in the caboose of the locomotive, whence they could see all that might happen, and direct operations.

At five o’clock, just as the grey dawn was streaking the skies over the pine woods, they saw a red light agitated violently some two hundred yards ahead. The word was passed along the cars to be ready, the engine-bell rang out, and the brakes were put hard down.

Scarcely had the train been brought to a standstill, when from the thickets on each side of the track swarmed groups of wild-looking individuals, armed with rifles, the foremost of whom leapt upon the engine, off which he was promptly knocked with a billet of wood by the engineer, whereupon he picked himself up, swearing horribly, brought his rifle to the ready, and sung out:

“I reckon you’d better tell the Colonel to give up the keys of your freight-cars, or there’ll be shooting.”

“I reckon you’d better stand off, Captain, you and your boys,” replied the bullion clerk, covering him with his rifle as he spoke, “or there’ll be a bead or two drawn on you in return.”

At that moment the bullion convoy showed themselves on the platforms of the cars, to the rage and amazement of the robbers, who stood irresolute, whether to open fire or to bolt.

The man who had leapt on to the engine, and whom Lancelot at once recognised as being like himself, turned to his men, and said:

“Well, boys, we’re as good as them; we haven’t had a haul for some months; what do you say?”

“Go for ’em!” was the growled reply.

But before the suggestion could be acted upon, the bullion convoy discharged a volley, and half-a-dozen of the assailants lay stretched on the ground. The robbers, who had backed into the bush, let fly in return, and the calm and peace of a beautiful morning was broken by the crack of the rifles, the cries of wounded men, the curses of the combatants, the encouraging shouts of their leaders, and the crash of bullets through the brush-wood and the thick foliage.

In the midst of it all the Colonel came tumbling out of his car, half-dressed, and with a face which was a perfect study of rage and astonishment, but a bullet whizzing past his ear, and making a neat hole in the wood-work about a foot off him, drove him back into shelter.

The combat was of but short duration, for the robbers, not having expected resistance, were but poorly armed, and in ten minutes time a dozen pairs of hands were thrown up and all was over.

Then the Colonel came forth to view the scene, and to take over again the command of which he had been, by accident, deprived.

The first corpse which met his wondering gaze was that of the leader of the robbers, the man who, previous to the commencement of hostilities, had been so summarily ejected from the engine.

"Why! Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "If that ain't Jem Forrest, the man who would have married my daughter if that skunk of a Britisher hadn't gone off with her!"

"Yes, Colonel," said his clerk. "That's Jem Forrest, the out and outest black-guard on the track. He's handed in his checks now, and I reckon he'll have a powerful deal o' blood lettin' to answer for."

"Well," said the Colonel, "I wouldn't have believed it. He was one of the quietest, say-nothing-to-nobody sort of cusses I ever met, and that's why I kinder froze to him as a husband for my Pansie, and that's a fact."

"It's real lucky we had the boys aboard, Colonel," said the clerk. "I reckon it warn't your fault."

"Who did it? Who was it?" said the Colonel. "I don't care who he is, but he's saved the bullion train, and Cornelius P. Wyman ain't the man to forget such a good turn. You're right, Hawkins, I've been a sight too easy of late, and this has learnt me a lesson. Say, who's the man?"

"That thar Britisher, yonder," replied Hawkins, jerking his head in the direction of Lancelot, who, stripped to his shirt, was busy amongst the wounded.

The Colonel rushed up to the young Englishman and shook him energetically by the hand.

"Sir," he said, "I don't know how I can thank you for what you've done. If the train had been wrecked I should have been a ruined and disgraced man. You've saved the dollars, and you've saved an old soldier his berth. Name your reward, sir, and if it's in Cornelius P. Wyman's power to grant it, consider it as granted."

"Very well, Colonel," said Lancelot, leading him aside. "I take you at your word. Didn't you show me a letter last night in which it was said, that your daughter had run away from school with a Britisher?"

"Yes, sir, confound him, that's so!" replied the Colonel.

"Would you forgive that Britisher, and receive him as your son-in-law if you were to see him?" asked the young man.

"Well, sir," answered the Colonel, "I'm under an eternal obligation to you. If that man's a friend of yours, I forgive him, although he's done a real mean thing. As for my Pansie—well, as Jem Forrest ain't of no account now, I forgive her."

"I'm the Britisher, sir," said Lancelot.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the Colonel in amazement. "And Pansie?"

"Well," said Lancelot, "I rather expect she and her maid are half dead with fright. I haven't seen them since the shooting began. They're in the sleeping-car."

So the Colonel and Lancelot ascended the sleeping-car, and there they found Pansie and Susan shuddering together in a dark corner. The meeting between father and daughter was of course of a most affectionate nature; and whilst the train in an hour's time rolled on its way towards Salt Lake City, the Colonel and his new son-in-law cemented a friendship which culminated in a promise, on the part of the former, that he would return with them to England in order to pass Christmas at Furnace Court, where he would parentally soothe the outraged feelings of the Misses Julia and Aurelia Penless.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

No one saw Madge's face for more than a week from that day. Lady Judith paid a daily visit to her room, and her maid brought her meals to her bed-side; but the room was kept darkened and, when any one approached her, she hid her eyes with her hands, complaining of racking pain in her head.

Lady Judith in her daily visits reported the household news with the most faithful minuteness. The golden opportunity of a listener, who perforce must remain a listener, was one to be made the most of. "Sir Peter actually advised me to keep out of the room," she said, sweeping in in her voluminous draperies. "He said perfect quiet would bring you round sooner than anything. I told him perfect quiet had a very nice sound on his lips. It was not I who came in at doors and went out at windows every five minutes in the day."

The curtains fluttered in response to her vigorous fan, the floor creaked under her weight, and her long skirt turned up the corners of every rug that lay in her path, and eventually carried along in its folds a footstool or two, wrong side uppermost.

Of all Lady Judith's flow of oratory during the first day's visit, Madge heard naught save that Sir Peter and Mr. Stubbs had "been closeted together the whole morning, and were closeted together now. Goodness only knows what they can find to talk about. I should call it a sinful

waste of time to shut myself up for half a day to chatter about nothing at all."

Lady Judith's voice on the second day seemed to come a little nearer to Madge's muffled ears. It recounted how that Sir Peter had laid before her a newspaper paragraph recording the terrible fate of Miss Shore, and how she had reminded him that on the very first day that the young lady set foot in the house she had said that she had a most repulsive manner in spite of her good looks, and was bound, sooner or later, to come to an unfortunate end. Lady Judith further added—with comments—that Sir Peter and Mr. Stubbs had started off at once for Liverpool, to state to the authorities there all that they knew of the unfortunate young lady, and to see that decent burial was given to her.

On the third day Lady Judith's chronicle of events grew more distinct by a great deal to Madge's dulled senses.

She came into Madge's room about noon with seven telegrams in her hand, all from Sir Peter.

Telegram No. 1 stated that on his arrival at Carstairs he had changed his mind, and instead of continuing his journey to Liverpool with Mr. Stubbs had thought it better to take train for the North in order to see Lance and apprise him of the sad news.

The telegram did not add what in reality had been the case—that this change in Sir Peter's intentions owed its origin to a suggestion from Mr. Stubbs.

Telegram No. 2 reported that he had reached the first station on his journey to Edinburgh.

Telegram No. 3 reported that he was getting on all right.

Telegram No. 4 reported another step on the journey.

Telegram No. 5 stated that he had crossed the Border.

Telegram No. 6 announced that he had arrived at Edinburgh, but that Lance was not there.

Telegram No. 7 stated that he had started on a return journey, trusting to find Lance at a little village in Northumberland, to which his Edinburgh letters would be sent.

After this day's report, Madge found her ears thirsting for the news which Lady Judith's next day's visit would bring.

But the next day was a blank. It brought no news whatever.

On the day following came the tidings by telegram that Sir Peter and Lance had joined Mr. Stubbs at Liverpool; and the day after that Lady Judith paid Madge a second—an evening—visit to her room, on purpose to report the fact that the three gentlemen had returned to the Castle.

"But in a very extraordinary state of mind, my dear—two of them at least; for Sir Peter I've scarcely seen—certainly have had no opportunity of conversing with. He has been in and out of the stables, through the green-houses—to see that the plants are growing right and uppermost, I suppose—but no, not for five minutes at a time has he been in the same room with me. Well, as I was saying, Mr. Stubbs is going about on tip-toes with his eyes half-shut and speaking in a solemn whisper, for all the world as if the terrible affair had happened in this house—instead of miles away. And as for Lance, my dear! well you must see him to know what he looks like—a perfect wreck, with a white face and sunken eyes, as if he had had no sleep for a week! and as for talk! there's not a word to be got out of him! Say what I will, I can't get him to tell me what they've all been doing at Liverpool, and not even did he open his lips when I remarked what a mercy it was that the young lady didn't commit suicide here, and jump out of her bedroom window on the very night of the ball."

"Must see him to know what he looks like!" Madge felt at that moment as if she would never dare to meet him face to face again. "For Lance, for Lance," she had said to herself over and over again, as she had sought to still the voice of her conscience. But now came the voice of her own heart echoing, not stifling, the whispers of conscience, with the terrible question: "What if this thing done 'for Lance' shall have wrecked, not saved his future for him?"

Sir Peter had not been twenty-four hours in the house before the doctor was sent for to see Madge, and she had to sit up and face him.

He came down from his interview with her with a very grave face. She was in a terribly weak state, he said, and must have run down a good deal without any one noticing it. He recommended change of air and scene so soon as it was practicable.

Sir Peter felt his hands very full just then.

"Really, Stubbs," he said, confidentially, to his secretary, "what with one thing and another, I hardly know which way to turn. Mr. Clive, the first thing this morning, announced to me that he intended joining an exploring expedition into Africa—or was it the Spice Islands, really, I'm not sure which—and now Mrs. Cohen to break down in this way! And there's that letter from her lawyers about her property at Redesdale. They say they've written to her again and again, and can't get any answers to their letters, and now they're obliged to apply to me. It's a matter of first importance."

Mr. Stubbs proffered his services immediately.

"Would it be any use, Sir Peter, if I took the lawyer's letter to Mrs. Cohen and offered to write a reply to her dictating?" he asked.

Sir Peter caught at the idea. A message was at once despatched to Mrs. Cohen, which elicited the reply that she would see Mr. Stubbs in her own room.

Mr. Stubbs found her seated in a low chair, as far from the window as possible. The room was much darkened; she leaned back in her chair shading her eyes with her hand, so that he could scarcely see her face. He took the chair which she indicated; it was a long way from her own, considering how confidential their talk was likely to be. He placed it by a yard nearer. Madge immediately drew in front of her a small table, as if to set up a distinct barrier between them.

Her movement left him free to note how much her few days' illness had told upon her.

Her voice sounded weak and unlike her own as she asked the question: "Did you see her?" in a low, agitated tone.

"I grieve to say I did not, madam," he replied. "I was too late—the paper sent to me was two days old. The body had lain for identification at the mortuary for a day, but no one coming forward, an

inquest had been held, and it had been buried in the paupers' burial-ground."

Madge, with a low cry, leaned forward on the table before her, hiding her face in her hands. There seemed to come a sudden rush of some soft valse music into her ears, a graceful figure in misty grey draperies seemed to float before her eyes. It vanished; in its stead there lay a still and silent form swathed in grave-clothes in a pauper's coffin.

Mr. Stubbs went on composedly:

"I went to the local authorities and stated that although the young lady was an entire stranger to Sir Peter, she had been staying for some little time at the Castle. I further requested them to hand to me the purse, and the envelope on which her name was written. This they did. Mr. Clive took possession of both."

The slight tremor which thrilled Madge's hands showed that she had heard his last words.

"I also requested them to point out to me her place of burial, as I knew it would be Sir Peter's wish to place a stone over it. They could not do so with exactitude. It was a big cemetery; there had been a good many paupers buried that day; two in one grave, three in another, and they were not certain in which grave the drowned young lady had been buried."

He waited for Madge to speak, but never a word came from her lips. Her head bent lower and lower, till at length, covered still with her white tremulous hands, it rested on the table.

"I did my best, madam," he said at length. Still not a word from Madge.

He was determined to make her speak.

"Mr. Clive was in a terrible state of mind. Sir Peter didn't know what to do with him. He was half-frantic at first. He was going to do all sorts of wild things, vowed he'd have the whole cemetery dug up to find her body, he must see her once again and say his 'good-bye' to her, he said, or he should know no rest in this world. I asked him if he remembered the face of the girl who was taken out of the river at Lower Upton? After that he said no more about searching the graves for her."

Madge's fingers clutched each other convulsively.

Mr. Stubbs had no pity.

"Unless something is done promptly he will be doing something desperate, and may ruin his life for himself," he said.

Madge drew her hands from her white, tear-stained face.

"Listen," she said, "I shall do something promptly—before this day is out—go to Mr. Clive and tell him the whole truth, from beginning to end."

"My dear madam—"

"Be silent," she said sharply, peremptorily. "After this—this—shall I go to you for advice?"

She pushed back her chair and rose from the table.

"I cannot keep it to myself, it will drive me mad—mad!" she said desperately.

Mr. Stubbs rose also; he looked at her in silence for a few moments, then he drew his letter-case from his pocket.

"What about the Australian letter, madam?" he queried.

Madge started. The second terrible catastrophe had for the time thrown the other into the shade.

"Shall you, when you make your full confession to Mr. Clive, tell him also the story of Sir Peter's nephew and heir?"

Madge drew a long, weary breath.

"It will help him a little farther along the road to ruin, that's all. Pardon my speaking plainly, madam, but this is a crisis—forgive my saying so—in Mr. Clive's life as well as in your own."

"My own life may go," she said, recklessly. "One way or another I have ruined it for myself—it is not worth taking into account now." She made one step towards the door, then abruptly paused.

Was her resolution wavering or gathering strength Mr. Stubbs wondered.

"Will you be good enough to read this, madam?" he said, opening his letter-case and spreading a letter before her.

Madge, with a hasty eye, read as follows:

"Liverpool, August 22nd.

"The Rev. Joshua Parker regrets that he is unexpectedly prevented from calling upon Sir Peter Critchett, as he had intended to do on his way to the North. He hopes, however, that the pleasure may be only deferred for a month or six weeks."

Madge was prompt enough to recognise the name and handwriting of the writer of the letter which lay locked in her desk. It was startling news this, that the man who knew the story of Gervase Critchett was in England, and would shortly make his appearance at the Castle. She had taken it for granted that all communications on this matter would be by pen and ink across fifteen thousand miles of ocean, and had formed her plans accordingly; it had never for a moment occurred to her that Gervase's guardian

would follow in this fashion on the heels of his letter.

"It came this morning, madam," said Mr. Stubbs, watching her face as she read it; "I recognised the hand-writing, and of course, would not lay it before Sir Peter until I had your instructions on the matter."

"How dared you——" Madge began, but broke off sharply, her words of reproach dying on her lips before they could be uttered. How dared she in very truth even frame them in thought?

She stood with one hand resting on the table, the other she pressed against her hot eyeballs. After all, this announcement of the Rev. Mr. Parker's intentions savoured somewhat of the nature of a reprieve, in so far as it assured to her definite space wherein to arrange her plans.

It seemed as if Mr. Stubbs read her thoughts. "It seems to me there is no time to be lost, madam," he said, "a month soon slips past."

Madge made an impatient movement with her hand.

"It is a crisis in Mr. Clive's life," he went on insinuatingly, "he is reckless, broken-hearted; a second blow might drive him headlong to desperation — I only suggest——"

Madge threw back her head. She pointed to the door, "Go," she said in a voice in which hatred and fear strove for mastery, "Go, and never dare to come near me again."

Mr. Stubbs went immediately. He, however, carefully left the Rev. Joshua Parker's letter behind him on the table.

Madge stood staring at it blankly for a few minutes, then she deposited it under lock and key beside the Rev. Joshua Parker's former communication. She had now the responsibility of two purloined letters resting on her shoulders.

UR OF THE CHALDEES.

TILL almost yesterday all the records of Chaldean civilisation were as closely hidden from men's eyes as were the ruins of Herculaneum, from the day of the lava-flood till the Italian savans began to dig out the buried city. Other ruins had been described and re-described; Busbequius had visited Baalbec; Tournefort had told of temples and tombs in Lesser Asia; Bruce had gone through Cyrene, and over the site of old Carthage. Even of

Persepolis the fame had travelled westward, long before Moore in his "Paradise and the Peri" sang of "the forty pillars of Chil-minar." Indian rock-temples, Cambodian palaces, bell-shaped tombs of Kandyan Kings, Easter Island colossi, Mexican teocallis — the world had been ransacked up and down for notable ruins; and yet nobody suspected that close to Mosul and Baghdad were evidences far completer than anything that Greek art has left of a culture which profoundly modified the Phœnicians, and through them the Greeks. The reason is that, whereas all the world's other great ruins are of stone, the Chaldees having no stone, were compelled to use brick (mostly sun-baked), so that when deserted by their inhabitants their cities literally became ruinous heaps. They were mounds, ugly and unattractive, soon passing so wholly out of recognition, that when Xenophon led his Ten Thousand Greek mercenaries across from Susa to the Black Sea, they passed close to Nineveh and Kalah, without recognising that they had ever been cities at all. Two of these mounds are opposite Mosul, and mark the site of Nineveh. One of the two the Turks call "Jonah's Mound," and believe the mosque on its summit contains his tomb. This has helped to preserve it, for nobody was likely to go for building materials to such a hallowed site. And protection was greatly needed; for whenever out of any of these mounds heavy rains washed a winged bull or other piece of sculpture, the ulemas of Mosul would preach a sermon, and would gather a band of true believers, who hated sculpture as devoutly as did the followers of John Knox, and who in their zeal for the One God would cross the river and break the idol in pieces.

In 1820, the Baghdad political resident of the Honourable East India Company, Mr. Rich, found fragments of pottery, of carved stone, and of stamped bricks, in the rubbish which the rain of centuries had washed off these mounds. He picked up some of these as he rode by, and then set to work with pickaxe and shovel until he had found a good many perfect bricks, baked clay cylinders used as seals, and so on, which he duly placed in the British Museum.

For more than twenty years this was all we had in the way of Chaldeo-Assyrian antiquities. "Till I began," says Layard, with pardonable pride, "a three-foot square case enclosed it all." Layard

was incited to the work by the success of M. Botta, French Consul at Mosul. He had got an appointment in Ceylon, and determined to go overland, exploring as he went. While travelling in the Tigris valley, he heard that Botta had at Khorsabad discovered in the centre of its mound a hall, lined all round with sculptured slabs of soft limestone, representing battles, sieges, fording of rivers—all the life of an old warlike nation. Layard determined to try his luck, and, as the English Government would not allow him anything, he was fortunate in getting help from Sir Stratford Canning (Lord Stratford de Redcliffe), our Minister at Constantinople. He began in 1845, and the romance of his explorings, carried on in the teeth of universal opposition, is in everybody's hands.

The climate—in summer one hundred and twenty degrees in the shade (Baghdad is one of the "centres of heat" where life is only endurable in the cellar), and in winter so damp that the walls of Layard's brick hut got clothed inside with grass—was as much against him as the natives. But he persevered, and the bronze dishes, bowls, shields, etc., are even more interesting than the colossal sculptures. All is wonderful: Layard, wandering through the halls that he had opened out in the Nimrud mound, is like a modern Aladdin—the reality is quite as great a marvel as the fiction.

All these old Mesopotamian palace-forts were built on terraces. Why? Because the Chaldees' first settlements were in the swamps at the head of the Persian Gulf, where for health's sake it is needful to raise your dwelling above the surrounding fields. Such a custom, too, would be useful against nomad tribes, to whom the land was—as it still is—periodically a prey. The rains of ages, the sand-storms, the destruction wrought by conquerors like Sennacherib, have combined to make them the shapeless mounds that they are. Ur itself—the present mound of Mugheir—is one of the best preserved. When the sand and rubbish were cleared away from part of the base, a facing-wall ten feet thick, of burnt red brick, cemented with bitumen, was found. Often, platform rose above platform, forming a terraced pyramid, like those in Mexico, and, like them, crowned with a temple.

Birs Nimrud, near Babylon, had seven stages, and is still over one hundred and fifty feet high. The labour of making such mounds must have been immense. Raw-

linson calculates that to raise the great mound of Koyunjik—ninety-five feet high, and covering one hundred acres, on which stood the palaces and temples of Nineveh—would take ten thousand men twelve years, or twenty thousand men six years. And this was all preliminary to the palace building. Near it is the still unexcavated mound of Nebbi Yunus, loftier and steeper, and covering forty acres. This would take ten thousand men at least five years and a half. No wonder the early conquerors displaced whole populations, driving into captivity thousands every year; and, just as every Egyptian King built his own pyramid, so every Assyrian built himself a new palace.

Probably the world's history does not contain a stranger instance of red-tape than the raising these huge brick mounds, with such a waste of labour, in a hilly country where rocky sites were at hand on all sides. These Chaldees used stone for ornament, for sculptures, for the inner casing of rooms—though this is sometimes made with beautifully enamelled brick—but they went on heaping up clay platforms as they had done in the stoneless lands at the Euphrates' mouth.

One difficulty is: how were these palaces lighted? No windows are found in the chambers opened at Khorsabad or Koyunjik. A row of small lights in the cornice would not have been enough. Botta suggests, "louvre" in the roof, like those still in use in the country, covered, during rain, with thick carpets.

Anyhow, there must have been abundance of light, else the delicate carving or enamel of the wall and pavement slabs would have been thrown away. But brick, especially sun-baked, was a bad material, and despite the elaborate system of drains, these palaces have suffered at least as much from nature as from man. The strange thing is, that none of the remains are sepulchral. Everywhere else, the primary use of art is to decorate the abodes of the dead. Here, there is no evidence of a single interment. The idea is that Chaldea, on the lower Euphrates, remained the national burying-place after the migration northward. This may well have been the case, for from Hillah (Babylon) down to Mugheir (Ur) is one vast sepulchre. Indeed, so persistent are old ideas that to this day every caravan brings, as to a holy land, hundreds of dead bodies in felt-covered coffins from all parts of Persia across to Babylonia.

Happily, these Chaldees had, to an unusual extent, man's craving to live "in the mouth of aftertime." They wrote on the smooth faces of rocks, on stone slabs, and they printed with inscribed cylinders on soft bricks. In Assurbanipal's palace (he was Sennacherib's grandson) Layard found two of the smaller chambers heaped up with fragments of baked clay tablets that had fallen from niches in the walls. He sent home several cases full; and a young engraver, George Smith, sorted them, piecing the bits together with marvellous dexterity, and learning the cuneiform—"wedge-shaped"—writing, and finding so much that the Daily Telegraph sent him out to find more. Going straight to Layard's "small chambers," he discovered, as everybody knows, the Chaldean story of the Flood, so strangely like that in Genesis; twice came back with a cargo of treasures; and the third time died of the plague (1876) in Syria, aged thirty-six.

A nation which wrote its traditions, its psalms, its incantations, its history from year to year, not on parchment or papyrus, but on indestructible brick, often packing them in clay cases for better preservation, was, unawares, a benefactor to mankind. We shall soon know as much about the Chaldees as we do about Greeks or Romans. Ten thousand tablets have been recovered from the Nineveh library only; and the work is still going on. In 1881, De Sarzec, French Consul at Bassorah, brought to Paris a vast collection, chiefly from the hitherto unexplored mound of Tell-Loh (Sirgulla), among them nine splendid statues (alas! headless) in black diorite. Not all the inscribed bricks, however, are indestructible; many are only sun-dried, and crumble readily. These have in many cases been successfully baked before sending to England; and on them Smith found some of the most interesting of the legends, as if, being "popular," they had been written on a commoner medium than the records of the Kings. The inscriptions with which these bricks are closely covered are sometimes so small as to need a microscope.

From these brick books we have learnt all about the Chaldees and their religion. It was emphatically a religion of demons. Most terrible of them all were the Maskima, the seven spirits of the abyss, "not having a good name either in heaven or on earth." They are "spirits of rebellion;" and the language used of them is as grand as anything in Æschylus about the Eumenides:

"They are seven, they are seven. Seven are they in the depths of sea; seven are they, disturbers of the face of Heaven. Male they are not, female they are not, children are not born to them. Order they know not, nor beneficence; prayer and supplication they hear not. They sit in the roads and make them unsafe; the fiends, the fiends." This is the key to the Chaldee's life. Demons were on the watch to do him harm at every turn, not merely bodily but moral. Civil broils and family quarrels came direct from them. Nothing could keep out them and the ill-luck they brought. "They fall as rain from the sky; they spring from the earth; doors do not stop them nor bolts; they creep in at the threshold like serpents; they blow in at the roof like winds." The desert, and the marshes by the sea—so hateful to the "Accad" highlanders, driven down to the Persian Gulf from the uplands of Susiana—were their favourite haunts. Fever was among them, and the plague, and madness "which holds the head as it were in a tiara of iron, making it confused."

I sometimes wonder if the translations are bonâ fide. This, for instance, is so very like the Penitential Psalms: "I, thy servant, am full of sighs; I call to Thee. Whoever is beset with sin, his ardent supplication Thou acceptest. If Thou lookest on a man with pity, that man liveth. Ruler of all, mistress of mankind; merciful One, to Whom it is good to turn, Who dost receive sighs . . . Speak. How long? and let Thine heart be appeased. When will Thy countenance turn on me? Even like doves I moan, I feed on sighs." Who shall say that we have progressed in the art of prayer-making?

Believing in demons, the Chaldees of course believed in sorcerers, who could set demons at those they wished to injure; and—as life would else have not been worth living—they also believed in charms and spells whereby the powers of evil could be foiled. The mixture of the two feelings—real devotion, such as breathes through the above psalm, and trust in incantations and amulets—is strange; and might almost make us think two races, one almost monotheistic, the other scarcely grown out of the fetish state, were half-fused together to make up the Chaldees. This was so later; Assyria was a purely Semitic nation. From it, offshoots moved southward, fixing themselves among the Accadians of Chaldea and becoming the ruling caste, even as in

Caledonia, first the Scots from Ireland, and long after, Normans from South Britain, established themselves as Kings and nobles. But when these prayers and charms were written, Chaldea was inhabited solely by Accadians, unless we suppose that the Accadian was used for religious purposes, as Latin is in the Roman Church, after the two nations had got mixed. Of course it would be very nice to attribute all the grand and noble parts to the Shemites, and all the base and degrading superstition to the Accadians; but the evidence of the bricks, as interpreted by the best scholars, is against doing so. And therefore the Accadians, though of Turanian race—cousins, that is, of Turks, and Mongols, and of those Tartars whose whole religious furniture consists of a drum with a few pebbles in it—are credited with all the glorious poetry and splendid mythology recorded in these brick books; with all of it except the worship of Asshur. That deified King first comes to the front as chief god when Assyria begins to take the lead.

Neither Accadian, however, nor Semite of Nineveh ever attained to complete monotheism, though they came very near it; the former with Ana, Lord of Heaven; the latter with Asshur. The first Semites were driven south into Chaldea, it is supposed, by pressure from the mountaineers of Elam. Abraham's history hints at a conquering King of Elam; and he, as we know, did not remain in Ur, but moved away westward, across the great Syrian desert, to Canaan. When, by-and-by, Assyria was established as a ruling nation, the relation between it and Babylonia was much like that between England and Scotland had the two been pretty equally matched, and had the capital for a few generations been at Edinburgh, and then for a few more in London, and again vice versa.

But with this pendulum sort of history we have no present concern, nor with semi-historic legends like that of Semiramis (Shammuramat), daughter of the Syrian fish-goddess, loveliest of women, whom to see was to adore. Shepherds found her near her mother's shrine at Ascalon, and nurtured her till Oannes the governor (his name is that of the fish-god) saw and married her; and by-and-by, King Ninus seeing her, took her, and Oannes died of grief. Nor can we speak of the Hittites, not a mere Canaanite tribe—"the children of Heth"—but the Khetah of the Egyptian inscriptions, owners of nearly all lesser

Asia, to whom probably the "Shepherd Kings" who so long held Egypt in thralldom belonged, and whose seat, when they first rose to greatness, was in the mountains of Armenia. Our only question is: Who were the Accadians, that is, the earliest civilised people of Chaldea, the people who Berosus, Babylonish priest, who wrote just after Alexander had conquered the city, said were already settled in the land when his forefathers came there? And the verdict of modern scholarship is that they were undoubtedly Turanians.

Now, years ago, when I, a little boy, used to haunt the British Museum, wondering with unspeakable wonder as I wandered alone through the Egyptian room, I remember seeing on the wall the fresco of the so-called triumphs of Rameses the Third (Sesostris). Blacks he conquered, and Jewish-looking Semites and Hittites; but besides them he conquered yellow men with pig-tails, whose forts looked a good deal like pagodas, and were painted in stripes, green and violet and black. These people were so markedly Chinese in feature and surroundings, that I was not a bit surprised when by-and-by the earliest Chaldean civilisation was pronounced by the best scholars to have been Turanian. The yellow race, then, with its religion an incongruous mixture of greatness and littleness (the Shamanism, that is mere conjuring and sorcery, of the Tartars being in China mixed up with a pure nature worship, acknowledging a supreme power who is identified with Heaven, as in the Japanese Shintoism), somehow sent out an offshoot to the head of the Persian Gulf. The language is the same—agglutinative, like the Turkish and the Red Indian, and monosyllabic like the Chinese.

This we know, because many of the inscriptions are bilingual, in Accadian, and in that Semitic dialect, akin to Hebrew, which is called Chaldean. In these oldest Chaldees, too, scientists find the same "law of limitation." They got to a certain point (the most remarkable of their doings is that they, nomads, cousins of wandering Tartars and Turkmans, took to building—in China their "great wall," in Mesopotamia their city-mounds), but they could not progress beyond it. In Chaldea the incoming Semites took on the work of development and carried it forward—on the same lines, indeed, but with a difference. Of the Turanian religion the brick books give a clearer idea than we can get else-

where. It lingers among Tartars—as “Paganism” did under the form of witchcraft among European villagers centuries after the towns had become Christian; it lingers, as Taoism, in China—Chinese superstitions are very like those of old Accad. This, from a Babylon brick, might be heard any day in Shanghai: “If a white dog gets into a palace, it will be burned; if a black dog, its foundations will be razed; if a dog vomit in a house, the master of it will die.” But Turk and Chinese have accepted alien religions, those of Mahomet and of Buddha; in Accad alone we have on the bricks the complete literature of the old nature worship, with its littleness and its greatness. When, therefore, we read those legends, so strangely like the Genesis records: Izubar, for instance, a Samson who conquers the lion, and a Noah who builds a ship and smears it with pitch, and sends out over the waters a dove, a swallow, and a raven; when we see the grand remains brought over by Layard and his successors, and look at the conjectural restoration—in Fergusson, or in Perrot and Chipiez—of a Ziggurat, a terraced pyramid, crowned with a dome-covered temple, ascended by zigzag flights of steps, adorned with richest cornices, and faced at the base with a crenellated wall, forming altogether a building worthy of the reservoirs which made what are now deserts marvels of fertility; and of the hanging gardens, and of the cities almost as big round as London; let us remember that all this, “the glory of the Chaldees’ excellency,” as the Bible calls it, originated with that yellow race—cousins of the Chinese—which, as well as the black, is not even named in the ethnology of Genesis, and which those who harmonise science and Scripture suppose to have consisted of the descendants of Cain. Surely it is unwise to shut out of those parts of Australia that are too hot for Europeans, a race one branch of which has shown such capability.

ARTISTIC PROFESSIONS FOR WOMEN.

IN these present days it is a common thing to hear from all sides, and from all sorts and conditions of men, the complaint that professions are overcrowded, and that the competition for a place in the fighting ranks of life’s battle-field is growing keener

and still more keen every day. To dwell upon this subject would be only to recapitulate facts with which every one is familiar, and to reiterate a tale that is told by every working member of the community with whom we are brought in contact. High and low, the story is the same. We hear that hundreds of men answer one advertisement for a clerkship, and that hundreds of women reply to one demand for a governess; and we know that men and women both are living, Heaven alone knows how, day by day, week after week—without work, or even the hope of work, to sustain them, and in too many cases, with others even more helpless than themselves dependent upon them.

So far, we read all this for ourselves in the published statistics, in the daily papers, and still more effectively in the experience that contact with our neighbour brings to us. It is not necessary, therefore, to linger longer upon so unpleasant a theme. But, as our northern cousins say, “facts are chiefs that winna ding;” and it is our present purpose to apply these same facts to a problem that has puzzled and will puzzle all those who feel an interest in a question which may claim to take its place as one of the most serious of the present time. That is to say, to the daily increasing problem of women’s position in the great labour question; here again modifying the general term to one comprehending only those whom we may designate as women belonging to the middle and upper classes, upon whom, perhaps, the necessity of work and the difficulty of obtaining it weighs more heavily than upon any of their sisters.

The good old days, when our grandmothers worked samplers and studied their recipe books, have passed away long ago; our spinster aunts, who would have died rather than soil their hands with anything that savoured of “ungentility,” are fast fading out; and the present generation of girlhood, with enlarged ideas as to woman’s brain and woman’s work, is standing on the threshold of life eager to mingle in life’s warfare.

It was accepted as a sort of dogmatic belief, in the last generation, that teaching was a lady-like occupation, and one that did not detract from what we might call a lady’s moral gentility. Certainly, teaching is a woman’s occupation, as she has generally a greater share than man of patience and of self-effacement—both integral parts of tuition. But as it was not a bonâ-fide

trade, and because of its reputed gentility, daughters of doctors, clergymen, lawyers, officers, and in some cases of belted Earls, looked upon teaching as a specially invented remedy, designed by Providence, for "ladies," whether fitted to impart knowledge or not; and consequently the market was over-stocked with a superfluity of inefficient persons, not one in ten of whom possessed the elements of the gift of imparting the little that she knew.

This we may consider was the position at the time of the last generation. Now steps forward the present, and surveys the world around ere launching her boat upon the waters. Then, perhaps, she glances at the page of statistics held open to her, and she cries:

"Five hundred women answered one single application for a governess! Then I will never swell their ranks. I will adopt a different course. I will have a profession."

Of all the rocks, and maelstroms, pits, and snares, that beset a young girl with her bread to earn on her way through life, few are as dangerous as that which fronts her when she makes choice of a profession that is to be to her a staff through life. A boy is educated in such a way that his natural inclinations develop themselves and determine his career. The soldier or sailor, the student or engineer, is in most cases evolved from the boy who spent his pocket-money on guns or boats, on books or steam-toys. With an ordinary English girl this is rarely the case. She is confided to the care of the Lady-Superintendent of a school, in a sphere where her natural propensities are smoothed down to a pattern-level, and should adversity befall or threaten her, as it unfortunately too often does, on the threshold of life, we find her ignorant of the world and its difficulties, and as unprepared to do battle with it at twenty as at ten. Twenty years ago she would have swelled the ranks of lady governesses, now she elects for a profession.

Let her then bring her talents before her, and determine which will serve her best. Not one has been really developed. Her knowledge of literature is limited, and she has never been taught to express herself in any manner beyond that of the regulation school theme. Her languages are limited to a smattering of French and German, with an English accent. Her drawings always required finishing by the drawing-master before they were fit for home inspection. Her music is

distinctly her best point. She can play the "Moonlight Sonata" accurately, if unemotionally, and she has a pretty, fresh voice. Here is something tangible. She will become a musician; and straightway she betakes herself to the local Academy of Music. This modest institution does not, however, satisfy her aspirations for long. In every place of the kind there is always a star, male or female, about whom local fame is loud. And soon it is rumoured that this particular planet is about to ascend the path of glory, and to migrate to the Royal Academy of Music. Ambition is a moral complaint that is as catching as scarlet-fever or small-pox. Behold, then, our young aspirant suffering from the same disorder, and filled with the sacred flame of art, burning to distinguish herself either at the venerable institution in Tenterden Street, or at the more modern one lately erected in one of our most fashionable suburbs. It follows, then, that if she is a country girl she leaves her home and settles near the scene of her labours, or if not, she simply goes through the necessary forms, and enters upon her studies. We will suppose her student's career completed, and herself a finished singer—at any rate, in her own eyes.

Of course it is hard for a young aspirant for musical, artistic, or literary honours to be judged by a standard attained only after long years of patient toil. But it is harder not to be judged at all; and that is what befalls, not one in ten, but nine in ten of those who plead for a trial in any one branch of art in this great London.

We find our musician then after a time a full-fledged songstress, or player, having laboriously and conscientiously fitted herself for a profession of whose *modus operandi* she knows nothing. She is ready to sing, to play, but who will hear her? Her professor gives her an introduction to a concert-giver in London, and then leaves her to her fate. Armed with this, she presents herself to the arbiter of her destiny, full of hope and confidence. He, perhaps, hears her sing; tells her that she has a good voice, which, with experience, will be better; takes her name and address, promising to bear her in mind should an opportunity offer; and the important interview closes. What remains for her to do then but to possess her soul in patience, and wait until she hears from the autocrat of the musical world? But, on the other hand, when she sees this gentleman, he may take her into his confidence,

and in a fit of candour, and for her own good, tell her honestly that there is a microscopical chance only of his doing any thing for her. He may, perhaps, show her piles of letters containing similar applications from young beginners, and may own that his pocket would pay the penalty did he offer a Metropolitan audience any but the names of well-known and recognised artists. Let her, he will say, try and get her name known in London as a promising young singer, or player, and then come to him again.

What must be her next step? It is clear that the impresario will have none of her. There is one pitfall that is always yawning for pilgrims of art into which most, if not all, fall. True as the needle to the pole, unerring as the Indian on the track of his prey, the fashionable lady scents her victim from afar, and leads her into fashionable houses, to sing to, and amuse fashionable ladies and gentlemen for fashionable terms—that is, for nothing. There is always somebody who will try to get pupils for a young beginner; and to secure her an introduction into a “good set,” will give her annual entertainment to her friends, on the strength of having a bright, young musician, a novelty and clever, who will amuse them free of cost to her own purse. Ask any young singer, or player, who has tried to make a bid for popularity, how much of real good these entertainments have ever effected for those for whom they were ostensibly designed. Ask any lady artist to what straits she has been put to provide gowns to make a sufficient effect, and to fulfil her hostess’ behest to “look smart.” Ask how often cab or carriage is provided by these ladies for the convenience of those who are to bear the whole burden of amusing their guests. And these lady-patronesses are of all classes. There are those of the highest rank who tout for such distinguished foreign artists as venture to visit our shores unaccompanied by a species of bear-leader, whose duty it is to provide suitable engagements for their charges, and to warn off intruders. Then there are ladies, leading lights of Tyburnian and Kensington society, whose names appear on charity committees, but whose benevolence does not hesitate to employ, for their own advantage, the talents that it has taken years of expensive industry to cultivate. And so on down the scale. Lower circles of society touch corresponding circles in the professional world, and so the song goes on.

Our young friend, then, has gone through an expensive apprenticeship of this kind to become known. She has even appeared at Saint James’s Hall, when her patroness got up a charity concert for “The Dying Poer of the Sahara Desert;” and now, when the real music season approaches, she presents herself anew to the custodian of the musical world she fain would enter. So she writes to him, and waits for a reply; then writes again, and waits again. Then she goes to see him, to be told that his arrangements are completed, and he has had so many applications that he has determined to employ only those whose names are assured favourites with the public. Let her, he advises, try the provinces. She is there met with the assurance that only London artists find a hearing with the provincial audiences, and so it is again “*da capo*.”

Few will contend that the chances of an aspirant, such as we describe, are promising; but let those whose lines are cast “in music,” say whether the tale is exaggerated, or whether there has been “aught set down in malice” in this unvarnished statement. Bass or tenor, soprano or contralto, pianist or violinist, how many are there who have gone into the musical profession and enacted the above little drama? Only with them it has not ended with a twelve months’ apprenticeship, but repeats itself year after year of their lives; and they live and die striving after that will-o’-the-wisp—the reputation of being a promising young artist—that will lead them into the *El Dorado* of their dreams.

Bad, too, as is the position for members of a well-known academy, it is a thousand times worse for another class of would-be musical professionals. These are those who, while still having the determination to avoid what they look upon as the end of woman—that is, governessing in general—have not even the acquaintance and knowledge of musical matters involved in joining an academy. They trust their voices and their fingers to fifth-rate professors, who delude their unfortunate pupils with boundless promises of gain and fame at some future period.

Go regularly for a given period to small concerts held at the local Halls, Institutes, and Athenæums, which abound in the London suburbs; and from the performances there, the style of the instrumentalists, the voice production of the singers, gather what kind of teaching must these numberless aspirants have received from the so-

called professors under whose wing they make their appearance, whose method they copy, and whose faults they, if possible, exaggerate.

It is far from the writer's intention to undervalue or underestimate the value of artistic education for women. A thorough knowledge of the mere elements of any branch of art throws open to the student possibilities of observation, appreciation, and enjoyment, utterly unattainable by any other means; and serious wrong is done a child in whom the artistic faculties have not been carefully and judiciously developed by education.

But there is a vast difference between art as art, or as a pleasure, or a pastime, and art as a means of livelihood; and our protest is against the number who consider that the mere passing of a certain number of terms at an academy constitutes an artist fit to claim a hearing from an educated public. The warning is to those who, believing the words of others as ignorant as themselves, think to find in the musical profession an *El Dorado*, where money is found ready coined; and in an English audience men and women as dense as they would have to be, to take the musical fare set before them.

There is another point to be considered, and deserving consideration. At the present moment while woman's education is undergoing a great revolution, and every effort is being made to rectify the errors of the past system, there is great danger of being engulfed in those of the new. In avoiding Scylla, there is fear of running within reach of Charybdis. Between giving women a hazy, imperfect, or, as the old Scotch lady said of the dictionary, a "disconnected" education, and suddenly deciding that every woman must have a profession, there is a great gulf. But the danger is, that, great as the difference may seem, there is a tendency to make it a surface distinction only.

Education was deficient in accuracy, distinctness, breadth, range, and in many other qualities; have we altered this so very much? Now that the path to knowledge is smoother, there is the danger that superficiality is more often achieved than thoroughness; and just as a mother thinks it a fine thing for her daughter to give up French and take up Latin, as something not attempted by the generality of her girl's friends, so do young girls themselves think that it is better to give up their general education at an early age to apply

themselves to music or painting, without much regard to the ear or eye or general capabilities with which Providence may have endowed them.

Still less often do they pause for a moment to consider the workings of the profession with which they wish to associate themselves; whether they could claim a single friend upon whom they might reckon for a helping hand at the beginning of their career, or for a word of advice at any critical time. No; general musical facility or a good voice is a gift from heaven for which no interest, or next to none, is exacted they consider; and therefore the best thing they can do is to join the musical profession. Ask any musical critic or any one who is sufficiently up in such matters, the result, even among those who obtain a hearing in London. How many fall back into obscurity, how many are passed over in merciful silence! And in the interest of art, we should be grateful that such is the case. The standard of excellence cannot be lowered because of the inefficiency of those who aspire to it. By all means encourage the spread of art in all directions. Increase the number of Schools of Design, Academies of Music, Libraries, Museums, Galleries, all that can teach the lesson of the good and the beautiful. But let us not mistake the means for the end. Every one with eyes can be taught to understand gradually the beauties of nature and the beauties of art; music, according to each one's capabilities, can become dearer and dearer. But because each one is a zealous and loving disciple, let him not, therefore, consider himself a master. The revival of art and music that has been taking place among us lately, has been hailed with joy as the beginning of a new epoch. It will as surely prove to be the beginning of a downward progress in all but a few centres, if, with the multiplicity of educational institutions, we flood the cities with a multiplicity of half-instructed professors, who will in their turn educate their pupils to a lower standard than their own.

In venturing to offer a few remarks upon so important a subject, the career of a singer has been chosen to exemplify them because the human voice is the sole stock-in-trade that costs nothing to begin with, and that consequently offers the greatest temptation to the owner. At the same time it is the one thing about which it is easiest to be deceived, and about which there is most uncertainty. A voice as an instrument is nothing, unless its

owner can play upon it with skill, and use it with dramatic art. It is not a single gift that makes an artist competent to compete for public favour in any branch of music. It is a combination of gifts, and the number of those who possess that combination is very small. And, therefore, it is all the more necessary at the present time to reiterate the warning, when the general progress of events has made it infinitely more easy to develop talents that would have necessarily remained dormant even a generation ago. Because this is the case, however, it does not follow the owners are competent to pose as, or even to compete for a place among, the giants of art. Ask any manager if he has ever had aspirants for histrionic honours, beg for an engagement at his theatre, "which he could always attend to after business;" which business however, would always prevent him being present at rehearsal! Ask how many men have given up lucrative business appointments, because they are the happy—or unhappy—owners of tenor voices, cultivated at the evening classes of their local academy. How many women, above all, have sacrificed general education, savings, everything to swell that army that advertises: "Music at sixpence an hour;" "Singing lessons, half-a-guinea a course of twelve."

The disciple is not above his master. Our predecessors in art toiled weary years before they attained the pinnacle upon which their contemporaries placed them; and multiplying art academies in these days will not alter the natural order in which the prize is gained by the strongest and best.

IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

"Hush, hush. Why did you come to-night, mine own?"

The Ironsides are mustering in the court;
Hark to the echo of the pious psalm,
And the hoarse roar of the ungainly sport.
See where my uncle, with his crafty smile,
Pours out the brown October, full and high;
He'd do the same for Rupert should he come,
And quote a text to justify the lie.

"The King?—why, you are wounded, darling; see
How the blood oozes through the azure vest.
I've unguents here, and bandages anew,
And, spite them all, to-night I'll guard your rest.
I'll rouse old nurse from brooding by the fire,
Telling my grandsire's feats to twilight gloom.
I've played the ghost ere now at Hallow E'en;
No foot, to-night, shall tread the haunted room.

"There's only one I fear—my cousin there;
Him with the close-cropped curls and subtle smile,
Seeming to jest with yon grim corporal,
And watching closely for me all the while.

Last night he urged his suit—nay, never frown.
You might have heard, and welcome, all we said;
But, 'mid the oath crushed in his clenching teeth,
I heard your name—sweetheart, I am afraid!

"Keep back; the niche is deep and narrow too,
But he can hear and see as if, in sooth,
Some evil spirit helped him. What, love? Fly,
And at some quiet chapel pledge our troth?
Set sail in La Belle Marie, dancing there,
Behind the headland, on the heaving main,
And, in some hidden nook of sunny France,
Wait, till our King comes to his own again!

"Dear, you'll be good to me? And it were well
To leave these weary wars and woes behind.
Ah! Richard is no longer in the court!
Danger is nigh us, so old Hubert signed,
Hubert who loved my mother. Hark, a tread
Comes ringing down the oaken corridor.
Pass 'neath the tapestry, darling. Who comes
there?
To-night I shall not quit my bower more."

The weak bar crashed before an angry foot.
The lover sprang, the shrinking girl to guard,
But his strong arm hung helpless at his side,
Helpless the murderer's deadly thrust to ward;
As a long shriek rang to the vaulted roof,
Struck to the heart the gay young soldier fell.
The coward's dagger reached it through her hand,
So the old legends of the tower tell.

Nor long she lived to mourn her cavalier,
But passed away in frenzy—happiest so;
And in a drunken revel died the man,
Who slew his own hopes with his dastard blow.
But still, they say, at the old casement niche,
A shadowy form at Hallow E'en will stand,
Watching with wild blue eyes the empty court,
In silence pointing with a bleeding hand.

SKETCHES IN TENERIFE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

IN the evening we watched the sunset from the azotea of the Icod inn. The Peak was at first wholly free from clouds; its black lava streaks, its snow, and the rosy cone of it were alike bathed in the warm yellow light of evening. But after a while a cloud crept round its shoulder, two or three thousand feet from the summit, and broke into fragments that hung, to all appearance, motionless here and there about its tremendous body. As the sun sank, these diaphanous clouds were dyed a light amber colour, through which the purpling mountain slopes shone gloriously where they fell to the Canarian pines, yellow as buttercups, at the head of the Icod valley.

Later, the clouds and all the spurs of Teide, where there was no snow, grew abruptly black. There was an air of indescribable awe about the towering phantom that thus brooded over the town so nearly, and was yet so majestic that nothing could seem more removed from the intrusion of restless mortals. All the world

was by this time in cool shadow of hurrying twilight—the mountain spurs; the pine-woods at its base; the fields of tobacco, barley, and potatoes about the town; and the reddish roofs of the houses, interspersed with palms and dragon-trees, all sloping gently towards the sea—all the world except the Peak of Teide itself.

As for the Peak, it glowed with crimson light until the moon over our heads was lustrous enough to read by.

When this memorable scene had passed, we descended to dine. The company was scant, but courteous; the dinner excellent, and the wine enlivening. It fell to my lot to settle a dispute about the comparative worth of English and Spanish wines. An elderly gentleman, whose education had been neglected, was surprised to find that, in defending the vintages of England—which he confessed he had never tasted—he had been whipping a dead horse; nay, rather, a horse that had never yet been foaled. I dare say, however, he mistook the pale ale of Burton, which is in every wine shop in Tenerife, for a strain of the British grape.

Towards bed-time, new diversion offered. The hostess remarked that she had a daughter; and upon such a possession I congratulated her.

"Moreover," continued the good woman, "she is learning the French, and speaks it a little. Not so well as the señor speaks Spanish; but better than not at all."

"Then," said J, "the poor girl must have very few words at command."

"No—it is not so," rejoined the landlady, laughing civilly. "Would the señor like me to fetch my daughter?"

She was a well-grown girl of eighteen or so, and she brought her grammar with her. There was nothing for it but to sit side by side at the book, and test each other's acquirements. The mother meanwhile produced her lace work, and, with a joyful expression of face, sat on the other side of the table, now and then proffering a word of encouragement when the child's wits were woolgathering or centring in her smiles and blushes. For, though the girl's cheeks were bepowdered—ay, and her very ears—so that she was as pale as a corpse, the blood showed through the powder, and her large dark eyes put these foolish artificial methods of adornment much to shame. Occasionally a citizen sidled his head into the room; but I fancy a glance from the student's mother told them all, one by one, that they might go

elsewhere for the time. Thus we spent a pleasant hour, and at the end of it I wished Dolores sweet dreams.

"I did not think the English had so much patience," said the hostess, in comment upon our labours. I of course assured her that patience was needed rather to bear the cessation than the continuance of such gracious tasks.

At ten o'clock the next day José and I set out for the Cañadas, or lower and ancient crater of the Peak. We were to ascend whither so many grievous torrents of lava have flowed over the west and south-west of the island. For it is on this south-western slope of Teide, that most of the recent volcañetas have arisen; and the great mouth of Chahora, which belched fiery fluid day after day for several weeks in 1798, adjoins the Peak on this side, being only about two thousand three hundred feet lower than it.

José ingenuously confessed that he did not know the way to the Cañadas. For six pesetas, however, I procured a responsible youth, who gave me an insight into Canarian character by bargaining with another youth to take the work from his shoulders for three pesetas. To this arrangement I made no objection, especially as the latter guide was a merry, honest-seeming boy. He spoke an iniquitous brogue, but insisted that his bargain made it imperative upon him to carry the sack of maize, bread, eggs, wine, and so on, with which José had duly girt himself. From that moment José lorded it over him, though with patronising kindness.

The day was all that could be desired; the mountain magnificent in the morning light; swallows circled about us in the clear, warm air; the blue smoke from the fires of the charcoal burners, two or three thousand feet above us, rose in straight, unbroken columns. The very goats browsing among the lower scrub seemed possessed with a sense of elation on this glad, beautiful day; they skipped from hillock to hillock with a lively ringing of bells, and laughed to scorn the superintendence of the goatherds in long, white smocks, and the stones which the goatherds threw at them. We met many a country woman descending to the town, with admirable poise of her shapely body, and a basket of eggs upon her head; muleteers clad in cool linen, with their scarlet vests loose upon them; and foresters carrying upon their shoulders pine trunks

that would have crushed you or me to the ground. Thus we passed from the infamous rocky lanes of the lowlands, by woods of flowering green cistus and tall heaths, into the cheerful and odorous region of pines, the droppings from which lay so thick on the land that our footsteps were inaudible. Our progress was marked by the growing nearness of Teide on the left hand, and the appearance to our right of scarlet hillocks, one after another, which shone like blood through the gold of the pines, and one after another were left behind. We were by this time four or five thousand feet above the sea. The extreme dryness of the air, the heat of the sun in a cloudless sky, and the exertion had parched the boys so that they thirsted greatly. But no water was to be had for their or the mare's relief; for we were now upon the lava beds which, in comparatively recent times, have scorched the very bowels of the island, and whence no springs fall to the lowlands. As for me, I enjoyed at my ease the purple flanks of Teide, the intense azure of the sky, the crimson volcañetas, and the bright gold of the pines.

At a height of about five thousand feet above the sea, we left the pines below us, and were amid the weird but fascinating evidences of volcanic work. The mountain of Chahora was close at hand. A broad slope of primrose-coloured pumice dust, studded with gray clumps of retama bush, would have taken us to the summit in two or three hours. But its heavy rounded peak, seen from below, did not look very attractive. Only later, when I stood on the cone of Teide itself, and peered down upon it, did I learn what a fine example of a crater Chahora offers to the eye. Its great circular mouth is more than four miles in circuit, and two or three hundred feet deep; whereas the cone of the Peak is barely half a mile round, and its sulphur pit only forty or fifty feet from the encircling edge.

We traversed the yielding pumice for many minutes, with a wavy bed of light brown lava to the right of us. Nothing seemed more impracticable than this rugged iron stream, with its surface in places rising into twisted pinnacles, humps, and chilling edges, and sundered by crevices which were as deep as the fancy cared to make them. Here were no signs of disintegration. As the iron band had unrolled itself upon the country some score of years ago, so it lay. Not even a hardy retama had found a fertile niche wherein to rear her

welcome olive stem and foliage. The desolation was absolute.

But, after a while, the pumice sand ceased, and we were face to face with a wide, inky stream, which had run from the lip of Chahora down towards the brown lava to the right of us. This was the last lava flow in the island: the outcome of 1798. It lay upon the country like a long coarse blot.

At this point the real toil of our day began. For, though the lava appeared so impassable, we had to cross it, and much more, ere the Cañadas could be reached. José straightway put on his boots; his epidermis was thick, but he could not fight the keen points of the lava, which were unblunted after an existence of nearly a century.

How we laboured over this awful tract! I left the mare to herself, of course. A fall from her would have brought me in peril of an impalement. The poor beast did not know where to put her feet. It was the work of an acrobat, indeed, to step from point to point, and withal to avoid slipping into the painful crannies between the points.

Thus we struggled along for a couple of hours, rising all the time. We had attained an altitude that let us see the island of Gomera, lying close to the south-west of Tenerife. Its appearance was charming. We looked down upon its mountains in such a manner that they had the form of an irregular shadow cast upon the placid, silvery sea.

We were seven thousand feet higher than the resplendent sea round Gomera, when a strong gust met us in the face. Very soon afterwards a surge of mist came sweeping with a roar across the great plateau of the Cañadas. The mare was terrified, and plunged a little in her fear. She had become used to the stillness of these upper regions, which have nothing to do with life or death. In time, however, she got used to the mist also; and it was enveloped in this hurtling vapour, that at three o'clock in the afternoon we sat on the edge of the Cañadas crater, and ate our dinner with a rare appetite. Now and then the mist broke, and showed us the sharp peaks of the Cañadas mountains, which fringe the crater. Some of them are nine thousand feet above the sea level, and they are all contorted into fine, bold shapes. The snow still lay thick on their sides, in picturesque contrast with the brilliant reds and browns of their rocks, and the yellowish stretches of sand at their

base, marked, like a great leopard's skin, with many light spots, indicative of retama clumps. There was snow, too, within a stone's throw of our dinner-table; but, in fact, neither our wine nor our noses lacked the property of coolness.

On the return journey we made a detour to examine a little volcano which uprose thirty to fifty feet from the midst of one of the brown lava streams. Familiarity had bred in me a little disrespect for the dangers of the lava; as a result, I lost some blood, and much skin, ere we were at the base of the hillock. This proved to be a dainty excrescence, in shape like a conical limekiln. In its side was the rift, whence the lava had seethed upwards to join the stream that was already pressing past it. I suppose the teeming flank of Teide, which had burst primarily higher up, was here glad to find farther vent. This little bubble of stuff was extruded as a tap subordinate to the main outflow. Within the volcañeta were traces of sheep and goats. They had probably come up to feed on the retama, which grows best at a great height. But what a temptation to Dame Nature to cook their mutton while they slumbered in trustful security within one of her ovens!

We dropped gaily down the slopes of Teide, with the full evening light upon the yellow pines. The boys sang, very much in disunison, but with exceeding heartiness. For my part, however, I was a willing victim to the charms of Teide, and nothing but Teide. The mountain seemed to come nearer as the sun went west. Its snowy pyramid, and the pink cone cresting it, with soft inward curves, were dazzling to look at. Anon, a purple shadow fell upon the base of the mountain, and crept slowly upwards. And in this stage of the day, with a sky of the purest blue above, and never a cloud in the heavens from horizon to horizon, Teide wove gossamer veils one after another for the tiring of her head, and discarded them as fast as she put them on. They were the most patent of shams—absolutely transparent; but how they enhanced her beauty! And one by one they fell from her, and lay in glossy horizontal strata, until they dissipated into nothingness. To speak exactly, the sulphureous vapours which are at all times exhaling from the cone of the Peak, now became visible in the chilling air.

Icod was reached again at eight o'clock. We were all tired—of anxiety as much

as fatigue, for the last hour of our work had been a descent in the dark, over ticklish stones and rockways, at an uncommonly steep angle.

The third day of our travel was Palm Sunday—a festival of great honour in Tenerife. While I dressed I watched the populous gathering of town and country folk on the greensward in front of the church, and in the Plaza de la Constitución beneath my window. The women wore silk handkerchiefs of gay colours bound round their heads, and poised on their crowns were tiny straw hats, fit for a large-sized doll. Otherwise, their dress was not singular—clean prints being the common material thereof. There was more actual dandyism among the men on this Sunday morning. One young buck, for example, in a tight-fitting white and black cotton jacket, a large crimson neckcloth, and snowy pants, pranced superbly into the Plaza, twirling his moustache while he managed his horse. He carried in one hand a broad fan of palm foliage, and most of the others also bore a palm leaf in sympathy with the day.

I entered the church with the rest, when the hour of mass was rung. Every foot of standing space was soon occupied. The women went to one side by themselves, and very lively was the effect of the hundreds of kerchiefed heads—purple, yellow, crimson, and blue—from which the small straw hats were removed. The men were hardly less reverent than the women during the function. The two or three exceptions were spruce adolescents who thought it no wrong to lean against a column, and chatter at their leisure. But even they were not without a cutting from a palm. The flutter of fronds in all parts of the church cooled the air amazingly. Drawn from side to side of the choir was a thin veil of gauze, to symbolise the veil of the temple. In the course of the function of the following Friday, this would be ruthlessly rent in twain, and afterwards the sorrowful effigies of the crucified Christ and the tear-stained heart-broken Virgin would proceed down the aisle, and out into the streets of the town towards the Calvary, where, amid much sobbing, the burial scene in the cave of Arimathea would be enacted. But to-day, the veil seemed to cool the heated church, like the palm-leaves.

José attended mass, like the rest of Icod, and, after the service, confessed

himself ready for the twenty miles which I proposed for the day's stage. Dolores came to the door to see us off. She had powdered her fair young face afresh, so that there was no divining whether its expression was one of sadness or relief. I, however, made a resolution that has not been kept. I vowed I would put into irreproachable Castilian that worthy saying which avers, that "beauty unadorned is beauty at its best," and the next time of meeting introduce it insidiously into her receptive mind. But I fear there is no opposing the fashion, even in Tenerife.

Bearing across the valley, we immediately struck upward by a path which, an hour later, brought us to the summit of the cliff which impends over Garachico. We halted in the full heat of a torrid sun, with nothing around us but the grey lava which in 1705 sped hence down to the town, and looked below. A few red specks, with a hand's breadth or two of green between them—this was all that Garachico appeared to be. The black ruin framed it all too closely. It was odd that in two or three places we found this upland lava sufficiently decomposed for the growth upon it of tiny fig-trees, a few square yards of potatoes and some sprigs of glowing gorse; whereas, elsewhere, it was unyielding. But this material is very uncertain in its surrender to time—a recent outflow not seldom breaking up before an earlier one.

The morning passed in uneventful toil. The day previously we had been in a region where water of any kind is not; this day we struggled through the hottest hours seeking in vain for drinkable water. The soil was a moist vermilion sort of loam, and acres of potatoes stretched to the eye-line on both sides of us at an altitude of about three thousand feet above the sea. We were, in fact, in the midst of English greenery, and the air was damp. But we tried puddle after puddle in the red earth, and rejected them all.

At length a valley opened at our feet, and a thin, glistening line that wandered through it was hailed as "sweet water." We descended briskly, for it was long past the hour of lunch; and here, by the side of the stream, secluded from the outer world by smooth rounded hills mottled with bushes of gorse and heath, we spread the contents of the saddle bags, and allowed the mare to bury her nose in a sack of barley. Two or three huts, like pigsties, held the population of this nook; and ere

long we had a wondering throng of savage little faces within hail of our meats and bottles. The hill scenery of this valley, and the large staring eyes of these grimy children—fresh from play with the pigs and poultry—alike reminded me of Marathon. By-and-by a man appeared, leading a cow by the horn. With the delicacy that seems inborn in the Spaniard, he would not come near enough to cause inconvenience by his presence. Nevertheless, he could not forbear to sit at a distance and watch this unusual scene. When José saw the man, he looked at me for the cue of common conduct under such circumstances. I confess I did not understand his meaning. And so taking the law into his own hands, he went off with eggs, bread, and wine to the peasant, and the formula, "Haga me el favor"—"Do me the favour"—to eat something. The agriculturist declined, but touched the ground with his hat in acknowledgement of our conventional courtesy. Afterwards, however, he did not disdain to join with the youngsters in gathering up the fragments that were left.

It was cruelly against the grain to leave this grassy Eden for the hard hill sides, when our meal was done. Even the mare pretended to be mightily stiff. Maybe, however, she had a presentiment about the state of the road on the other side of the hill. We ascended to the very brow of a ridge, and then looked down at the large village of Santiago, embosomed in a plateau on the other side, and with the peaks of two or three soaring red mountains casting shadows over its low, rude houses. These red conical hills to our left were the same that yesterday, on our way to the Cañadas, we had kept on the right hand. The descent into Santiago was infamous. It was all the mare could do to keep on her legs, so slippery were the broad inclined planes of rude rock which led by degrees into the valley.

Of Santiago I have not much to say. It is a "poblacion" of some two thousand inhabitants, very rich in fruit and cereals, and very picturesque from the irregular shape of its environing mountains; but else uninviting to a stranger. The citizens and their wives were immensely curious about us. I really thought the church bell would be rung in our honour. But these houses had a dilapidated air very opposed to comfort, especially in a place nearly three thousand feet above the sea. And so I was not sorry when, at some cost,

José had thrown off the last of his interrogators, and we were stumbling over grey lava pebbles towards another upland track. The whole of this country is volcanic; and the very basin in which Santiago stands must, in remote ages, have been deluged again and again with fuming lava from the volcanoes round it.

From Santiago we climbed the face of a mountain by a monstrously steep trail. For my life's sake, I would on no account have ridden down it. But these Tenerifan horses go at the severest ascents with surprising courage and vigour; and I had rather to curb the good, panting mare, that she might not chance to make a serious false step, than stimulate her. We rose until we were a thousand feet or more above Santiago and another village in a like plateau nearer the sea. A trick of vice or terror in the mare might have sent us both rolling down this abrupt declivity. Where the ledge was narrowest, moreover, if a muleteer, whose ass was burdened with brushwood, so that it took up the room of three asses, did not chance to be coming towards us! This exacted some dainty management on our part to give the ass the outside berth, where it might pass with two of its feet considerably lower than the others. But when we had safely done with the ass, we had done with the hard work of the day also.

Thenceforward, until five o'clock, we gradually lowered towards the town of Guia, to which I was recommended for the night. Hereabouts, we saw the last of the Peak for awhile. Its tiny cone just looked over the vastly-broken country which intervenes between it and the coast in this part of Tenerife. Thin woods of pines shaded the higher of these intervening hills; but ere we reached Guia the cloud had settled upon the ridges in a long, steady, black line of vapour. We passed through the village of Chia, where the villagers seemed hardly less degraded than those of Santiago. Ancient crones, squatting on the thresholds of ramshackle houses, were taking snuff out of small tin boxes, or smoking cigars in social knots, and chattering with each other in loud, unfeminine tones. The men, however, were fine fellows to the eye, in their red waistcoats and tawdry finery. They and the lads of Chia greeted us with a running fire of questions and ejaculations, and acknowledged José's proud record of our feats of travel—for such they were regarded—with many an Ave Maria! and

Caramba! of satisfaction. But we hastened past them all, and on over the desiccated lava fields, in which the barley grew miserably, but the fig-trees and prickly pear attained a huge size.

José had an uncle who had been born at Guia; and he boasted the salubrity and scenic charms of the place with such a flourish of superlatives that I looked forward to our arrival. To the eye, however, it promised little. A coterie of low, flat-topped, white houses, with but scant greenery among the houses—all set on a naked slope of mountain, surrounded by stony lava fields, and unprotected from the sun. Such was Guia. Were it not about eighteen hundred feet above the sea, which glittered at the foot of its long slope, its heat must have rivalled that of Timbuctoo.

Here the excitement at the entrance of a stranger was even more demonstrative than at Chia. The citizens, with their wives and daughters, flew to the roofs of their houses, and, with telescopes, opera-glasses, and their own discerning dark eyes, subjected us to an ordeal of the most critical kind. There was no evading it, for the clatter of my mare on the rough stones of the street made a noise that seemed to thunder through the silent thoroughfares. The windows were filled with faces, and at the door of the Casino, or Club House, a crowd of young men stood with billiard-cues in their hands to see us go by. Thus we attained the house of the good doctor, to whom I was recommended, with more éclat than was pleasant, either to me or to José. The boy had, of course, put on his boots for the occasion; but his feet were swollen from exertion, and this, with the tormenting cobbles of the streets, made him limp in a marked degree. Nevertheless, he prattled gleefully of the mare's performances to any that would listen to him.

To my confusion, the doctor was not at home when we arrived at his house. But as soon as the ladies of his family understood the meaning of the confabulation at the door, they invited me into the reception room, and despatched the letter to the doctor straightway. There were in all six ladies, and I, all but a stranger to their tongue, in the midst of them. The doctor's mother, a handsome woman in the prime of life, seated herself on the sofa, which is the place of honour in a Spanish drawing-room, and the other ladies, with myself, were ranged in chairs to the right and left

of her. The doctor's wife, a beautiful girl of two or three-and-twenty, seemed to be of no more esteem in the house than the doctor's sisters—graceful and dark-eyed, like most Spanish girls.

But how mortally perplexing it was that I could not by a coherent conversation fitly respond to the civility with which they thus ceremoniously received me. Now and then we struggled with fair success into talk of a minute's duration; but it always ended with a lifting of eyebrows, a twinkling of black eyes, pleasant smiles and laughter. It is notorious in Spain that the stranger makes himself understood best when he is tutored by a pretty girl. Spanish spoken by a charming mouth is the sweetest music that ever traced its source to Babel; and I suppose the intelligence may be quickened by dark lustrous eyes. Hence I soon found that one word from Donna Mercedes—the youngest of the ladies—was, to my dull comprehension, worth ten words from any of the others. None the less, however, it was a merciful relief when the young doctor himself appeared, and by his hearty goodness made it clear that it mattered little, as far as my welcome was concerned, whether we understood each other or not. Cigars were lighted; cigars were even pressed into my pocket "for the road to-morrow;" and bottles of Bass's ale were opened in the presence of the ladies, who did not disdain also to sip lightly the contents of the bottles. Several young men, friends of the doctor, now came to swell the company, and restraint was at an end. And here, as elsewhere, I learnt to love the Spanish nature. With much merely external courtliness, it includes an earnest desire to be hospitable towards a stranger that is very winning. At dinner, for example, without the slightest tincture of vulgarity, the ladies vied with each other to put tit-bits of this viand and that upon my plate. It was a bright meal, illumined by black eyes. The doctor sat at the head of the table; three of the gentlemen faced him at the other end. To his right was his mother—still in the place of honour. I sat next to this lady, with the doctor's wife on my other side. So manifest a rule of the mother-in-law would agree well with but few English wives; here it seemed to go smoothly enough.

After dinner, the doctor carried me through the deserted streets of the town by the light of the moon.

"There is nothing to see in Guia—nothing at all," he said.

He had migrated to Tenerife from Seville for family reasons; but the contrast between Seville and Guia was too extreme to be easily supportable. This only he said, in unadulterated praise of Tenerife: that it is marvellously healthy.

"Drier than Madeira; therefore, better than Madeira," so, with a serious professional air, he judged it.

Moreover, the remarkable cheapness of living in Tenerife was of some account in its favour.

"What do you think my income is here?" he asked. "Well, I keep this establishment—men, maids, horses, and dogs, and all my relations, on two thousand five hundred pesetas (one hundred pounds)."

The common necessaries of life cost little or nothing. As for fruit, there is no end to it. Game, represented by partridges and rabbits, is also fairly abundant: the walls of a corridor in the house were adorned with the feathered skins of partridges, nailed up to dry. Of all the trials pertaining to such a life, for a man of ardent temperament, the isolation was the worst. Though Tenerife is but a speck on the ocean, the roads and country between Guia and Santa Cruz, the capital, rendered it impossible to make the journey in less than two or three days.

THUNDERBOLT

A COMPLETE STORY.

IN the "good old times"—by which I mean the days when we were young—two or three of us, young bushmen, were staying at Wyalla, the head station of a neighbour, on the marches of Queensland and New South Wales, and thoroughly enjoying the hospitality of our kindest of hostesses, a lady who commanded the allegiance of every young fellow for fifty miles round. Ladies were few and far between in the bush, in those days, and Mrs. Kaye had at her call a troop of dashing light horsemen, her neighbours and liege vassals, who would have ridden fast and far at her behest.

Railways were afar off in the "good old times," and the screech of the locomotive had then never scared the wild cattle in the granite ranges; nor had the electric telegraph stridden over the great, grey plains with its long stilts, nor played

strange music on its Æolian harp for the lonely shepherd to wonder at. A journey to Sydney was an affair of a week's hard travelling, and not to be undertaken lightly.

On this occasion, a friend and chum of mine and I were riding down country together on our way to Maitland, thence meaning to take boat for Sydney, and we were halting our first night at Kaye's Wyalla station. Half-a-dozen of us were sitting in the wide verandah, after tea, watching the violet light fade from the great ranges of mountains visible to the eastward, across the plain at our feet, and I had announced my intention of buying a buggy and harness in Sydney, and driving back the two horses which I was riding down country. When, as in duty bound, I asked Mrs. Kaye what commissions I could do for her in Sydney, her lord and master, from behind his big pipe, warned me :

"Don't be too rash, young man ! You may be taken at your word and have more on your hands than you might bargain for."

"No fear !" quoth I, loyally.

"Well, you are a good boy," said Mrs. Kaye. "I have a commission. There is something I want very much. But it will be too much trouble ; you will not care to do it for me."

So of course I vowed that nothing could possibly be too hot or too heavy for me to bring up country, if by so doing I might please my hostess.

"Well, then, bring me up a housemaid."

"What ! a young woman ? How on earth am I to get hold of one ?"

"Oh, you foolish fellow ! Why, go to the Immigration Depôt, of course, and hire one."

Evidently my host was right, and I had been just a little rash.

"But, Mrs. Kaye, how am I to choose one ? What do I know about housemaids ?"

"Oh, just bring me up the prettiest girl you can see among them—a nice-looking one. I am sure you know what I mean."

"Why, she'll be married in a month, like the last one," says some one.

"Oh no ! The last one squinted. It is only plain women who marry the first man who asks them ; the pretty ones are much more particular, they are used to being made love to. If Mr. C. will bring me up a pretty girl, she will turn up her

nose at anything short of an overseer ; very likely set her cap at one of you young gentlemen. Besides, all the men on the station will be courting her, and there is safety in numbers. I have tried ugly ones until I am tired ; they will marry anybody, and never last me any time at all."

So, under promise of reward, and having to endure chaff from the mankind present, I engaged to hire and bring up country a servant-maid for Mrs. Kaye of Wyalla. We made an early start next morning, my friend and I, each with a spare horse, making long journeys over mountain and plain, by Glen Innes to Tamworth, and across the great Liverpool Range to Murrumbidgee, whence, by rail, to Maitland. On the evening of the fifth day from Wyalla, we were steaming between the towering black cliffs which form the magnificent entrance to Sydney harbour. Off Fort Macquarrie we passed a beautiful London ship just coming to anchor. We knew, by the rows of heads which lined her bulwarks, that she was full of immigrants, and I was vividly reminded of Mrs. Kaye's commission.

Once housed at the Club, we scarcely knew what first to do, the excitement and whirl of Sydney was so pleasant to us. However, we bought some cut tobacco, and paid a visit to the outfitters, who, of course, knew exactly what we wanted, and guaranteed to renew our respectability of appearance in a miraculously short time. Seasons were good, in the "good old times," tallow "up," and cattle, both fat and store, in request, so of course my agents were delighted to see me, and forthwith asked me to dinner. At my friend's pretty house down at Rose Bay, I sat, at dinner, next to a charming young matron, who, as Sydney matrons often were in the "good old times" to bachelor squatters fresh from the bush, was very kind to me ; listened to my perplexities about Mrs. Kaye's commission ; laughed at her theory about pretty hand-maidens and their matrimonial ambitions ; and volunteered to go with me to the Depôt, and select a "Mopsa" who should fulfil the necessary conditions.

My friend was the wife of a Government official, and, as such, enjoyed certain privileges not granted to the "general." So next morning saw me at the Depôt with my chaperon, where, certain ceremonies having been gone through in the office, we were presented to the matron of the newly-arrived ship, a genial dame, on whose

shoulders the weight of responsibility, in the shape of four or five-score young women, sat lightly. We were ushered into a great bare hall, among a lot of some sixty girls of all descriptions—ex-London slaveys, fresh-caught Irish maidens, with “the mark of the dog’s teeth” yet in their heels, tall “daughters of the plough,” and some poor girls who might a few months before have figured in a picture of Hood’s “Song of the Shirt.”

All looked fat and healthy, after four months of sea air, the usual condition of newly-landed immigrants; but the Sydney mosquitoes had had notice of their arrival, and had feasted on fresh and healthy British blood. So the poor girls, for whom a paternal Government does not provide mosquito nets, were one and all disfigured by the winged tormentors. Half-a-dozen young women, who were reported willing to face the unknown perils of the bush, were trotted out for our inspection in a most business-like manner; and a tall, fair, handsome, shy English girl of two or three-and-twenty was bound over by mysterious documents to meet me at a certain time and place, and, under my charge, to proceed to Wyalla, transport for her “boxes” being duly arranged for. And that was my first introduction to Mary Lawson.

Then, with many thanks to my fair friend, away sped I, on business I understood much better than that of hiring housemaids—to wit, the buying of what we Australians call a buggy, but what is known in the States as a waggon, or buckboard—four light wheels, all about the same height, a perch, a shallow tray and splashboard, mounted on fore and aft springs, on which is a seat for two; the whole as tight, tough, and elastic as a skilful combination of mild steel, hickory, and leather, can be made to be, and the best vehicle yet devised for travelling over the complications of ruts, rocks, and roots, which are known as roads in the Australian bush. Mine was an “Abbott,” newly imported from “Concord, New York”—not a cheap article by any means, but a very good one. And a week afterwards—my visit to Sydney too soon over, for I had sold a thousand head of store cattle to a Victoria man, to be mustered and delivered a hundred miles down the road, and had not many weeks to do it in—I was on my way home, with Mrs. Kaye’s housemaid by my side, in the buggy.

I had driven one of my horses myself;

about the other there existed a tradition, on the station, that some one had once seen him in harness. He certainly, at first starting, seemed to have forgotten his early experiences. My companion, however, treated his eccentricities as a matter of course, merely remarking that she was used to horses. It was evident that she had good nerves. The young woman indulged in one good cry during the journey, much to my alarm, but, otherwise, took the many strange sights and sounds she saw and heard very quietly. She spoke good English, and seemed nice in her ways, and was, she told me, the daughter of a Devonshire farmer and cattle-dealer, and after her parent’s death had been for awhile in service in London.

Jim Curtis, the Wyalla stockman, met us, fifty miles down the road, with fresh horses, and I handed over my charge to Mrs. Kaye, after a prosperous journey. Jim was a fine, tall, handsome young fellow, a type of an Australian “Cornstalk,” slim and broad-shouldered, with curling fair beard and hair, and good-tempered eyes. A splendid rider and horse-breaker, a real good stockman, either in the bush or in the yard, he was well liked everywhere, and a model to be imitated by all the Jackaroos and new chums in the district. And, in clean white shirt and moleskin trousers, neat boots, and little cabbage-tree hat, with his handsome brown face, and perfect seat on horseback, he looked the beau-ideal of a daring stockman, and was celebrated for various exploits among cattle and horses. Indeed, it needed a good man to follow him among rangas, or in scrub, or to “back up” to him after a mob of wild cattle. Jim was the son of a small farmer, Singleton way; his father and mother had probably both come to the colony “under Government,” as the phrase used to be.

Well, to shorten my story, I went home, mustered my cattle, and, in a couple of months’ time, again found myself a guest at Wyalla. I, of course, enquired for, and saw my housemaid; she had recovered from her mosquito bites, and was, undeniably, a very handsome girl. Mrs. Kaye liked her, and praised me for the way in which I had executed her commission. The next news that I heard, some months later, of Mary Lawson, was that she was engaged to be married to Jim Curtis, but the event was not to come off until “after shearing,” an interval of some months. Then came evil tidings.

Jim had got mixed up with some horse-dealing transactions, had yielded to the temptations to which all stockmen are exposed where stray horses abound, had been tried for horse-stealing, and had been convicted of "illegal possession" of a certain mare and foal, which is about the utmost of which a bush jury will find a man guilty. So Curtis, instead of marrying the pretty new chum, had before him the prospect of nine months' imprisonment in Berrima Gaol.

My friends at Wyalla, where Jim was a favourite, were very sorry for him. Here was a young fellow's whole life ruined for what might only have been a case of "soldiering," or a mistake about a brand; and here, too, was Mrs. Kaye's favourite parlour-maid crying her eyes out for her lover, and vowing that she would marry Jim as soon as he came out of prison. About that time a sort of epidemic of bushranging, or robbery under arms, had set in. Peisley, Gardener, Morgan, the Clarks, and many others, had made the country ring with their desperate deeds. Many men had been shot, and robbery under arms had been made a capital offence. In the partially settled districts of New South Wales, there was growing up a class of young men, many of them of convict blood, lawless, and very ignorant, preferring an idle life, diversified by a little horse-planting, or downright horse and cattle-stealing, to steady work. From this to bushranging is but a step; and, to such young men, these brigands seemed heroes.

These men were good bushmen, splendid horsemen, and were sympathised with by the small settlers, many of whom have a hereditary hatred of a policeman. To inform against these men was to court death, and they flung about their stolen sovereigns with lavish recklessness.

When a bushranger said to a man, "Bail up, you, or I'll shoot you," he meant what he said, and often did it. Thus the terror they inspired was great, and their example contagious. Banks, gold-escorts, mails, stations, and travellers had been stuck up without number, and the robbers seemed to have the gift of fern-seed, and there was a certain amount of uneasiness pervading our district, though as yet we were free from molestation.

About twelve months after Jim Curtis's trial, we heard that he had been seen about Wyalla cattle station. And news came, too, that Mary Lawson had left Mrs. Kaye's

employment rather suddenly, and that lady had little doubt that the girl intended to carry out her intentions of marrying the dashing ex-stockman, despite all that had happened. But we visitors at Wyalla had soon more important matters to discuss than the vagaries of a servant-girl. Bushrangers were here, in our midst. Mail after mail had been stuck up and robbed on both sides of the border, the robbers being a tall man and a boy; and, as a climax, a bank had been entered, in broad day, in the main street of a neighbouring township, two men had walked in, bailed up the accountant with a revolver, found the manager in his bath, and without giving him time to dress, made him open the safe, and hand over a noble booty in notes and gold; the while a man had guarded the door, and a boy stood, holding the horses in the street. Then the party had vanished into the air, leaving not a trace behind. The leader of the gang became known as Thunderbolt; the name was in the mouths of great and small, and men who had seen him said that Thunderbolt was no other than Jim Curtis, late stockman at Wyalla.

Some time had elapsed since these events, three months or so, during which we had heard little of the bushrangers. Many people thought that they had cleared out of the country, which was patrolled in all directions by mounted police belonging both to New South Wales and Queensland—the latter reinforced by black trackers from the border force, wild fellows, keen as kangaroo dogs, but uncontrollable, except by their own officers. Still, horses disappeared mysteriously, and Thunderbolt and his boy were said to have been seen at different, and relatively far distant points.

One blazing hot afternoon at the end of that summer, I was riding quietly along a mountain track. It was so hot that the very flies had ceased from troubling my horse and myself, and the black crows, perched in a tree near the carcass of a dead bullock, were sitting with open beaks and drooping wings. I was overtaken by a couple of police troopers, fine, dragoon-like fellows, well mounted, and armed with heavy revolvers. One of them, McKean by name, a sergeant, and late of the Irish constabulary, I knew well, a tall, good-looking fellow, the beau ideal of a cavalryman. The other I had never seen before. I was glad of their company; they were bound to our station, so our

ways lay together. We pulled up, lit our pipes, had a drink of cool water from the water-bag I carried slung to my saddle, just flavoured with something from my flask, and we jogged on together. Of course we began to talk about the bush-rangers. The sergeant told me that they had taken a man who they were tolerably sure had been a mate of Thunderbolt's on the occasion of the Bank robbery; he was in possession of stolen horses, and had a suspicious number of sovereigns about him; but, as to Thunderbolt himself, they were at fault. The small free selectors and farmers would not, or dared not, give any information; the bush telegraph was actively at work. Thunderbolt and his boy were in all probability comfortably hidden somewhere in the ranges, certain of timely information, should the police get upon their track. I told him that three of our best horses had mysteriously disappeared; one of them, the Doctor, winner of certain Stockman's Purses and Hack Races, in particular, was well known to him, and to most people in the district, and we had little doubt as to who had taken them. The Doctor was a slashing chestnut, with a great staring white face, like Blair Athol; an animal to be recognised a mile off amid a thousand others.

So we rode on, yarning, mile after mile under the hot sun, intending, when we got off the stony track on to the plain, where the going was good, to canter on, so as to get home about the setting of the sun. We rode over a little stony rise and down on to a grassy flat, on which was feeding a little scrubby flock of sheep, belonging to one Peter White, who kept a bush public-house and store a little further down the road. Here, on the dusty track, we very soon noticed, the sergeant and I, the hoof-marks of three horses, one of them shod and quite fresh; they had evidently only just come on to the road, or else we should have noticed them sooner. The sergeant rode over to the boy who was minding the sheep, but the convict-bred young cub, with the inborn dislike of his race to policemen, was sulky, and said that he had seen no one. This was a lie, for the horse-tracks were on top of the tracks of the sheep, where they had crossed the road, on their way to water at the creek which ran down the middle of the flat. So we pushed on a bit, thinking to hear, at White's, a mile ahead of us, who the travellers might happen to be. We rode across a shallow ford, startling a great mob

of white cockatoos, which were drinking and bathing in the clear water, and as we rose the opposite bank, came in sight, a quarter of a mile from us, of the little clump of bush buildings which made up Peter White's establishment—a long, low verandahed alab house, its iron roof shining in the westering sun, and a few bark and shingled huts, kitchen, store, and stable, behind it, all lying snugly at the foot of the forest-covered hills, just where they touched the plain.

As we cantered up to the place, everything about it seemed silent and deserted, save that, at the saddle-stand in front of the public-house verandah, stood three horses, one carrying a pack-saddle, on to which a fair-haired boy was busy in strapping a swag. And one of the horses was the Doctor!

Instantly the scene changed. As I sang out "By the Lord Harry, that's my horse!" and the sergeant stunk his spurs into his big brown mare, we heard the boy scream or shout some alarm, a tall man rushed out of the door, brandishing something bright in his hand, sprang on the old Doctor, and dashed away, closely followed by the boy, and leaving the pack-horse tied to the rail.

A shout from the sergeant, "Come on, sir, in the Queen's name!" and away we three went after them, thundering down the road, round the corner of the paddock fence, over the steep bank of the creek, into the thick scrub on its far bank, crashing through it, and up the rough side of the hill beyond. As the two raced over the bald ridge, we saw the man, against the sky-line, throw out his hand, and the boy swerved off to the right; we never saw him again that day.

And then began a furious chase, a race for life and death. Hard riders we all were in those days, hard riders after wild scrub cattle and wilder horses, through thick bush, and over ranges, by sunlight, and by moonlight; but never such a ride rode I, as that afternoon after a man. I seemed to feel the frantic passion with which a horse will gallop until he drops, in pursuit of his fellow horses.

We well knew that our horses could not keep up the pace at which we were going; we knew that the man we were hunting was familiar with every yard of the wild country we were riding over; we knew that he was flying for his life, and would fight for it; but we rode as the huntsman of old may have ridden after the savage beast, his prey. Scrambling up hills,

clattering down declivities at reckless pace—for we were following the best stockman on that country side—our horses blundering over stones and bogs, my leader still ahead of me; over ridge and down gully we galloped, the sergeant never losing sight of the bushranger, and I keeping well up.

Once we came down a slide, made by timber-getters, to send down their logs from the top of the range to the saw-pits in the gully below, our horses fairly sitting on their haunches and blundering down amid a shower of stones. Then the race went on through a thick acacia scrub, the yellow flowers powdering us as we crashed through with gold-coloured dust, and up a stony ridge thick with quaint, feathery-topped "blackboy" trees we struggled with beaten horses, the bushranger three hundred yards ahead, and I could see the trooper striving to release his pistol from the holster in which it seemed entangled.

As the two disappeared over the ridge, my blown horse came down, giving me a nasty fall among the stones, and getting away from me in the scramble. But, as I picked myself up, I heard that which made me forget my bruises—a pistol-shot sounded quite close to me, and as I ran over the ridge I saw a sight not easily to be forgotten. The low hill fell steeply down to a little chain of water-holes a hundred yards below me. In one of these—across which a tree had fallen—up to his waist in water, stood Thunderbolt, his hat hanging by the chin-strap on the back of his neck, watching intently, pistol in hand.

Out from a little patch of black wattle rode the sergeant, flinging himself from the saddle, his drawn revolver smoking at the muzzle. He went scrambling down the steep bank, almost on the top of the man at bay, and as I ran down the hill, I heard a shout: "McKean! remember your wife and children! your wife and children!" But the sergeant never stopped. Two bright flashes shone through the gathering dusk from behind the log, followed by a tremendous splash as the policeman jumped into the water-hole, firing his pistol as he did so within a yard of the bushranger's breast. Then the latter fell slowly forward across the log without a sound, spreading out his hands and then lying still, his pistol slipping into the water.

As the echo of the shot died away among the hills, I rushed down, breathless, meeting McKean, as he staggered out of the

water, exhausted, and gasping: "Is he dead? Is he dead?"

I helped the sergeant up the slippery bank, and saw that he was hit. One of Thunderbolt's bullets had passed under his arm, just grazing the rib, and cutting his jumper and shirt. Lucky for me that it was so, for had the sergeant fallen, I, who was unarmed, must have beaten an ignominious retreat.

As soon as we had seen to this, we pulled the dead man out of the water, and laid him on the bank; the big government bullet had caught him fair in the middle of the chest, and gone clean through him, and the pistol had been fired so close that the powder had set his shirt on fire. Poor Jim Curtis's dead face had no look upon it either of pain or fear, only a slight expression of astonishment; his beard and hair were powdered with the yellow dust of the wattle flowers.

It was nearly dark as we caught our tired horses. McKean said that he was closing with his man, though his mare was nearly done, when the poor old Doctor stopped and whinnied, as a horse will do sometimes when woefully distressed. Thunderbolt jumped off, and ran for the water-hole, and the sergeant shot the old horse, as he passed him, to cut off his enemy's chance of retreat.

I was very sorry for the poor old horse, he must have done a severe journey that day, or we should never have caught our man. And we were, both of us, anything but jubilant as we led our horses slowly back through the bright moonlight, soon hearing the "cooce" of a party which, with our policeman, was in search of us. The latter had wisely pulled up, early in the chase—neither he nor his horse was fit for such a gallop. We had come four miles as the crew flies, over very rough ground, looking rougher still in the moonlight. With some trouble, we took a cart into the range, and brought the dead man in the morning to White's. After the necessary enquiry, we buried poor Jim, rolled up in a sheet of newly-stripped bark, the bushman's coffin, under a big tree on the bank of the creek.

And the boy? His history is soon told. Peter White's history of Thunderbolt's visit was to the effect that the bushranger had walked quietly into the bar, and informed Peter as to who he was—which was superfluous, as Peter knew him well—showing a revolver, by way of credential. After having a drink, Thunderbolt ordered

White to pack up a lot of slops and grocery, including, to the publican's mystification, some women's stockings and other female belongings, and had handed out one parcel to the boy who, pistol in hand, was minding the horses and keeping guard outside. As for the two or three men about the place, they had far too much respect for revolvers, and, perhaps, sympathy for the wielders of them, to do other than keep carefully out of sight. Then, our arrival changed the aspect of affairs, and I have tried to describe what ensued.

Not many days after all these things had happened, there came in, one night, to the homestead of a New England sheep-station, not very far—as distances are reckoned in the bush—from the scene of the bushranger's death, an old shepherd, a crabbed and ancient relic of convict days, who was shepherding a flock near the foot of the main range. This old fellow went to the store where he, after the manner of shepherds, invested in tobacco, boots, soap, Holloway's pills, and other commodities popular among those who follow sheep, offering, to the astonishment of the jackaroo who was acting-storekeeper, to pay for the same in gold. And, when the elder man was questioned by the younger, as to where he had obtained coins so rarely seen in station stores, the elder replied with the aphorism, that "them as axes no questions, gets told no lies."

However, a glass of rum exhibited by the master, elicited, in conversation, the fact that, that morning, a young chap had ridden up to the old man, out on his run, given him some money, and "bounced him" into going into the head station, some fourteen miles away, telling him to be sure and bring out a newspaper, and "news about the 'rangers," the young fellow promising to look after the sheep in the meanwhile.

"I axed him why he didn't go hisself," said the old man; "but he just ups and chucks me two quid, and tells me to mind my own business, and look alive."

The old man was given a newspaper, and was off before daylight. A note was sent to the nearest Inspector of Police.

The Inspector, with the wounded sergeant and a trooper, called at our place, on his way to see into the matter, and I, pretty sure that we were on the track of the bushranger's boy, consented to accom-

pany him, and took with me two mounted black boys—good trackers.

Arrived at the sheep station where the boy had been seen, we had but little difficulty in picking up the track of a shod horse, which led us right into the heart of the mountains, deep among gullies—which bore marks of being filled with snow in winter—and over stony ground, where the boys were sometimes at fault.

We camped upon the track that night, serenaded by wild dogs. Next day the boys puzzled out the iron-shod tracks slowly, sometimes over very bad ground, until, in a gully deep among hills, we found the track of hobbled horses; further on, the horses themselves. At the end of the steep, blind gully was a wall of rock, under which an old log stockyard, patched up newly, and probably originally erected by cattle-stealers, close to it a small hut of alabs and bark, with the usual big chimney at the end. The door, made of green hide, was closed; no smoke came from the chimney; nor was there any sign of life, or sound of living thing to be seen or heard about the silent place, save that, close to the door, a saddle lay propped against the slabs, and fresh horse-tracks were plentiful about the yard.

Cautiously and quietly we rode up, as men who expect to see strange things—they know not what. I easily pushed open the door of the hut, which was fastened slightly with a peg, bush fashion, and I presently saw, lying on the low couch, a figure covered to the chin with a white blanket, a fair-haired corpse, the calm, waxen face, the face of her who had been Mrs. Kaye's pretty handmaiden, my fellow traveller from Sydney, Jim Curtis's sweetheart or wife, Thunderbolt's boy—poor Mary Lawson. A newspaper lay upon the floor, and on the little bark table near her was a laudanum bottle and a pannikin.

We buried her hard by, under a curra-jiang tree, in the lonely New England mountain ranges.

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OCTOBER

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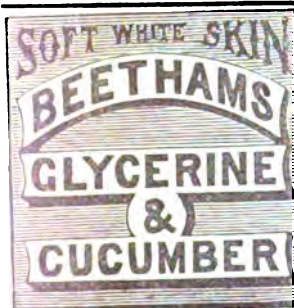
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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

No. 1036. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXX.

"My dear boy, my dear boy," said Sir Peter, now at one end of the study, now at the other, "think it over. Africa, did you say? For years? No, no, you don't mean it? Make it months—and—and wouldn't Vienna, or Paris, or Rome, or—or—New York even do as well?"

"They might do every whit as well—or as ill," answered Lance, slowly. "But I think it will be Africa."

Nevertheless, it didn't look as if it would be Africa—that is to say if, as might be supposed to be the case, a journey to Africa implied a little energy on the part of the would-be traveller. He was leaning heavily against the study mantelpiece, while Sir Peter pursued his peregrinations. Lady Judith had in no wise exaggerated in her portraiture of Lance, when she had described him as looking "the wreck of himself." He had all the appearance of a man stunned by a heavy blow, whom instinct sends crawling out of sight while he gets his breath back again.

Sir Peter paused in front of the young man, executing his favourite heel and toe movement, his eyebrows going up and down with the motion. One terrible half-hour passed in Lance's company at Liverpool had revealed to him the true state of his feelings towards Miss Shore. He was afraid of raising even the ghost of that terrible half-hour now, yet he knew that Lance must be reasoned with, and not allowed in a sudden rash moment to ruin his whole future.

The situation seemed to him to require diplomatic treatment, and he felt that he had a great many threads to manipulate at that moment.

He racked his brains to think of the strongest argument he could bring to bear, and after tip-toeing, and going back on his heels for about a minute and a half, brought out the remark, "Africa is a long way off," and then he set off round the room again.

"Yes," was all Lance's reply.

"And—and, my dear boy, how do you mean to get there?" said the old gentleman, from the farther end of the room.

"Upon my life, I don't care twopence-halfpenny about that. All I care about is to go somewhere—do something, or else I shall go out of my mind."

Sir Peter caught at the word "do." It brought him back in a trice from the farther end of the room.

"Do! yes, that's it, that's it, Lance—it's something to do that you're wanting—occupation; your time hangs heavily. Occupation, my dear boy, is the unacknowledged necessity of existence. It means contentment—a mind at rest." Here he stood at Lance's side. "It means quiet, peacefulness, tranquillity." The last word found him at the other end of the room.

Lance did not seem to hear him. He had walked away to the window, and now stood looking out at the cedar tree, under which he had more than once established Miss Shore and her easel; at the sloping garden-path which led down to the river-bank, where he had caught sight of her in hiding among the reeds and osiers; at the winding mountain road, up which he had followed her in his effort to arrest her death-daring footsteps.

Once upon the topic of occupation Sir Peter's eloquence grew sparse. He drew a touching picture of the general deficiency in funds and workers of the larger portion of benevolent societies—to hear him speak one would think that every one of the charitable institutions of England was on the verge of bankruptcy—mourned over his own inability to devote a larger portion of his time to their good work.

"But—there, what with the management of his own estate and Madge's——"

But here he broke off abruptly. Madge's name came to him like an inspiration.

"The truth of it is," he said, "Madge ought to get married, and then her husband could look after her affairs—I'm always at work, and yet I can't keep things under. Redesdale alone would take the whole of a man's time; and Madge never takes the slightest interest in anything connected with it. A most important question has arisen. The lawyers have written again and again telling Madge that the estate adjoining Redesdale has come into the market, and unless she buys it up the speculative builder will get hold of it and Redesdale will be ruined; but no, they can't get her to give them her attention——"

But Redesdale, and Madge's neglect of it, evidently had no attraction for Lance. He left his stand at the window and crossed the room towards the door.

Sir Peter stood in his way, tip-toeing very hard.

"Don't you agree with me that she ought to get married? It's dreadful to think of that young woman left all alone with that immense property on her hands, and her own health not what it was. She's far from strong, Broughton tells me, and ought to go away at once."

"Well, what's to prevent her getting married? Heaps of men would jump at the chance of marrying her," said Lance absently.

"My dear boy!" cried Sir Peter aghast, "you wouldn't like to see Madge fall into the hands of a needy adventurer!"

"I should hope she'd have too much sense ever to do such a thing," said Lance, making another effort to get to the door.

Sir Peter laid his hand on his arm:

"My dear boy, can you put two and two together and find that they make four?" he asked energetically. "You want something to do? Well, I've told you the management of Madge's property

would take the whole of a man's time. You want to start all in a hurry for a journey—to—to—— well, say to the moon. Madge has been ordered by her doctor to take a trip in precisely the same direction. Now, do you understand?"

But if Lance did understand he did not say so. He stared blankly at Sir Peter, then the door opening at that moment from the other side, he took the opportunity and made his escape.

The door had opened to admit Mr. Stubbs. Sir Peter, with energy and a little touch of irritability, related the heads of his talk with Lance, and demanded his sympathy for Madge and the Redesdale property.

Mr. Stubbs knew all about Redesdale and the adjoining land. He had a suggestion to make, and he made it with a great show of diffidence. It took the form of a question:

"Was the estate adjoining Redesdale a good paying property, and of the kind that Sir Peter had had in his mind when he had talked the other day of buying one to settle upon Mr. Clive?"

Sir Peter caught at the suggestion. "It shall be seen into, Stubbs; capital idea!" he cried, gleefully. Then he started off at once to confide the notion to some one else—Lance, if he could find him—if not to Madge.

Madge had come downstairs for the first time that day. She and Lance had met at the luncheon-table, but had scarcely exchanged a word. His listless, frowning face had set her shivering, she had felt as if some vast ocean had suddenly rolled in between them, and as if she and he would never again stand side by side on the same shore. Then she had become suddenly conscious that Mr. Stubbs's sleepy eyes were fixed on her own face, and she had made a great effort and had broken into common-place talk, complaining of the cold east wind which had set in, and had vowed that winter must be beginning; it was like a November day.

Lady Judith had recommended her to have a fire made in her little boudoir, and to sit there all the afternoon. Whereupon Madge had lighted up into sudden vehemence, had declared that she hated the room and would like to have it bricked up. Then she had risen hastily from the table and had thrown at Mr. Stubbs one angry furtive look which had said: "I hate you, I defy you, I mean to assert myself and to get back a clear conscience."

Mr. Stubbs's acknowledgement for this courtesy was to say in a low voice as he held open the door for her to pass out:

"Be cautious, madam, this is a crisis."

After luncheon, Lance had followed Sir Peter into his study to announce his intended journey to Africa, and Madge had wrapped a thick shawl about her and had gone wandering out into the garden. A chill air was blowing; winter assuredly was not yet setting in, but the most golden of the golden days were over. Madge, weak still from her short, sharp illness, felt the bracing wind too strong for her; she turned down a sheltered alley—a little bit of shrubbery leading off the flower-garden—where the larches entwined their long feathery boughs overhead, and the dappled blue sky showed here and there in patches.

She walked up and down with quick yet weak footsteps, the echo of Mr. Stubbs's warning still in her ears. A crisis in Lance's life was it? She knew that just as well as he did. Why his future positively trembled in the balance. Now did it behoove her who had dared to take his future in hand and to say, "It is for his happiness that my wealth and my love should be given to him," to finish the work she had begun, to continue to steep her soul in deceit in order to assure to him this wealth and love? Or on the other hand should she go to him and say: "Lance, hear my confession; I have done my best to break your heart with my supreme folly, do now what I had better have let you do at the first—choose your future for yourself."

A stupendous effort, a courage all but heroic this latter course would demand. She stood still in the middle of the path asking herself if it were in her power to do this thing—to lose for ever the chance of winning his love, to see him, perhaps, in hot haste and desperation, fling himself headlong into poverty and ruin.

As she stood thus asking herself these momentous questions, Lance passed along slowly at the end of her shady path. A sudden rush of courage seemed to come to her. "Now or never it must be," she said to herself. She waved her hand to him. He caught sight of her among the shadows of the larches, and went to meet her.

"I was going to the stables to give some special directions about my hunters—I want them well looked after while I'm away," he said, intent on breaking the news of his intended departure to her.

Madge for the moment could not speak. She looked up into his face as they stood there in the breezy sunlight; he looked down into hers. Each felt thrilled with a sudden sharp pity for the other's changed white face.

Madge was conscience-smitten and silent. Lance not being conscience-smitten had words to express his pity. "What has pulled you down in this way, Madge?" he asked. "Come indoors, the breeze is too strong for you."

Madge laid her hand upon his arm.

"One moment, Lance, I want to speak to you," she said, in a low, tremulous tone.

More than this her lips were absolutely incapable of.

Lance looked a little surprised at her flushing downcast face. "What is it, Madge?" he asked, kindly; and Madge's lips parted as if to speak, but still the words would not come.

But though her lips were silent, her thoughts were clamorous. "It must be now or never, Madge Cohen," those thoughts seemed to say. "Make up your mind at once which it must be, a full confession, or lips for ever more to be sealed."

She was trembling from head to foot.

"Lance, when are you going away?" she asked, presently, in the same low, nervous tone as before.

Paraphrased, her question would have been:

"Will you give me another chance of making my confession!—the words won't come to my lips to-day."

"To-morrow morning before you are down," he answered, "I shall go straight away to Paris, and make up my mind when I get there what I shall do with myself. I've prepared Uncle Peter for my being away a long time—but of course I shall write."

The mingled hopelessness and recklessness in his tone frightened her. She seized his hands impetuously in hers.

"Oh, don't go—don't go," she implored. "Lance, Lance, if you do, you will break my heart."

Every other thought was swamped now in the fear lest this might be a final parting.

Lance looked at her wonderingly. This was Madge in a new light.

"I don't think you know—I don't think you understand," he began after a moment's pause.

"Yes, I do know, I do understand," she interrupted impetuously and ner-

vously as before, "I know how you—pityed her——" she could not bring the word "loved" to her lips.

"Madge," he interrupted sharply, "pity doesn't crush a man into the dust and take all the life out of him."

Madge grew white and whiter.

She let go his hands suddenly, as if they stung her. But still she cried despairingly, "Don't go, don't go; oh, why should you let this, this sorrow ruin your whole life."

"A man must fight through his troubles in his own fashion, Madge; this is my way of fighting through mine," he answered gravely. "But come indoors—this east wind is too strong for you—and tell me what you have to tell me there."

In silence they went back to the house together, Madge nerving herself as best she could for what lay before her. "In half an hour it must, it will be, all over," she said to herself, "and he will either hate me and curse me to my face, or he will forgive me and help me to tell Sir Peter of my other deceit."

She led the way to the smallest and sunniest of the drawing-rooms, but still kept her thick shawl wrapped around her. He shut the door as they entered. Madge stood before him flushing and trembling, "Lance, Lance," she said in a voice choked with tears, "the words will not come——"

He took her hands in his. "Why, what can there be that you should be afraid to tell me, Madge?" he asked in kindly astonishment.

The door-handle turned at this moment and Mr. Stubbs entered the room. Madge started, but did not attempt to withdraw her hands from Lance's grasp. Mr. Stubbs's face had possibly never before been seen with so ominous a look on it. His lips said respectfully enough, "Sir Peter is looking everywhere for you, Mrs. Cohen," but his narrowing eyes said, "take care, only half your secret is yours to confess, the other half is mine."

Madge felt that he had played the spy on her. She lost her self-control utterly, her tears came in a flood now, her head bowed on Lance's hands, which she grasped convulsively in her own.

"Don't go, don't go," was all that she could say. "Don't go, Lance, or it will break my heart."

And Lance, looking down on her wonderingly and remembering old love passages in days gone by, thought he read

the meaning of her passionate tears and halting words, and felt his own purpose falter.

"Capital idea! capital idea!" said Sir Peter, coming into the room as Mr. Stubbs backed out of it. "They're in here together, did you say—the very thing! Capital fellow Stubbs is—knew he was, though Lady Judith had so much to say about him. Well I've got something special to say to you two young people. You know how you've been bothered lately, Madge, with letters from the lawyers about the land adjoining Redesdale? Well, Mr. Stubbs suggests that instead of you buying it and getting more responsibilities and anxieties on your shoulders, I should buy it for Lance—eh, do you see now, and settle it on him! Eh, do you understand, Madge—and—and then—then, don't you see, don't you understand—it's all in a nutshell? Well! if I must speak out——"

But Lance interrupted him here. It was his hands that held Madge's now, not Madge's that held his, and he answered Sir Peter with his eyes bent on her bowed head, "I understand you, at any rate, Uncle Peter, and it shall be as you wish."

SALMON.

WHEN Fluellen, on the field of Agincourt, not content with asserting that there was a river in Macedon, and "also moreover" a river in Monmouth, ventured further to declare that there were "salmons in both," he perilled his self-bestowed reputation as "a goot man in all particularities," inasmuch as there are neither "salmons" in the rivers of Macedon, nor indeed in any of the waters which help to feed the Mediterranean, though they are met with throughout the greater part of the Northern hemisphere lying north of 35°; and Sir John Ross assures us that he found them so numerous in the Arctic regions, that one hundred pounds could be bought for an old knife, and that an Esquimaux would dispose of a stone weight merely in the form of "hors d'œuvre."

Though the ancients may have been acquainted with some members of the family, we may safely conclude that they knew nothing whatever of the king of fish himself, the "salmo salar." The Greeks make no reference to him; Pliny, indeed, knew that he frequented the rivers of Aquitania; and Ausonius, in his poem

on the Moselle, sang his beauties and edible qualities :

Nor will I pass the glistening salmon by,
With crimson flesh within, of sparkling dye ;

but it was reserved for the soldiers of Cæsar, when, on their victorious march towards Gaul and Britain, they reached the banks of the Garonne, to behold the fish cleaving his joyous way upwards as he made his ascent from the sea. But obstacles such as availed not to hinder the introduction of the far-famed oysters of Rutupia, interposed between the delicious "salmo salar" and the jaded palate of the Roman epicure ; for the Alps, a mighty barrier, rose between, and the great secret of packing fish in ice was discovered by Dempster, of Dunnichen, many hundreds of years too late to facilitate the supply of the Roman market.

Strange stories have been told of "the samon, the most stately fyssh that any man maye angle to in fresh water," as Dame Juliana Berners calls him. Olaus Magnus speaks admiringly of a procession of salmon shining in glittering panoply of silver, sweeping onwards like an invading army, swimming as wild geese fly, in a wedge ; some large old salmoness at the apex of the triangle, and young males at the base. On a forced march, so some would have us believe, they accomplish thirty miles in an hour—their rate of swimming being really from two to three. According to Fuller, being "both bow and arrow," they can shoot themselves out of water to an incredible height, which Twiss, in his "Travels in Ireland," puts at fourteen feet ; while Scrope considers six or seven feet much nearer the truth. Frank Buckland, however, observed certain "speckled enthusiasts" leaping to a height of nine feet in their efforts to gain an unassisted passage over a dam in the river Coquet. Lord Lovat, as is well known, has a salmon leap, where, in consequence of local conformation, a kettle of boiling water can be so placed, that the fish literally jump into it and are boiled.

The value set upon salmon in this country has always been considerable, and a long series of statutes following in solemn procession bears testimony to the ready ear which Parliament has ever lent to the fisherman's complaint. That great Palladium of English liberties, Magna Charta, stipulated, rather perhaps with a view to convenience of navigation than to the movements of salmon, that all weirs throughout England, except by the sea

coast, should be utterly put down ; and during the early Edwards and Henrys, many fierce and sweeping denunciations were hurled at the heads of evil doers who destroyed the brood of fish and gave them to the swine. That our ancestors were possessed of more intimate knowledge of the ways of salmon than is usually supposed may be inferred from the enactment of close-time in the Yorkshire rivers from "the Nativity of Our Lady, unto Saint Martin's Day"—fifth of September to the eleventh of November—as early as the reign of Edward the First ; while an old Scotch statute, subsequently embodied into the English code, provided that there should be left in all weirs a gap of such size that a three-year-old pig might turn round in it without touching the gap with snout or tail. Franciscus Tolensis, writing the life of Thomas à Kempis—fourteenth century—tells us that the love of that pious man for the author of the book of Psalms was likened by his brother monks to their own love for salmon. For centuries the Abbot of Westminster claimed an offering of the fish, on the ground that when the great church of Saint Peter was consecrated by the Apostle himself, it was endowed with a tithe of the salmon fisheries of the river on whose bank it stands. In the reign of Edward the Third, a petition presented to the King praying that no salmon might be taken between Gravesend and Henley, during the winter months, concluded with the words, "If it please your Highness thus to make order, all your people repairing to London, or bordering the river, shall buy as good a salmon for two shillings as they now get for ten." And this brings to notice the question of the comparative cost of salmon in times ancient and modern. The Duke of Ormond told Evelyn that the fish were so plentiful in the Irish streams that they were hunted with dogs, and the Earl of Strafford writing 1638, states that the fishery at Derry produced that year two hundred and forty tons of salmon, which sold at fifteen pounds per ton.

One Richard Franck, a Cromwellian trooper, who made an angling tour through Scotland in the seventeenth century, writing of Stirling, remarks that the "burgomasters are compelled to enforce an ancient statute, enjoining masters not to oblige their servants to feed on salmon more than three times a week. The price of salmon formerly," he adds, "did not exceed sixpence." A similar regulation is also alluded

to in connection with the house of lepers at Gloucester, the object, in this case, being to render the servants less liable to leprosy; a disease which was supposed to be aggravated by eating fish. It is but right to add that no corroboration of stories such as these could be obtained by the Royal Commission on salmon fisheries in 1860. When once we enter the present century, however, no more is heard about the low price of salmon, which is stated to have become too dear to be used by the lower orders in Scotland in 1805, while its price in England is amusingly illustrated by the story of the laird, who, visiting a London hotel with his gilly, ordered a beefsteak for himself, and "salmon for the laddie." On paying his reckoning he discovered, to his chagrin, that he had to pay a shilling for his own dinner, and a guinea for the laddie's.

Owing to various causes—such as drainage, pollution, and the formation of weirs too high for them to get over, salmon sometimes forsake certain rivers, as the Wear—which furnished the monastic houses of Durham with rich supplies of the venison of the waters for their refectories on fast days—the Thames, Stour, Itchen, and Medway. In fact, between dams and pollution, the condition of the fish has been likened to that of horses in a steeple-chase, who, besides being required to negotiate their fences, should at the same time be compelled to breathe an atmosphere laden with carbonic-acid gas. Formerly, there was a good fishery just above the place where the Severn tunnel now passes beneath the bed of the river; but in consequence of the boring operations and the blasting, the fish have wholly forsaken that part of the stream. The chief case of entire extinction in Scotland is that of the Clyde, in prophetic allusion to which, perhaps, it is, that the heraldic arms of the City of Glasgow comprise a salmon with a ring in its nose, and literally "up a tree." Like instances may be cited in other lands; up to 1798, salmon were largely caught in the Connecticut river, but none were seen there again until about 1875, when they began to reappear as the direct result of planting a large number of eggs in the stream some three years previously. "No salmon," says Walton, "are of such excellent taste as those of the Thames;" and in the early years of the present century—when a single net-maker in Fenchurch Street is said to have been paid eight hundred pounds a year for nets to be used in the

river—it was nothing unusual for twenty salmon to be taken at a single haul in Chelsea Reach. From 1794 to 1814, salmon were commonly taken at Boulter's lock near Taplow; and as recently as 1820, a boy in a ferryboat at Laleham was in the habit of catching seventy or eighty a day, with a rod and line hanging over his boat while plying to and fro across the stream. But though large numbers of salmon babies, from the glass nursery at South Kensington, have been turned into the river at Staines, Windsor, and elsewhere, only one or two fish have been taken in recent years.

For ages the picturesque practice of "burning the water" was carried on in the United Kingdom, and the spearing of gravid fish on the spawning beds was an old, and, especially on the Tweed, highly popular sport. Amid the glare of pine torches reflected from cliff, wood, and water, and the accompaniment of yells and laughter provoked by sundry duckings, the scene was, without doubt, sufficiently exciting. Who but remembers the description in "Guy Mannering:"

'Tis blithe along the midnight tide
With stalwart arm the boat to guide
On high the dazzling blaze to rear,
And heedful plunge the fork'd spear.
Rook, wood, and scour emerging bright,
Fling on the stream their ruddy light,
And from the bank our band appears,
Like genii armed with fiery spears;

but the sport was shamefully wasteful and destructive, and was declared illegal in 1857; not, however, until it had been abolished in Canada and even in the waters of Labrador.

But it is time to say something concerning the habits and life-history of the fish itself, of which honest, but, as regards salmon, utterly ignorant Izaak Walton remarks, that, "like some persons of honour and riches, which have both their summer and winter houses, he uses the fresh water for summer and the salt water for winter."

It is usually said that he is a sea fish; but other migratory fishes, as the shad and lamprey, who live in the sea and resort to fresh water to breed, ascend the rivers, breed at once and return. Not so the salmon; and the problem still awaits solution: where is his home?

Much additional confusion has been imported into the natural history of the salmon, owing to the number of names by which the fish is known during various stages of his existence in different localities, pre-eminent among them being "parr,"

"smolt," and "grilse," indicative of successive eras of development, culminating in the salmon. Even two hundred years ago this confusion of names was matter of observation and complaint. Captain Franck, speaking of the various names given in England to the brood of salmon says: "In the S. they call him 'samlet;' but if you step to the W. he is better known as 'skegger;' in the E. they avow him 'peak;' to the N. 'brood' and 'lock-sper;' so from thence to a 'town,' then to a salmon."

"These and others," says Walton, not throwing much additional light upon the subject, "may be fish of another kind, differing as we know a herring and a pilcher do."

It was an early opinion, supported by the authority of Rondeletius, that the spawn of the salmon was shed and hatched in the sea; but it has long been known that the fish can only repeat the story of its birth, by ascending from the salt water to fresh, when the female scoops out a nest, or redd, as it is called, with her tail, and buries the eggs after they have been fertilised by her male companion, who employs such spare time as he may have in rushing open-mouthed upon every other male who comes in sight.

Each fish has eight hundred or nine hundred ova per pound weight, so that a single twenty-pound salmon may yield as many as eighteen thousand eggs—the seed sown to produce the salmon harvest of the Severn alone varies from ten millions to twenty-five millions a year—the spawning season continues from about the end of October to the close of January, and the eggs are hatched out in periods varying from ninety to one hundred and thirty days, depending on temperature.

The tiny water babies make their debut resembling slips of pink gum, each with a little round head and a yellowish bead, about the size of a lemon pip, attached beneath. For six weeks or so, the newly hatched fish, or "alevin," remains a helpless infant, breathing the air in the water like an adult fish, but subsisting on the oily contents of its forage bag, and, when this is absorbed, the fish becomes perfectly developed and is about an inch and a half in length.

But Fortune has already smiled upon him, if he have escaped the slaughter of the innocents; the larvæ of insects, floods, droughts, and severe frosts alike destroy the ova, greedy trout eagerly scramble for

them—five hundred fish eggs have been taken from the maw of one trout—even salmon themselves are not above suspicions of cannibalism in making a meal on their own; or it may be their neighbour's eggs, and used formerly to see salmon ova, preserved in salt, sold in fishing-tackle shops and so forth. And in the case of the young parr also, the theory of the survival of the fittest becomes rather the survival of the luckiest; ducks, swans, and rats are ever lying in wait to devour him, to say nothing of fish themselves, few of which do not at one time or other, make the young salmon their prey. Nor can the fowls of the air be held guiltless; the kingfisher has been seen to take six young fish out of a pool within an hour; knavish crows, with keen, rapacious eyes, for ever haunt the weirs; and there is the "lone hern," too, of which the Laureate sang, who as he

Forgets his melancholy
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool.

And in addition to, and quite as active as these natural enemies of the salmon, there is man, and especially man the poacher. Thus as with Virgil's bees, so also with the youthful parr not yet transcoloured into smolts:

Tum varis illudent species, atque ora ferarum.

When about a couple of years old, for it is uncertain whether the samlet migrates at the beginning of his second or third year, the young fish is seized with a yearning to make his first visit to the sea. He assumes a new tourist suit for the occasion, without which, indeed, the salt water would prove fatal to him. The dark transverse bands on his sides yield to a bright covering of shimmering scales, arrayed in which—true knights in silver armour—the smolts, about eight inches in length, set forth to view the world of waters, as the old couplet has it:

The first flood in May
Takes the smolts away.)

On their way down stream the young salmon, "saved to-day, to-morrow to be slain," encounter many foes; and if they are successful in eluding their assailants, perhaps some five per cent. of the hatched out ova live to reach the sea. And here our knowledge somewhat abruptly ends; how long they stay, what they do, and when they return, we cannot say; but it is at any rate reasonable to suppose that if in fresh water their enemies live and are mighty, in the sea their name will be

legion; and a calculation has been made according to which, only one salmon's egg in a thousand deposited by the parent ever becomes a fish fit for human food. From the time, then, that the smolt passes to the sea, nothing is really known about him. He remains in the sea "a certain time," and it is usually believed that the smolts who go down one spring, return as grilse of eight or ten pounds weight in the summer of the following year; and the theory has been popular that salmon, like swallows, returned to their former quarters, a belief which Frank Buckland fervently hoped was true, "as most salmon were being bred in his kitchen."

The question has been often asked what leads the grilse to seek the river at the time they do? The reply which first suggests itself is to spawn, but as they are not in a condition to do so for probably another three months, other solutions have been offered, as for instance, that they resort to fresh water to get rid of the sea lice, or to escape the persecutions of such mighty Nimrods of the deep as seals, porpoises, or dog-fish; failing which reasons, we can only fall back upon instinct in explanation of this primary characteristic of the king of British rivers. At any rate, in early spring, and through the summer and autumn months, they come from the sea, swimming, leaping, and struggling up the rivers, bright-coated and silvery; and in winter spawning time comes on. Meantime, the parent fish having performed their reproductive functions, pass down again in spring to the sea as kelts, the silver sadly tarnished, the jaws elongated, the tip of the lower one armed with a long cartilaginous hook analogous to a deer's horn, which disappears when the salmon is not breeding, fins and tail torn and lacerated—the very impersonation of misery and starvation; for in fresh water the salmon eats little or nothing, subsisting on the store of fat which its diet of fish fry, crustaceans, etc., has enabled it to acquire while in the sea. Thus, it not unfrequently happens that large numbers of emaciated and exhausted kelts perish miserably while still in the rivers, a prey to starvation and disease. So great, indeed, is the number of spawned fish who die, and corrupt the long and swiftly-flowing streams on the Pacific slope of America, that a belief has there arisen that salmon invariably die spawning.

With regard to questions such as the

longevity of salmon, the size to which it may attain, and the number of visits it makes to the sea, our information must be confessed to be somewhat meagre. Bacon limits his age to ten years; Willoughby says that he requires six years to reach his prime; while others again are equally confident that he attains his full size in half that period. Buckland mentions the capture of a marked salmon, which was seven or eight pounds when marked, and having been loose seven years, was found to have grown to twenty-six pounds, which does not show a very rapid growth in mature fish. It may be assumed, however, of a forty-pound salmon, that he is an eight year old fish, and probably more. As a rule, the larger the river, the larger the salmon it produces; fish over twenty pounds being quite common on the Severn, while on the Usk anything over thirty pounds is exceptional. The biggest fish recorded as having been taken in the Severn, was a sixty-four-pound in 1873, described to the chairman of the fishery board by an eye-witness as being, "as thick round the waist as our farm girl." There are many well-authenticated cases of salmon caught in the Tweed exceeding seventy poundweight but the largest specimen known to have been captured in British waters, was one of eighty-three pounds, taken in a net in the year 1821, though salmon of as much as one hundred pounds weight are said to have been caught in California. Frank Buckland observes that on one day in the month of August, 1879, there were in London six salmon whose aggregate weight exceeded three hundred and twenty-five pounds.

To more common evils hindering the growth of salmon, must be added the outbreak of "*Saprolegnia ferox*," a cutaneous disease resembling ringworm, which, since it was first noticed in the Esk some ten or eleven years ago, has unquestionably slain thousands of fish. The disease, which is by no means confined to this country, having been observed also in Siberia and British Columbia, appears in its early stages as a slight ulceration of the surface skin. By-and-bye, however, the spots become more numerous, and sink deeper and deeper into the flesh until the hapless salmon is literally devoured alive by the fungoid growth, which gradually extends over the entire surface of the body. The disease, which is caused by a very curious fungus, found in fresh water only, has, in all probability, always existed

sporadically; but under certain conditions, of which we are imperfectly informed, it suddenly assumes an epidemic character. As many as fourteen thousand fine fish have been destroyed by "saprolegnia" in the waters of the classic Tweed in the course of a single season; and as many as six hundred diseased fish were, in 1882, removed from a small river like the Lune.

The present state of the British salmon fishing presents a very marked improvement upon the condition of things which prevailed some quarter of a century ago. The Royal Commission, in 1860, found the English fisheries in as low a state as was compatible with bare existence. In 1863 the annual produce of the salmon rivers in England and Wales was estimated to be worth about eighteen thousand pounds, which increased, after seven years' protection, to thirty thousand pounds in 1868; to one hundred thousand pounds in 1877; and to as much as one hundred and fifty thousand pounds in 1883.

The fisheries of Ireland and Scotland—though never so decayed as those of England and Wales—have also revived, so that the gross value of the salmon fisheries of the United Kingdom cannot now be assumed to be much less than three quarters of a million sterling. The total capital invested probably exceeds sixty thousand pounds, while employment and recreation is afforded to some twenty thousand net fishermen and ten thousand anglers yearly.

The happy invention, by Mr. Smith of Deanston, in Scotland, about the year 1827, of the salmon stair, or fish pass, whereby the surplus water flowing over is made available for enabling the fish to surmount the same, formed a new epoch in the history of salmon fisheries in this country. The arrangement practically consists of a sloping trough with frequent bars across, moderating the flow of water, and forming a series of small pools, from one to another of which the salmon can swim or leap, and so pass a weir.

What a salmon ladder can do has been strikingly illustrated in the case of the Ballisodare river, County Sligo, in which, prior to 1856, no salmon whatever existed. The lower falls are nineteen feet six inches high, and, to render them passable, a ladder of rough hewn stone was constructed two hundred and forty-eight feet long, inclined at a slope of one in thirteen, ten feet in width, with the chambers twelve feet across, giving ample room for the

salmon to rest in comparatively quiet water. The entire cost of the passes, for upper and lower falls, was about one thousand pounds, and their construction has practically created a fishery which is worth three thousand pounds a year.

If he be regarded as a national benefactor who makes two blades to grow in place of one, what shall be said of a man who makes fish swim where they never swam before? It must be borne in mind, moreover, that salmon cost nothing for their keep, make bare no pasture, consume no corn, and displace nothing, but are literally "bits of silver pulled out of the water."

To see a salmon river in the fulness of its abundance we must cross the Atlantic and visit the waters of the Columbia, Fraser, Sacramento, and other streams, which actually swarm with hundreds of thousands of salmon. So crowded are the cañons of the Fraser that canoe navigation is occasionally impeded, and in 1876 it was estimated that the "canneries" at the mouth of the Columbia river sent away forty million pounds of salmon, to say nothing of the amounts wasted and captured by Indians. Mr. Livingston Stone thus describes the first assault of the salmon on a dam erected on a branch of the Sacramento river, in order to facilitate large captures of fish for the purpose of collecting their eggs for artificial breeding. "The sight was one never to be forgotten. For several rods below the bridge, the salmon formed one black writhing mass of life. Piled together in solid columns they charged against the bridge and dam, which trembled and shook beneath their blows. Finding the fence impassable, despite their super-piscine efforts, many tried to jump the bridge, which some succeeded in doing, sometimes striking the men on the bridge and actually jumping between their feet. For an hour-and-a-half, the fierce assault continued, when at length exhausted and discouraged by repeated failure, the wearied fish pilgrims fell back into a deep hole just below the rapids." Such is the state of things in the rivers on the Pacific slope to-day, and such may it have been also in our own country,

When wild in woods the noble savage ran,

ere yet the boasted "resources of civilisation" had been pitted against the powers of Nature.

The opinion seems rather to be gaining ground that as it is to artificial causes that

the deterioration of our salmon fisheries is due, so it is to artificial modes of culture that we should have recourse for the purpose of reviving them. The discovery of the art of fecundating the ova of fish must apparently be accredited to Stephen Jacobi of Hohenhausen, Westphalia, who, as early as 1748, carried on experiments in breeding salmon, and in 1771, received a life pension from our George the Third. The French, indeed, claim the discovery for a monk named Pinchon, in the fifteenth century, and assert that the result of his investigations remained practically unknown until 1840, when two fishermen of the Vosges succeeded, after patient and protracted watching, in anew wresting from Nature her secrets.

Fish culture was inaugurated in Great Britain, in 1837, by Mr. John Shaw, gamekeeper to the Duke of Buccleugh, and an extensive salmon-rearing establishment was erected at Stormontfield, on the Tay, in 1853; while in Galway, the Messrs. Ashworth have, by similar means, stocked large lakes and rivers which the fish had been previously prevented from reaching in their ascent from the sea. At Haningue, in Alsace Lorraine, a very extensive establishment has also existed for many years, from which hundreds of thousands of fish were annually distributed to stock the French rivers and lakes, a work still continued by the German government, into whose possession the establishment has fallen.

Briefly described, the artificial rearing of salmon consists in the following operations: The ova being collected either from the natural spawning beds, or preferably, by carefully manipulating the fish—"stripping," as it is technically called—a box nearly filled with fine gravel (boiled in order to destroy any creatures which might come to life and prey upon the ova), serves as an artificial nest; and running water at a temperature of about 45° Fahrenheit, constantly trickling from a cistern placed above the box, serves as an artificial mother. A series of these boxes are placed like steps, one below the other; the tiny stream of water falling gently from one to another, and the boxes should be constantly examined in order that the dead eggs, which turn white, may be removed before they contaminate their neighbours. In about thirty-five days, two black specks appear in the ova which develop into eyes, and in this stage the eggs can be removed, being packed in wet moss with ice as

required. This system is so far an improvement upon Nature, that under it more than ninety per cent. of ova reach the fry stage; but it is obvious, that unless the fry can be reared, hatching by the million is but lost labour. In the countries on the other side of the Atlantic, a great deal has been done towards making a practical use of this branch of pisciculture, and it is reported that the placing of some millions of young fry in the waters of the Sacramento has been followed by such a large increase in the take of adult fish that, "with the aid of artificial breeding, sea-lions, canneries, and fishermen combined are compelled to own themselves beaten."

But the greatest triumph of pisciculture is the transfer of "salmo salar," through the heat of the tropics, from the North to the South hemisphere and its acclimatisation there, a feat which could never have been accomplished but for the discovery that the eggs of the fish could be taken and fertilised by artificial manipulation, and that their development could be sufficiently retarded by means of ice to enable them to be carried in safety half round the world. The first successful attempt to introduce the salmon into Australia was made in the year 1864, when one hundred thousand ova were shipped, packed in moss and charcoal in wooden boxes placed below the ice in the ice-house. The vessel sailed January the twenty-first, 1864, and the voyage occupied seventy-seven days. Towards the close of the year 1865, the five hundred fish survivors of this venture were liberated and allowed to find their way into the river Plenty, being the first salmon ever introduced into Australian waters. It seems probable, however, that the Californian species are capable of withstanding a much higher temperature than the English salmon, and would therefore be more likely to suit the Australian climate, and it has even been suggested that the Californian salmon might be advantageously introduced into the rivers debouching into the Mediterranean.

The saying that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it is apt to be somewhat misleading, otherwise, how came it to pass that oysters have risen to so high a price, that Dublin Bay haddock are now rarely to be met with, and that soles have become one of the dearest instead of the cheapest of fish? Should other rivers, now fairly productive,

go the way of the Clyde and Mersey, and by reason of pollution, land drainage, and other causes, refuse any longer to bring forth for us "the red verison of the waters," how striking an illustration of man's destructive power and of Nature's reproductive force would be presented, should the day ever arrive when salmon, shipped beneath the Southern Cross, takes its place beside the succulent saddle of the Antipodes, and smokes upon the Englishman's dinner-table!

THE WORTH OF A PRESENTIMENT.

A COMPLETE STORY.

SOME one was playing soft grave music in the silence of the great vaulted chamber—a chamber with deep wide windows, looking on to the Rospiglioni Gardens of Rome.

A beautiful chamber, the studio of a woman artist, whose name was well-known to the world of art. It was lighted by shaded lamps, and out of shadowy corners gleamed rich artistic draperies, and stands of palms and flowers, and odd quaint cabinets laden with china, and bronze, and bric-a-brac.

A group of people were seated near the open fireplace; there was a fragrance of tea and delicate comestibles, and now and then the chink of cups and spoons, and soft hum of voices. It was the day on which Madame Moncreiffe received; the one day in the week on which her friends and admirers were privileged to intrude on her solitude, for, as a rule, she lived a very solitary life, and never had been known to accept any of the invitations showered upon her by the English and foreign society who wintered at Rome.

She sat now on a low chair by the fire. A woman no longer young, and with a face whose pale and chiselled beauty was marred by an expression of intense sadness—the face of a woman for whom life had held tragedy of no common kind. Her eyes were gazing dreamily into the clear, bright flames; her hand, hanging loosely by her side, was clasped in that of a young and very lovely girl, who was kneeling on the soft rug at her feet.

Music has many advantages. In society it readily lends itself to use as well as entertainment—it is an incentive to confidence and conversation. The voices rose and fell in rhythmical cadence, sub-

dued in deference to an occasional chord; but not in any way oppressed by the necessity of listening. The woman in the chair was silent; but her companion, as if emboldened by the murmurs around, nestled closer and whispered an entreaty.

"I have come to-day," she said, "just to plead my cause once more. Do say you will come. It will be the one thing necessary to complete my happiness. Surely you won't refuse that."

The woman started, as if aroused from some deep train of thought. Her eyes turned to the young, eager face, and something tender and compassionate came into their gaze.

"Dear Estelle," she said, "I love you too well to refuse any request that might tend to your happiness. I would do more for you than for any one I know here in Rome, but I cannot be present at your bridal to-morrow. Do not ask it, for I hate to refuse you anything."

"But I do ask it, dear Madame Moncreiffe," pleaded the spoilt beauty, the belle and heiress of the winter city. "You know I always get what I want, and I want you—to-morrow."

"My dear," said the artist, sadly, "if I could break my rule for any one, I would do it for you. But I cannot. Nothing could induce me to attend a marriage ceremony—even yours."

"You always say that, I know. But why? Is there anything you fear? Or is it that such a ceremony recalls—"

"Yes," the woman interrupted. "It recalls—it awakens—it is full of pain and horror to me. Estelle, I should be only a shadow to the sunshine of your bridal. Do not press the matter farther."

The girl was silent. She knelt there in the firelight—a picture of bright and beautiful youth, to whom the future only showed itself in the golden light of hope. Softly the music rose and fell. It had changed now to a plaintive minor melody. The woman shivered as the mournful notes echoed through the vast chamber.

"It was just such a scene as this," she said, suddenly—"the eve of another wedding day; and the music— Oh, Heavens! why does he play that, why does he play that?"

"Shall I stop him?" cried the girl, terrified by the agony of the face bent suddenly low in the light of the leaping flames.

She half rose to her feet, but a gesture from that slender, trembling hand stayed

her impulse, and she resumed her former attitude.

"Did I frighten you, Estelle? I am weaker than I thought. No, don't move, child; stay there, and while the music lasts I will try to speak, to tell you the reason of a refusal that seems so ungracious a thing. It is no caprice, Estelle, for I love you as if you were my own child, and I have prayed for your happiness ever since I knew that Prince Giovoli had won your heart. You wish to know why I cannot be a guest at your wedding? Shall I tell you my story, Estelle, or will it frighten you? We live in an age of realism—of incredulity. No one believes now in dreams, or signs, or presentiments, and yet I know the truth of each and all of these so well, that I am an old woman before my time, and I shall carry a broken heart with me to my grave for sake of one."

The girl trembled and drew closer. "I always knew," she said, "that you had suffered; that some great trouble——"

"You shall hear it if you will," said the woman in a strange, dull voice. She bent her head. The girl's blue eyes noted wonderingly the mingled grey and gold of the soft thick hair, the haggard lines about the beautiful pale lips.

"It is years ago," she said, quietly, "and such a girl as you are now, welcomed, even as you welcome, the eve of her bridal day. Not a cloud, not a shadow, not a foreboding! With the memory of her lover's kiss, she fell asleep that night; but in that sleep there shaped itself a dream—a dream strange—terrible—ominous. She saw herself standing in an old churchyard—a dreary, half-ruined place, melancholy with cypress and yew, and old forgotten graves, moss-grown and neglected. As she stood, something impelled her to look more closely at the headstone of one by which she stood. On it a name was graven and a date. The name was her lover's name; the date—not three weeks after her destined wedding-day. Cold and trembling she awoke, and tried to banish the memory of that dreadful place. In vain. It haunted her throughout that happy marriage-day. It turned her cold and faint, even amidst her bridegroom's passionate murmurs. He, keen-sighted, with a husband's new-born rights, demanded to know the cause of her pallor and her terrified looks. In despair, she told him, only naming herself as the subject of this hateful presentiment. He

laughed at her fears, and ere a week had passed she had almost forgotten them amidst the joys and the tenderness showered upon her life. They wandered from place to place in sunny Italy; in the loveliest nooks, and in the loveliest season of the year. They took no count of time. Strong in health, rich in love, and beauty, and worldly goods, life was like a happy dream that lulled them to deepest rest. One day they had halted at a little out-of-the-way village among the mountains. It was close on sunset, and they wandered off, as their habit often was, to explore the neighbourhood, or sketch some of its picturesque nooks. Suddenly the girl's heart seemed to stand still—a cold and deadly horror chained her senses. Without heed—without even remarking where their footsteps tended, they stood in an old half-ruined graveyard—the scene of her dream. Shuddering and pale she strove to draw her husband away. Her pallor and alarm roused his suspicions. He glanced around and he, too, remembered the dream. There was no mistaking the spot. Her description had been accurate in every detail. However, he made light of her fears; he strove to reassure her. They left the spot and returned to the inn. Only then did he remember the date of the day. It was exactly three weeks since their marriage."

The voice of the speaker faltered. The girl, pale and awe-struck, looked up at the sad eyes and trembling lips. Soft and weird the music rose and fell across the ripple of light words, the chime of distant laughter.

"Oh," cried the girl, suddenly. "It is of yourself you speak. This—this is your reason."

"Yes," said the woman, slowly. "This is my reason. That night, my husband was attacked by cholera. Two hours afterwards—he died."

There were tears in the young, bright eyes—eyes to which sorrow was as yet unknown.

"My poor friend," she cried, softly. "Oh, my poor friend. It is terrible."

"Wait," said the woman, harshly. "You have not heard all. Learn how more than cruel fate can be to those who defy it. You know how great the dread is of that terrible scourge. How quickly the pageant of death is played out to its final issue. Before I had even realised my loss, before my stricken heart had recovered from its first stroke of agony, I heard that my

darling had been taken from me—buried—buried, Estelle, in that very churchyard my dream had shown to me. Then a great stupor and horror fell over me. I was like one dazed and stunned. I felt nothing—realised nothing but my own great loss. I prayed only that death might seize me, and bring me to his side in spirit, since life had so cruelly divorced us. It was my first grief. No doubt I was impious—mad. They said I was—the priest, whose empty words and hollow services brought no peace to my wrecked soul, the soft-voiced sisterhood who came as nurses and friends to my side in those dark hours. Mad! Well, if so, I had to suffer yet more terribly for my rebellion. My story is not yet ended, Estelle. It may have been many days or few, I do not know. I had no count of time, when once again the force and reality of a dream held my senses in thrall. I saw my darling imprisoned as it were by some obstacle, calling me, entreating me, beseeching for some aid that I could give, and dared not. Trembling and sick I awoke. Then—oh! how can I speak of it; how describe that hateful unresting certainty which gradually took possession of me; which night and day haunted me with a persistence that would not be gainsaid. Weak woman as I was—a stranger in a strange place—I yet, by power of woman's wits and woman's persistence, gained my end. I had the grave in that dismal churchyard opened. I stood, a woman alone and helpless, amidst a shuddering, superstitious crowd, while the cruel earth gave back its dead. Its dead, said I? Ah, dear Heaven! it was no dead they had imprisoned there; no dead whose helplessness the ghastly tomb had mocked. They had buried him alive, Estelle—alive! He had turned in that fearful coffin; his eyes were gazing at me, wide open, reproachful, despairing——”

The girl shuddered. A low cry broke from her pale lips.

“Don't tell me any more,” she whispered. “Oh, it is horrible—horrible.”

“I have had to live out my life remembering it,” came the despairing answer; “live to think he had called, prayed, entreated for me in that awful place. I who loved him so, and only knew—too late—I might have saved him!”

Softly, hurriedly, the closing harmonies of the tragic music closed in that tragic tale.

Voices and laughter rang out once more from scattered groups. One or two approached the figures by the fire. A man, young, tall, of courtly bearing and handsome face, bent down to the kneeling girl.

“Have you persuaded Madame, Estelle mia?” he asked gently.

She rose. There was a shadow on the brightness and beauty of her face.

“No,” she said, “her reasons are too good. Do not trouble her, Paolo. I am content.”

The woman looked up at the two young happy faces.

“Some day,” she said sadly, “some day, Prince, you will know my presence is a thing of ill omen. I can be no one's wedding guest since I have learnt—the worth of a presentiment.”

HEATHER.

How calm it is, and how unchanged!
The moor our footsteps freely ranged
In childhood long ago;
The bracken glows from green to red,
And like a royal carpet spread
The heather is a-blow.

The purple heather—every bell
Is eloquent to me—how well
She loved the wild sweet sprays!
How oft we plucked it side by side
On mountain top and moorland wide,
On calm September days!

The hardy blossom seemed like her,
Courageous, fearless, all a-stir
With nature's honest life;
She chose it for her maiden flower,
It decked her bosom in the hour
Our girl became a wife.

She held a cluster in her hand
When parting from her native land,
From kindred close and dear;
And to her unknown, foreign home,
Across the wild Pacific foam,
We sent it year by year.

A few short seasons, only four,
And lo! the heather blooms once more,
But not, dear soul, for her;
Ah, love! in God's far land what bloom,
What waves of deathless sweet perfume
About thy footsteps stir?

What hast thou found across that sea,
Whose flood we might not breast with thee?
What gift to make amends
For love of husband and of child,
That aches for thee with anguish wild,
For kindred, home, and friends?

I know, my sister, I who wait,
So fain to gain the golden gate,
I know what thou hast found—
Deep peace that like a river flows,
Glad end of toil, full, fair repose,
And knowledge without bound.

Ah ! not for thee upon the spray
Of purple heath I drop to-day
These wild and wasted tears ;
But for the lonely path that I
Must travel onward till I die,
Be short or long the years.

Yet, lo ! a tide of comfort creeps
About my heart—God's promise keeps
Our day of meeting sure.
Dear saint ! I kiss thy heather sprays,
I know to everlasting days
God's yea and nay endure !

A CHAT ABOUT OXFORD.

It is sad to have one's old beliefs uprooted. With me it used to be an article of faith that King Alfred founded my old University. We did not insist on his having founded University College—we, who did not belong to that particular college. We smiled at the confiding simplicity which led that College to bring in its foundation by that good and wise King as evidence in a lawsuit. But that Alfred did found something at Oxford, if only a School of Music (the term in mediæval days meant much more than it does now), we believed as firmly as we did that John Scotus Erigena, i.e., "the Irish-born Scot," who lies behind the high altar of the Minorites' church at Cologne, taught logic in Merton College, his classroom still forming part of the old library.

Well, Alfred has to be given up. "John, the old Saxon," his music professor, taught, it appears, not at Oxford but at Glastonbury. Asser, the King's contemporary biographer, though he says plenty about Alfred's zeal for education, never mentions Oxford. The oft-quoted passage in his work is a sixteenth-century forgery, put in (like the lines in Homer about Athens) when the place it speaks of had grown to fame. In fact the Alfred story is as much a myth as what our septuagenarian scout, "old Harry," used to tell about the Giant Grim (the same who, in several parts of England, made Grimes's, or Graham's dykes), and how the hill of "Shotover" was so named from his arrow which, fired from Marston, went all the way across to Wheatley.

I am sorry ; but I am glad the sceptics admit that Oxford, a little later, became a famous place. Holding the ford between the north-west and south, it would naturally rise into importance in days when Winchester was one of our great capitals. It had several great monasteries, of one of which—Saint Fritheswide's—the story is told in the modern-antique glass of Christ

Church Cathedral. It had a castle on a huge artificial mound, with a collegiate church within its wall. And, as monasteries and collegiate churches always meant schools, so no doubt the "claustral" schools of the Oxford monasteries early drew a number of poor scholars.

Of the first beginnings of the lay schools we have no certain information ; but, by the year 1109, they had outnumbered the others, filling the street now known as the Turl, but in old time as School Street, which runs up north from the west end of Saint Mary's Church, and in which stand Lincoln, Exeter, and Jesus Colleges. This twelfth century was marked by a grand intellectual movement. The Crusades gave Western Europe something besides the gold bezants with which a good many Crusaders were eager to replenish their purses. Aristotle, hitherto almost unknown except at Cordova in his Arabic dress, got a strange mastery over men's minds. Abelard, Peter Lombard, and others, carried far beyond their former limits the subtleties of the "schoolmen." Then Roman or Civil Law began to be studied ; Irnerius lectured on it at Bologna ; and Oxford was already, in 1149, an educational centre of sufficient importance for Vacarius, a Professor of Bologna, to lecture there, under Archbishop Theobald's patronage. This, in Stephen's reign, is the first solid fact about Oxford ; but it amply proves that Oxford was then a "Studium generale"—open, that is, to all comers. The word "University" then, and long after, meant a Guild or Corporation. Henry the First (Beauclerc), who is said "to have pleased himself much with the conversation of clerks," may, or may not have been educated at Oxford. At any rate, he lived much there, and built on the north of the city the palace of Beaumont, of which Beaumont Street still preserves the memory. Stephen held councils at Oxford ; Empress Maud, every one remembers, was besieged in Oxford Castle. Henry the Second lived much in Beaumont (he had private reasons for liking the neighbourhood) ; she whom the monkish verse calls, "Rosa mundi non rosa munda," was buried hard by, at Godstowe ; and in Beaumont his son Richard was born.

Towards the end of the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis—Gerald Du Barri, the Norman-Welshman—whom Henry had sent to Ireland to find out what the people were like, read publicly in Oxford, "because there the most learned and famous

of the English clergy were to be found," the book which he wrote on his return. Gerald tells us "he did not wish to hide his candle under a bushel," so he chose the place which already had become a University in all but the name, and, from the neighbourhood of the Court, the more fashionable of the two.

In 1229, Oxford made a great start. Paris, which had just been formally incorporated as a University, and which was the "alma mater" of Oxford—Oxford men going over to finish their education, as Glasgow men now go to Balliol and Aberdeen men to St. John's, Cambridge—was in that year the scene of a great "town and gown row." A student had been killed in a brawl; and, as no redress could be got from the city magistrates, his fellow students broke up and migrated; and Henry the Third seized the opportunity to attract a good many of them to Oxford.

Not long before a similar "row" had nearly ruined Oxford. In 1209, a student accidentally killed a girl, whereupon the mayor and burgesses rang the bell at Carfax, the town cross, and gathering a mob broke into the students' quarters, seized three innocent lads and hanged them straight away. King John, at whose door is laid every mischief that happened at that time, is said to have abetted them in their lawlessness. Anyhow the Pope took the other side, and laid the city under an interdict, forbidding any lectures to go on. The students migrated "en masse" to Cambridge, Reading, and wherever shelter could be obtained in a big monastery. But before long they came back; for the town gave in, paying the Legate's penalties; one of which was to reduce by half the rent of the scholars' halls.

The scholars then lived in "halls," owned by townsmen, and disputes about the accommodation—it was very wretched—the firing, and the price charged, were constant. These halls had to be registered, and the payment was regulated by the University; but still the "poor scholars"—answering to the "unattached" of the present day, only relatively far more numerous, the "College men" of to-day being represented by those who found room in the monastic schools—were much oppressed by their landlords. They were poor; one of the fines laid on the town in 1209, was to feast a hundred of them every St. Nicholas Day, and also to pay fifty-two shillings

yearly to the University chest for their support.

There is a tale in Chaucer, not very edifying, which shows the sort of life they led. A good many, probably, did harvest work during "the Long," as some students at the Scotch Universities, much to their credit, do nowadays; some begged from village to village, like Professor Vambéry in his young days, or like the Irish "poor scholars," of whom Carleton and others give such touching pictures. Not for them were needed those licensed "fetchers," who, a few generations later, used to be sent to the Abbey schools to bring up their "men," twelve being then the usual age for matriculation.

Sleeping two or three in a little room; having no books of their own, and access to very few; dependent on what they could note or write down from the lips of a teacher, whose "class" included pupils of all ages and attainments, and whose lecture-room was cold, ill-lighted, and darkless, these "chamberdekyns" were nevertheless so important a part of the University that special helps were provided for them, not only by the burgesses, but by Eynsham and other Abbeys. For their sake, mainly, was formed the University chest, the money in which was lent on security of books, clothes, or the bond of responsible friends to help men through their terms, the loan being repaid with what they earned during the vacations.

Before long many of the lodging-houses began to get into clerical hands; and then endowments were bequeathed to them, and they ceased to be private property. Such halls were often the nucleus of colleges, many of which, both at Oxford and Cambridge, are made up of several halls.

College, of course, is a wide term, not necessarily connected with teaching. We have "The College of Surgeons;" the City Corporations are from one point of view colleges. The word means a body of men living under laws of their own. Every monastery was a "College of regulars," i.e., men who had a regula or rule stricter than that of ordinary priests; and beside the monasteries there were "Colleges of seculars," i.e., priests who took their place in secular life. Sometimes these were canons (in a cathedral town); sometimes a few priests formed what nowadays is called a "clergy house;" and in quite small villages you find now and then a "collegiate church," with a long chancel, and, perhaps, the stalls remaining in which the "college"

used to sit. A typical example is Waltham, which, founded by Harold the Second—no friend to monks—was a clergy house for “seculars.”

Well, each of these colleges, big or small, had its school (just as each monastery had one), if only for teaching plain-song. And one of these was founded in 1264, at Merton, in Surrey, by Walter of that ilk, first Chancellor and then Bishop of Rochester. Walter was, like Grosteste, Bishop of Lincoln, a great upholder of the Anglican Church against Papal encroachments. He therefore wished to form a seminary of “secular” priests, so highly trained as to be able to hold their own against the “regulars”; for of course it was the want of education, and generally low standard of the parish priests, that gave so much influence to monks and friars. So, besides his college at Merton, he undertook to keep twenty students in a “hall” at Oxford, or elsewhere if a more flourishing “studium generale” should elsewhere grow up. These twenty would bring the newest ideas on the Trivium, and Quadrivium, and “Science” in general, into the Surrey home. But the thing did not work well; and after ten years the founder transferred the whole—warden, bailiffs, etc., to Oxford; and “Merton College” started into life with much the same statutes (so skilfully were they planned) as those in use at the present time. Merton scholars were, by statute, forbidden to take vows, i.e. to become “regulars” (subject to a rule); unlike Dominicans and Franciscans, who ostentatiously neglected human learning, they were bound to master the liberal arts and philosophy before taking up theology; and they had chaplains to do for them the routine of the endless services, while they were at their studies. Such was the earliest Oxford College, a very Elysium, humble as it was, compared with the rough life, full of mingled hardship and riot, and quarrels between northern and southern “Nations,” and between gown and town, which was the lot of the “chamberdekyn.”

In college they were safe from all this hubbub and disorder; their statutes ensured regular discipline; their endowments gave them comfort and decency; the example of the elder Fellows, who were all bound to reside and to be active in teaching, must have told on the juniors. Instead of swaggering about in gay raiment, with sword by side or bow and arrows in hand, the Merton undergraduates walked “in sad-coloured dress,” and always under

the wing of one of their own Masters of Arts.

The college hall was a great improvement on the tavern where the “chamberdekyn” had to feed; it was not a refectory only, but an intellectual arena, with disputations of its own, just like those in the University “schools,” which at that time were carried on in St. Mary’s Church.

University College, founded by William of Durham, and Balliol followed soon after Merton. Queen’s College too, almost as old, is connected with Scotland. Most of its earlier endowments were for North-country men, “their need being greatest, because of the grievous way in which their country had been so often harried by the Scots.”

Merton’s statutes formed the model for those of all other colleges, both in his own University and at Cambridge; and, though the Sorbonne, founded, as a theological college, as early as 1250, gave him many hints, there was this great difference, which told on the future of the respective Universities, that the Sorbonne was confined to the one branch, theology, and other Paris colleges were for special “faculties,” while the English colleges were open to students in all “faculties.”

And so Oxford grew, though not to the portentous size which Anthony à Wood, quoting Richard of Armagh’s absurd exaggeration of thirty thousand scholars, attributes to it. The real number was probably a tenth of this; and these were too many for the accommodation. Overcrowding constantly brought pestilence, and drove the members of the University to seek refuge in the surrounding villages.

Oxford was thronged, because in those days men went up to the University not to get through the time between school and active life, but to work. It was a time of feverish speculation. Men mistook the mysterious phraseology of the schoolmen for solid knowledge, and thought it would lead them to some primary law governing the whole realm of mind and matter. They dreamed that in this jargon could be found the key to whatever could be known—the “Omne scibile,” that they thought to grasp in their treatises; and, just as mediæval chemists expected the philosopher’s stone to be an arch-solvent, reducing every substance to obedience, so mediæval reasoners looked on their logic as the arch-science which, when rightly understood, would make them masters of every other. And so in the chilly squalor

of bare, unwarmed chambers, by the light of narrow, unglazed casements, or the gleam of flickering lamps, they pored over dusky MSS. hardly decipherable by modern eyes, and, while dependent on charity for their daily bread, thought they could read the laws of Nature and the counsels of Providence.

Oxford, too, then, as in our day, was the seed-ground and nursery of newideas. There arose Lollardism. Wiclif was—like other North-country men—an undergraduate of Queen's; he became a Fellow of Merton; and afterwards of Balliol. The Archbishop, Courtenay, searched all colleges and halls for Lollards, who were "ipso facto" excommunicated and incapable of taking a degree. Yet in Merton alone, several eminent Fellows were Wicliffites; and Lollardism added another to the many causes of quarrel between North and South.*

This old-standing feud had, in 1334, led to the migration of a part of the Northerners to Stamford, in Lincolnshire, where the chief street still looks a good deal like the Oxford "High."

Northampton was another place where a swarm from the hive tried to establish itself; and so dangerous did the competition appear, that every Master of Arts had to swear that he would recognise no University save the two, Oxford and Cambridge, and would not lecture at any other place. A pact, whereby it was agreed that one of the two Proctors should always be of the Northern, the other of the Southern nation, helped to calm the troubles between North and South; but the gown and town rows increased in fury, till on Saint Scholastica's Day, 1354, two students drinking at the Swyndlestock (i.e. Mermaid) tavern, assaulted the landlord and were turned out. They collected some friends; the landlord did the same. The Mayor rang the bell of Saint Martin Carfax; the Chancellor that of Saint Mary's; and there was a general fight. Next morning the citizens, with bows and arrows, drove the gownsmen out of the whole north of the city, and sent to call in succours from the villages.

This the gownsmen felt must be resisted at all hazards; so, with a desperate effort, they seized the northern and eastern

gates. But the villagers, to the number of two thousand, made a circuit, and getting in at the west, swept the streets with cries of, "Slay, slay! Havock and havock!" "Gown" was hopelessly beaten; and next day the enemy glutted their vengeance, plundering hall after hall, and killing or wounding any scholar whom they could catch. Nay, the villagers are said to have scalped several chaplains in mockery of the priestly tonsure. The Bishop of Lincoln, in whose vast diocese Oxford then was, laid the town under an interdict; and for three years the burgesses remained excommunicated, till at last they were allowed to do penance, the agreement being that on every Saint Scholastica's day, sixty citizens were to offer on Saint Mary's altar a penny apiece, to be divided among poor scholars. A more important result of this outbreak was that the King gave to the Chancellor sole control over the "assize" of bread, beer, etc., and the assessment of rates, etc., which accounts for the power which the University still exercises over the City market. It is notable, as showing how much more ruinous civil is than foreign war, that, whereas during the hundred years' war, Oxford thrived immensely—partly, no doubt, owing to the decay of Paris University—during the Wars of the Roses it became almost empty. In 1450 only twenty of its two hundred halls continued to be used for scholars. Wicliffism, too, had given the place a bad name, just as Puseyism did in our own day. Least affected by the troubles of the time were the "Claustal" Schools, those, i.e., which the Abbots of Oseney, Dorchester (once a Bishop's see, the grand church of which has a stone Jesse window at the east end), Littlemore, Eynsham, etc., maintained in Oxford, and those of the mendicant orders. These were always striving to make themselves independent of the University—to get degrees without going through the "academical exercises," which answered to our examinations. They also tried so unscrupulously to attract lads from the secular schools, that a statute was passed, closing any college of friars, a member of which had "brought over" a lad under eighteen years of age.

The importance of these "regular" and also of the secular colleges kept the University in the background in several respects; some of them, for instance, probably had better libraries than that University library which, begun by Duke

* Lincoln College was founded by Bishop Fleming, in 1427, as a stronghold against Wicliffism. The Bishop had been a Wicliffite; and afterwards, with a turncoat's bitterness, ordered that, "any Fellow of his College who might be tainted with these heresies, should be cast out of them like a diseased sheep."

Humphrey's gift of one hundred and twenty-nine volumes in 1439, contained only five hundred volumes when it was dispersed at the Reformation. Let us hope that those five hundred fared better than the college books which Leighton, one of the visitors, joyfully tells us, "were torn and tumbled out into the quadrangles and sold for old parchment for fleshing (fleching, i.e., feathering) arrows; save that some Flemings bought many by weight and carried them abroad."

It is a wide leap from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War. We pass over the Renaissance, when classical Latin took the place of the scholastic jargon, and Greek—"that new language invented by the heretics," as an ignorant priest called it—began to be studied.

Erasmus visited Oxford; Sir T. More was an Oxford man; so were Colet, and Grocyu, and Linacre, who had all studied in Italy.

Fox, Bishop of Winchester, in founding his college of Corpus Christi (1516), endowed the first Greek lectureship. Despite these famous names, scholasticism did not yield without a struggle. The opponents of the new learning called themselves Trojans, and they and the Greeks fought as furiously with words as their namesakes in "Homer" did with swords and spears.

Then come Henry the Eighth and the foundation of Wolsey's "Cardinal College" (now Christ Church), which absorbed the revenues of twenty-two suppressed priories and convents. Henry robbed Cardinal College of its name and of much of its revenue, stunting too the grand school at Ipswich, which Wolsey had meant to be its feeder, as Winchester is of New College, and Eton of King's.

The King had a quarrel with Oxford, for Convocation refused to sanction his divorce, the vote for which was only carried by excluding the junior Masters of Arts. He was pacified, however, by a vote in favour of separating from Rome; and the greedy courtiers, who hoped that Henry would deal with the Colleges as he had done with the monasteries, i.e., parcel out their lands among his flatterers, were disappointed.

Nevertheless, Henry did take away a good deal. Probably he had a sincere love of learning, but he loved good land better; and at both Universities, several Colleges (notably Trinity, Cambridge) escaped by the skin of their teeth. Like his son, too, in regard to grammar schools, he got credit as a founder when

he was only confirming an old foundation. Many an "Edward the Sixth's school" had existed for centuries in connection with an Abbey. When the Abbey was suppressed the King received fulsome praise as a patron of learning, for not suppressing this school as well.* The miserable endowments of a great many of his grammar schools show how small a portion of the Abbey property was preserved for education. If here and there they are large, it is in places like Birmingham, where the land has vastly increased in value. The marshy bit of ground, which now supports all the Birmingham Schools, was at the time reckoned of less value than the twenty pounds which is the endowment of the neighbouring King's Norton Grammar School.

Oxford, however, was sadly depopulated by the suppression of the monasteries, which had maintained so many of the poor students. Numbers of these took to the roads, and became the "valiant beggars," whom Henry hanged without mercy for the third offence. Under Edward things got worse; theological disputes took the place of classical learning; the Visitors played havoc with what was left of the libraries, "burning cartloads of precious MSS." Magdalen Grammar School was only saved by a strong protest from the citizens.

Some modern reforms were anticipated; fellowships, for instance, were to be held only for a few years, and on condition of residence; and at All Souls' and Magdalen one fellowship was to be reserved for Irishmen. All this was done away with by Laud; and, till the other day, fellowships continued to be—in defiance of the founders' wishes—a life provision, for which the recipients seldom dreamt of making a return by lecturing or teaching in their College.

In the following reigns the downward movement went on.

The frequent changes may be measured by what happened to Peter Martyn's wife. She was buried in Christ Church Cathedral, near Saint Fritheswide, its patron saint. Cardinal Pole ordered the Dean to cast the body into unconsecrated ground; but before it had rotted on the dunghheap to which that obsequious dignitary had con-

* This was notably the case in regard to the London Bluecoat School. The old Saint Bartholomew School and Hospital had perished with the Abbey, when Bishop Ridley and Dobbs the Mayor moved Edward to set apart for them a fragment of the endowment.

signed it, Mary died, and Elizabeth's Visitors dug up Saint Fritheswide, and threw her out into a ditch. The end was that both the saint and the foreign Reformer's wife were at last, in 1561, buried together. No wonder that "two religions being now as 'twere on foot, divers of the chiefest of the University retired and absented themselves till they saw how affairs would proceed." The lowest ebb was reached when in 1564, that model "Tudor statesman," Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was made Chancellor. During his twenty-four years of office he was constantly recommending foreigners—bringing them up himself and urging their being put into good barths—indeed his wholesale jobbery and favouritism account for Oxford at that time falling far lower than Cambridge, which had in Burleigh a less unscrupulous Chancellor. To keep out "Papists" and favour his Puritans, Dudley narrowed the University into a Church of England seminary, by insisting on the signing of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Royal Supremacy before matriculation. The one good thing he did was to incorporate Oxford by Act of Parliament, which invested "Chancellors, Masters, and Scholars, with the right of perpetual succession." Hitherto a new charter had to be sought from each succeeding King; so that there was no real security, and a big fee was periodically exacted by the Crown lawyers.

The Colleges imitated Dudley; they began selling their fellowships, and giving long leases at very low rents in return for heavy fines. To meet this, Burleigh, or Sir T. Smith, passed an Act whereby two-thirds of the lease-rents were to be paid in corn, the price of which was fixed very low. This made dabbling in leases unprofitable, and also largely increased the value of fellowships and other college endowments, until the present price of land again reduced them to almost nothing.

At the very end of her reign Elizabeth, who, during her two visits, "bore with truly Royal patience, the orations, disputations, and Latin plays," began to encourage promising scholars; and Royal patronage woke up answering effort in the University itself. Men like Sir H. Savile and Sir T. Bodley felt moved to do something, now they saw "Gloriana" was taking education in hand.

There is no space to speak of James, the British Solomon, under whom Oxford accepted to the full the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, and from whose visit Antony

à Wood dates the drinking habits which too long disgraced the University. Under Charles, Laud destroyed all trace of the mendicant democratic constitution, and gave the colleges a complete monopoly. Halls and hostels disappeared, and colleges became overcrowded, poorer scholars rarely getting a bed to themselves. Laud tried to put down drinking, and largely enriched the University or Bodleian library—his last gift of books being just before his trial. He beautified many buildings (this was charged against him with much effect by those determined on his murder); and during his Chancellorship there was quite a galaxy of learning—Prideaux, Sheldon, Juxon, Hammond, and Selden among others.

When the Civil War began, the Town went against the University; refusing to help Sir John Byron who, with a few troopers, held the place for the King. Colonel Goodwin and Lord Say marched in, and Sir John marched out. The obnoxious statue over Saint Mary's porch was broken down; "Popish" books were burned; the plate of two Colleges was seized "because it had been hidden away," the rest being spared on condition that it should be forthcoming when Parliament called for it.

A month later Edgehill was fought. We call it a drawn battle; at Oxford, the Town thought differently; the Mayor and burgesses came out to welcome the King; he and his troops marched in. Every colleger had to work at fertifying, finding his own tools, or to pay twelve pence in default. A powder-mill was set up, and a mint, in which the college-plate was coined into Charles's siege pieces. The "Schools" were made a granary; the less warlike students "went down;" the place became a camp, and (when the Queen and her following established themselves at Merton) a Court as well. A strange time, when grave dons and gay young students would be walking about with Court ladies, and affecting the airs of Cavaliers!

But Oxford paid dearly for this stirring interlude amid academic dulness. There was a gleam of success at Cropredy Bridge, where the scholar-soldiers distinguished themselves; but Marston Moor followed, and Naseby; and in May, 1646, Charles left Oxford in disguise, and Fairfax summoned the city to surrender, "very much desiring the preservation of a place so famous for learning." The Oxonians "submitted to the fate of the Kingdom, rather than any way

distrusting their own strength." Indeed, with their fortifications and the flood-meadows which, had they waited for the rain which fell in streams a few days after, would have made the place impregnable, six months' provisions, and seventy barrels of powder, they might have held out; but Charles's behaviour had taken the heart out of his adherents. So three thousand Royalists, with drums beating and colours flying, marched out in the drenching rain over Magdalen Bridge, and as many more went north and west, while two thousand masters, scholars, etc., permitted by the articles to choose their own time, stayed behind.

"Order reigned;" but the colleges were empty and desolate, none being there but the heads and their families; and to keep them from falling to ruin, the rooms were let out to townfolk. Then began the expelling, to which there was so much passive resistance, that the penalty of death was proclaimed against any who, after expulsion, should persist in remaining. Oxford, however, remained Oxford still; the old buffoonery of the "Terræ filius," when the Act (answering to Commemoration) was celebrated in Saint Mary's Church, still went on; and when Charles the Second came he found the University as "devoted" as ever, in proof of which, when in 1665 the Plague drove him from London, he was lodged, as his father had been, at Christchurch, the Queen occupying her mother-in-law's rooms at Merton, which College also had the doubtful honour of lodging both Barbara Villiers—whose son was born there—and the Duchess of Richmond.

James the Second was before his time—in this as in other things; he wanted to restore the old universality to the University, which Charles the Second's Acts had made uninhabitable by any save Anglicans. Unfortunately for himself, he began by throwing it open to Romanists, and this neither Oxford nor the nation would stand. After he was gone, however, Oxford became the focus of dilettante Jacobitism, chiefly shown in drinking the Pretender's health, though in 1715 it seemed serious enough to demand the presence of Colonel Handyside's Foot and Pepper's Dragoons. Its numbers dwindled; its studies became more and more contemptible; until, in 1801, an attempt was made, by making the examinations effective, to start that new system which has not yet come to the end of its innovations.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was weeping and grieving in a house in the ancient town of Havre, a mourning and lamenting as if death or life-long parting was impending.

To an outside observer the tears of Madame Harache, and the awe-struck countenances of her daughters Barbe and Lucie, would have been depressing if he did not know the cause of their sorrow, grotesque if he did; for the origin of all the disturbance was that Gaspard Harache, the son of the first and brother of the two others, had been requested by his employer, M. Meudon, the shipbuilder, to go to Orkney, there to superintend the repairing of the French schooner, *La Belle Armande*, which had been injured by a storm off one of the islands of the Orcadian Archipelago, and was now awaiting renovation in the dockyard at Stromness.

Gaspard himself was delighted at the prospect of the journey. He was only twenty-three, and the consciousness that a special confidence was reposed in him by his master, added to the thought of travelling to strange and unknown lands, and of possibly meeting with romantic adventures, elated him beyond measure. But his sisters clung to him as if he had been a convicted Nihilist about to depart into life-long Siberian exile, and his mother firmly believed that he was certain to be starved to death before long, if he were not previously killed and eaten by the savage inhabitants of these distant, and, of course, desolate and uncivilised islands. Gaspard himself expected danger, for to him, as to his relatives, Orkney was no more than a geographical term; but he bought an English revolver, and pictured himself to himself as first dominating the wild men of the northern islands by the dread power of fire-arms, and then converting them to a perception of the sweetness and light of French civilisation.

He would have been well content to have been sent on such duty every year of his life; but Madame Harache had already determined that this was the last as well as the first time her only son and best beloved child should be torn so far from her side.

"Gaspard must marry," she said to herself, wiping the last tear of parting from her eye. "Employers who will send a young man to the North Pole on the slightest pretext, or on none, hesitate to ask a père de famille to go fifty miles from home without grave reason. I desire that he should marry Sophie Meudon, and I think her father would be willing. He appreciates Gaspard's talent and energy; he knows that I can and will buy for my son a partnership in his firm. Ah! he will be ready to consent; within a year the two will be married, and M. Meudon will not then be anxious to risk the life of his son-in-law."

Madame Harache showed, perhaps, even less regard than most French parents to the possibility of her son's showing a will of his own in the question of matrimony; but hitherto Gaspard had been a model of obedient sons, and his mother being a masterful woman by nature, and having sole control over a sufficiently well-filled purse, was so used to getting her own way that she never contemplated even the possibility of rebellion.

Madame Harache saw M. Meudon, had a satisfactory interview with him, and before Gaspard had reached the scene of his labours on the Belle Armande, had, as she thought, finally and satisfactorily settled his future destiny.

And, meanwhile, Destiny was going her own way, without regard to the plans and wishes of Madame Harache.

Gaspard had expected to find in "the melancholy isles of farthest Thule" the climate and scenery of a Greenland winter, and in their inhabitants creatures resembling in dress and customs the natives of the Fiji Islands in their primitive condition. It was, therefore, with a shock of disappointment, blended with relief, that he saw himself, when he left the steamer at Kirkwall, in an actual civilised town—a bleak, un-French-like town enough, turning chiefly high-shouldered gables to the wide, wind-swept bay, but very different from the collection of mud-huts he had expected to discover. There were many good houses in the six-foot-wide streets. His inn, once the town residence of some Orcadian magnate, who now went farther south for winter quarters, was a tolerably large place, built round three sides of a quadrangular courtyard, in which—oh utmost evidence of civilisation!—a German band was playing an air from "Patience;" and in the middle of the town, near the

solitary tree that is the pride of Kirkwall, rose the massive cathedral church of Saint Magnus.

It is no "poem in stone," this weather-beaten cathedral of the northern isles; no luxuriant fancy has expressed itself in quaint or delicate carving of capital or arch. How, indeed, could such luxuriance find a fitting place there, where the builders saw around them only low, treeless hills, and the endless sweep of ocean, with rocky islands rising here and there, dim and blue in the distance? The sense of colour, so far more widespread than that of decorative form, they would more probably possess, from seeing the night-long summer sunsets of the North, flooding with crimson and amber the whole arch of sky; and in the red and yellow contrasting stones of the cathedral doorways—now dulled and crumbled by time and sea-salt breezes—they have tried to represent, with such limited success as the palpable may attain in imitating the impalpable and evanescent, the one thing of supreme beauty that touched their daily life. No, there is nothing poetic in the ordinary sense in this church of Saint Magnus; but, built of stones brought in boats from Scotland across the dangerous Pentland Firth, rising in solemn, gloomy bulk, where it may best form a landmark to the storm-bewildered fisherman, the work of times when the White Christ had not yet made sure his victory over Thor and Odin or those unknown deities who were worshipped within the stone circle of Stennis, it is a fitting centre for the worship of men of the fierce, passionate, silent Norse race—men whose lives, whether passed on land or sea, were such a constant and bitter struggle with unkindly elements as those of southern lands can scarcely comprehend.

Although he could not claim to be in any special sense a Christian, Gaspard Harache was glad to find himself in a land which displayed evidences of religious faith, and whose inhabitants were not only decently clad and civil-mannered, but spoke a language more nearly resembling English than that used in any part of Scotland he had traversed in his journey. Adventure is charming when one is only passing through a country, but when one is compelled to live in it for a month or two, a little comfort is decidedly preferable.

Thus reflecting, Gaspard left the capital of the Orkneys for the twelve-mile drive to Stromness, where the Belle Armande awaited him. The route had no special

claim to attractiveness beyond that given by the ever-recurring surprise of meeting the sea, now on one hand, now on the other, in the journey across an island whose coast is so deeply indented that its shape resembles that of a star-fish; but to our young Frenchman, somewhat intoxicated by his first excursion to "foreign parts," and, in truth, his first escape from his mother's stout though silken apron-strings, the very absence of all prominent features in the scenery, the feeling of all-surrounding endless ocean, gave a sense of novelty, of emancipation, more fascinating than mere beauty. Then the air, fresh without chillness, and the northern sunlight, brilliant without glare—like the soul of a woman so good as to be unconscious of her own goodness—exhilarated him so much that not one minute of the journey seemed dull, and before his curiosity was half satiated he saw, between a wide shallow lake and the ever-present sea a peninsula of grey-green heather, crowned with a circle of great purple-grey upright stones, one of the few remaining relics of the Druidic worship—the Stones of Stennis.

In a few minutes this was left behind, and Gaspard was rattling along the narrow semicircular street, slid in between a steep hill scarred with "dry-stone dykes," and a smooth bay shut in by two tiny islands, the Holms, which forms the town of Stromness.

After eating a composite meal, Gaspard, being still unwearied, and in an inquisitive and exploring frame of mind, set out to walk along the neighbouring coast. It was evening by the clock, broad day by the sun; for the summer of Thule knows no darkness, and but little dusk. There is more variety of aspect in the shore on the farther side of Stromness Bay than near Kirkwall; the cliffs are higher, and break into arches and pillars where the ocean force beats the strongest. Gaspard strolled on, finding a hundred things to interest him which, had he met them within a mile of Havre, he would have passed unnoticed; on new ground every trifle is wonderful. Finally he stumbled across a spot that occupied his attention for a full quarter of an hour—an old and deserted graveyard.

It would be impossible to imagine a home for the dead more desolate and neglected. The low wall, built of stones, without mortar, had fallen in many places, and between the scattered stones the earth had nestled, and tall weeds, brightened by an occasional daisy or sea-pink, had sprouted.

The graveyard lay on a cliff, exposed to every Atlantic wind; and on stormy days its rank grass was often wet with salt spray, for to the seaward side there was not even an attempt at protection, and the narrow strip of yellow sand that lay between the cliff and the fierce-flowing sea was wholly covered in high tides. On some of the mounds that covered the dead—the older ones—lay fragments of broken gravestones, where a few uneven lines showed that some inscription once was carved upon them; but now all was moss-grown and illegible. Gaspard amused himself for some time in trying to decipher an occasional word that seemed less wholly effaced than its fellows, when suddenly he was disturbed by perceiving an odour of flowers—the rich almond-like fragrance of meadow-sweet.

He turned round abruptly, a little bewildered, and saw between him and the sunset sky a tall and beautiful girl with her arms laden with flowers. Not a mere village beauty, with red and white featureless prettiness, but a "daughter of the gods;" nay, proud and stately enough to be the goddess Freya herself. To Gaspard, looking at her with the sun-dazzle in his eyes, she seemed every inch a deity, appearing so unexpectedly in this desolate spot, with the gold of the sunset surrounding her like a halo. It is easy for a woman to seem a goddess to a man of twenty-three—the light is always in his eyes then, and he looks at all objects through a luminous mist that gives them an unmerited glamour. But when the luminous mist is cleared away, what then? Sometimes the glamour remains, because the mist hid even more loveliness than it revealed; but oftener the charm vanishes, for it was only the illusion of sun-dimmed eyes.

For a moment the two gazed at each other—Gaspard lost in sheer admiration, while the girl studied his appearance with a quiet interest that seemed above curiosity. Then the young man recovered his presence of mind.

"Pardon, mademoiselle; I fear that I inconvenience you," he said in his stiff, nervous, book-learned English, as he took off his hat.

Thora Sweynson opened her eyes a little wider, but seemed in no degree discomposed.

"No, you do not," she answered in that languid, plaintive Orkney accent, which seems to repeat the wail of the sea, "the graveyard is free to all."

"Is this, then, the place where all your dead are buried?" asked Gaspard, looking with some repulsion at the neglected enclosure.

"No, it is only the Vikings' graveyard," replied the girl.

"What! The Vikings, the old sea monarchs; are some of them buried here?"

"So it is said. There was once a sea fight below there, in the strait between Mainland and Hoy; and the Vikings on the defeated side, when they saw there was no farther hope of victory, threw themselves into the sea and let themselves drown rather than become the prisoners of their enemies. The tide washed up the bodies of some, and these were buried here; so the place is called the Vikings' graveyard to this day."

"You know the legend well, mademoiselle," said Gaspard, less interested in the narrative than in the narrator. "You take, without doubt, much interest in these old stories?"

"No," she answered, indifferently; "but Mr. Traill does, and I hear them from him."

"Who is he then, this Mr. Ter-rail?" enquired Gaspard, making a brave dash at the unfamiliar name, though he felt no interest in its bearer. But he felt a real interest in the girl to whom he was speaking, who was so unlike the ideal "jeune fille" of France in her stately composure, her utter absence of shyness, yet was equally free from the boldness or worldly self-consciousness which seems to be the only alternative; and he would have spoken of the driest science or asked the most trivial questions if that would win him the privilege of looking at her for a few minutes longer.

"He is the minister, whom I live with," she answered. She, too, was interested in this stranger. Strangers were not very common in Stromness then, for it was before fashion had added the Shetland Archipelago as an "additional attraction" to the Scotch tour, and such visitors as came to the little town, besides commercial travellers, were chiefly conscientious archaeologists. Now, the average archaeologist is middle-aged, unattractive, and indifferent to everything not of undoubted antiquity, quite indifferent to anything so little antiquated as Thora Sweynson. But her present interlocutor was young and sufficiently good-looking, and unless his eyes were wonderfully deceitful, he found in her an object well worthy his attention. So she answered

his questions so freely that he soon knew all her history.

She was the child of a Norwegian who had come to Stromness sixteen years before, a silent man, who had said nothing to any of his neighbours of his previous history. He did not even say distinctly that the year-old girl whom he brought with him was his daughter, though he let it be assumed that such was the relationship between them, and the little Thora called him father. The credulous and inquisitive old women of Stromness said that there must be some evil mystery in his past; but if it were so, it never came to light. For two years he lived in the village, not perceptibly shunning its natives, but not seeking their society, and gained his living as a fisherman. Then his boat was swamped in a sudden squall just outside the bay, and his body, cast up by the tide, was buried in the Vikings' graveyard; for in Orkney the Catholic idea that the unshriven dead must not be laid in consecrated ground, survives in a superstitious refusal to bury drowned men in the churchyard, and for centuries their bodies have been laid in the desolate enclosure on the top of the cliff.

When her father was lost, Mr. Traill, the minister of Stromness, an elderly bachelor, took pity on the golden-haired little orphan, and carried her to the Manse. There she had lived till now, receiving a little information on a variety of subjects from the minister, who was something of a naturalist and a great deal of an antiquary, and acquiring from his housekeeper, Osla—an old Shetland woman to whom Orkney seemed a lowland of surpassing fertility, but lacking, as lowlands do, the charm of her wilder Shetland home—all manner of Norse superstitions.

So Thora had a certain amount of vague and incoherent knowledge, drawn from books and old lore, and rather less acquaintance with the world's ways than a city kitten. Withal she was very curious about the wide world in so quiet a corner of which she lived, and listened eagerly to the words of even the dullest of Mr. Traill's antiquarian visitors, in the hope of gathering some further details to add to the unreal and dream-like picture of life that her fancy had conjured up.

This was why she answered Gaspard Harache's questions so readily; she hoped in return to win from him something to satisfy the thirst of her mind for knowledge of the world.

"And you come here to lay flowers on the grave of your father?" said Gaspard, when she had finished her story.

"Yes," replied the girl, looking confused for the first time. "You'll think it foolish of me—at least, Ola and the minister do—but I like to fancy that my father knows I remember him, and is pleased to see the flowers. But it's a silly idea."

"Surely not! In France it is commonly done on the *Jour des Morts*."

"Is it from France you come?" cried Thora, with a new awe and respect in her eyes. "How I envy you!"

"Why?"

"Because you were born in a foreign country."

Gaspard laughed. "Ah! mademoiselle, the country where one is born is never foreign, it is all the rest of the world that is strange. I could wish that Stromness had been my native place; then it would have been my good fortune to have already known you for sixteen years."

Thora blushed and looked almost alarmed, not being used to compliments, but the shock was a pleasant one, and her thoughts were less concentrated on her long-dead father than they might well have been, as she laid the branches of fragrant blossom on his grave.

The ready "*camaraderie*" of youth made the two feel like old friends as they walked townwards together. Gaspard, in answer to the girl's questions, had spoken of Le Havre, of his mother and sisters, painting all he described in the soft colouring which absence, however short, lends to the imagination.

"How beautiful it must all be!" exclaimed Thora, at last, with a sigh of longing.

"Not more beautiful than this scene," replied Gaspard. "Look, mademoiselle, is not this lovely?" He gazed round him admiringly, but his companion scarcely glanced at the tranquil bay, shut in by the two tiny green islands; the expanse of glittering sea beyond; the three gloomy, heather-clad hills, united at their base, which form the neighbouring island of Hoy, with its stern cliffs and gnome-haunted valleys; she would not even perceive the glory of the sky, its western crimson and gold changing to softest

green as it joined the blue ether in which the moon, pale and faint, a little luminous cloud, nothing more, was now beginning to rise.

"It may be beautiful," she said, discontentedly; "but I feel only that it is silent."

"You cannot imagine how dreary life is here," she went on. "If you were here in winter you would see the water out there"—she pointed to the distant sea—"storming and raging, while down in the bay there are only the feeblest waves, the poorest pretence of storm. My life is like the waters of the bay, obliged to be still when all the world is roused to excitement of anger or joy—still and dull and motionless."

"And yet, mademoiselle, the calm life of the bay is better than the storm of the ocean, especially for a woman. The world, like the sea, brings the adventurous to shipwreck."

"True; but, yet—I want to try it!"

"Fille d'Eve!" murmured Gaspard to himself.

"How much brighter existence seems to be in France!" cried Thora again. "I should like to hear more of your country, if it were possible."

"Why is it not possible? I, for my part, desire to hear more of Orkney. You say this Mr. Traill, your guardian, knows much of the past history of the islands. If I came to him for instruction, I might see you, and have the opportunity of speaking to you of France."

Their eyes met, and both laughed. It was as if some private understanding had already established itself between them.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

So Madge's confession remained unspoken; she fixed the date of her wedding-day instead. She caught up the burthen of Miss Shore's song, and said: "It is fate, my lips must be sealed eternally now." And she set herself to stifle the voice of her conscience, to banish every thought but the one that Lance so far was saved, and to look ahead at naught but the dangers which had yet to be faced and conquered for his sake.

Sir Peter did not say it was Fate, but went about telling everybody that "if it had not been for me these young people would have made a nice mess of their love affairs; one would have been off to Africa, and the other to goodness only knew where."

He surpassed himself in activity during the week following the announcement of the engagement. Nothing went fast enough to please him. One way or another he anticipated everything that had to be done in the way of business arrangements. The estate to be purchased for Lance must not be allowed to come into the market, so his solicitors were commissioned to negotiate for it privately. Before, however, they had had time to despatch one offer for the property, Sir Peter had sent off no less than three. And so on throughout the transaction. The price of the estate went up proportionately.

He pushed forward the date of the wedding-day in much the same fashion.

A three weeks' engagement was the utmost he would hear of. "Why you've been engaged from childhood, and ought to have been married ages ago," he said, anticipating any possible demur Madge might make, and skipping lightly over the Cohen episode in her history.

Lady Judith thought the hurried manner in which the wedding was arranged typical of Sir Peter's general method of conducting affairs, and off and on she had a good deal to say about it.

On the whole, the two persons most deeply interested said the least.

Lance a little listlessly accepted the fact, telling himself a hundred times a day how grateful he was to Madge for her love, and that to the end of his days his one aim would be to put as much happiness as possible into her life.

But of love-making, so far as he was concerned, there was not one jot.

Miss Shore's name never passed his lips, and it was quickly evident to Madge that they two would have to begin their life together with a sealed subject between them.

As the days went by that sealed subject seemed to her less like a sepulchre, with a stone decently rolled to its mouth, than an open grave whose proper occupant wandered at will, a restless shade, among the scenes and people to which it was supposed to have said good-bye.

If, when they sat side by side, a sudden silence fell upon him, Madge would say to herself, "He is thinking of that girl in grey, wondering over the mystery of her life, and what sudden terror drove her to her death."

Or if, in the course of conversation, he gave an absent answer, or let his gaze rest longer than usual on her face,

she would think bitterly: "He is comparing the beauty of that girl with my sallow face. Oh, Madge Cohen, what have you beyond your wealth to give him?"

Her thoughts travelled back to the bright summer's afternoon when, as she and Lance stood facing each other in the sunlight, the chill, cold shadow of that desolate girl had seemed to fall between them. Well, she might be buried six feet below the earth in her pauper's coffin, but she had left her shadow behind her; Madge might lock up easels and ball-dress, and change her room a hundred times over, but all the same the shadow was there.

As the days went by, Madge, instead of rallying from her short, sharp illness, grew whiter and thinner. Cold weather setting in at the beginning of September, brought with it for her a series of severe colds; whereupon, the old doctor once more lifted up a warning voice, advising that his patient should get away to the south before the Cumbrian mists and east winds set in continuously; in fact, as soon as possible, or he would not answer for the consequences.

Sir Peter would have liked the wedding to be not as soon as, but sooner than possible. He redoubled energy over the business arrangements. Letter-writing became far too slow a process for him now, he took to telegraphing two or three times a day to his lawyers, also to the trustees of the property for which he was negotiating.

This property was in Durham, and promised to yield a good income if judiciously managed in connection with the Redesdale estate; it occurred to Sir Peter that it might expedite matters if Lance, in person, were to survey the property and discuss matters generally with the trustees of the estate, and the land-steward of Redesdale.

Then he took Madge vigorously in hand, and just as in the old days he had hurried her into her marriage with old David Cohen, so now he hastened forward her wedding-day by another seven days.

One of Lady Brabazon's sons was to be married only the morning before the day now fixed for Lance's and Madge's wedding. Lance was to act as his best man. It was therefore arranged that Lance should go straight from Durham to this wedding, which was to take place at York; spend the night of that day with the Brabazons, coming back to Upton in the morning to receive his bride from Sir Peter's hands at Saint Cuthbert's church.

Lance did not throw much spirit into the part of "best man," which he was to perform for his friend. He characterised the Brabazon wedding as a headstrong, foolish affair. On the day on which he set off for Durham, Madge rose at six o'clock in the morning to have breakfast with him, and to "see him off." He spoke his mind freely to her about his friend's "infatuation" as he called it, and vowed that if the choice had been given him he would sooner have followed Eric Brabazon to his grave; "a man had far better lie down in his coffin than make such a marriage as that."

Madge knew the history of Eric Brabazon's courtship; the lady of his choice had as good as jilted him, but friends had interfered and the wedding had eventually been arranged.

Madge was standing outside in the bright morning sunshine caressing Lance's horses as he said this. She had been saying soft, sweet things to him with her good-byes, wondering whether the Redesdale fishing was as good as that at Upton, whether the stables there would need enlarging and so forth; when, however, he spoke of choosing rather to follow Eric Brabazon to the grave than go to his wedding, her soft speeches came to a halt. She bent her face till her curly brown hair seemed one with the horse's mane. "He may be happy, he may make up his mind to forget the past," she said, in a low voice.

"What, forget lies and deceit?" Lance cried, hotly.

"And it doesn't follow because she has deceived him once that she will attempt to do so a second time," she continued after a moment's pause.

"If I had been in Eric's place I wouldn't have given her a chance. The first deliberate piece of deception would have put an eternal barrier between us," said Lance, vehemently.

Madge felt herself frozen into silence. She walked with him to the park gates, the groom following slowly with the dog-cart; but she had no more sweet speeches to make.

"An eternal barrier, an eternal barrier," her thoughts kept repeating. She watched him drive away down the steep road, shading her eyes with her hand to catch a last glimpse of him. He waved his hat in farewell, then his hand; then a bend in the road hid him from her sight.

"When next we meet it will be before

the altar rails of Saint Cuthbert's," she said to herself, but with none of that rush of joy in her heart which the words might be supposed to bring with them. "Would it be so if I had spoken out the truth and told him what I have done for his sake?"

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Mr. Stubbs's voice at that moment. "I saw you walking through the park with Mr. Olive; and, as I particularly wanted to speak to you, I ventured to follow."

Madge was startled; this man, like an emissary of darkness, seemed perpetually hovering over her path.

"What is it?" she asked, coldly. "Will it take long to tell?"

"There is nothing specially to tell, madam, it is merely a suggestion I have to make; it can be made easily enough as we walk back to the house together."

That "we" was a perpetual torture to Madge. It seemed the outward and visible sign of the evil bond between her and this man. She never heard it without feeling as she felt on the day when old David Cohen clasped her first diamond necklace round her throat.

Nevertheless, she did not refuse Mr. Stubbs's company on her way back through the park, nor did she attempt to cut his communications short, for her steps slackened as they neared the house.

Mr. Stubbs's last words as they parted at the front door were:

"Everything is going on satisfactorily, madam; just exactly as we could wish."

To this Madge made a sharp impatient movement with her hand.

"And the second letter, of which you spoke just now, gives me no anxiety whatever. If allusion is made to it when the Rev. Mr. Parker arrives, I simply say I read it to Sir Peter with some half-dozen others of a similar kind—there are always a lot of people writing to make or to break appointments with him, and half the letters of that sort which I read to him he pays no attention to—he is either walking about the room, or thinking of something else. The first letter also is now a very simple affair, and the sooner it is in my hands the better, for really there is no time to be lost."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ONE or two things happened during Lance's stay in Durham.

Madge suddenly grew what the French call "dévoté." She developed a fondness for

saints' days and early services. Saint Cuthbert's old church, off and on, saw a good deal of her just then.

Her friends in the neighbourhood shared with Saint Cuthbert's church the honour of her society, for she balanced her devotion in the early part of the day with an increase of gaiety towards its close. She accepted every invitation to entertainments given in honour of her approaching marriage; seemed to enter warmly into the local enthusiasm that was growing on the matter, and talked freely of the preliminary arrangements which were being made for the wedding.

Once, however, when so chatting with Lottie Brabazon, she was suddenly frozen into silence by a remark made by that light-hearted young lady.

It was:

"Of course you will be married in grey—it's the only colour widows can wear."

Madge felt that she would as soon be married in her shroud as have to face Lance at the altar in grey garments.

Something else noteworthy occurred while Lance was away inspecting the Durham property. A sudden remarkable increase of intimacy seemed to spring up between Mrs. Cohen and Mr. Stubbs, and they were frequently to be seen in each other's company. Sir Peter noted the fact, and rubbed his hands over it with delight.

"Capital fellow that!" he said to Madge. "I'm glad to see you appreciate him. I think I've an eye for character, although Lady Judith, at first, hadn't a good word to say for him. Now, if you could get just such a man as that for your land steward at Redesdale, he'd double the value of your property in less than ten years."

Madge, standing with her back to the light, and speaking in a hurried voice, gave an answer which almost took Sir Peter's breath away.

"I was thinking of pensioning off the present steward at Redesdale. He's very old and not very active—and I was wondering if—if you thought—if you would like, I mean—Mr. Stubbs to take the post. I mean if you were thinking of getting a new secretary, Mr. Stubbs might like to undertake the steward's duties at Redesdale."

She had stammered a great deal over this speech. In truth, it was a speech not easy to make gracefully.

Sir Peter was fairly taken aback. "My dear child, my dear child!" was all he

could say at first. Then he walked up and down the room once or twice very fast. Then he stood still in front of her, and tip-toed and lifted his eyebrows at her till she felt quite giddy.

"I wasn't thinking of making a change, Madge," he said; "but now you speak of it, I think Stubbs is exactly the man for the post you could give him. He's getting on in life—a younger man could write my letters and do all I should require. His remuneration as your steward would be twice what I give him as secretary. He would have a nice house, servants, and horses of his own. Yes, capital idea! I won't stand in his light. Think it over! No, there's no need to do that. Consider it settled, my dear. I'm delighted."

After this arrangement was made it was only natural that Mr. Stubbs and Madge should be still more in each other's society. It seemed reasonable to suppose that there were many matters in connection with the stewardship at Redesdale that required discussion and arrangement.

Thanks to Sir Peter's telegrams and the general energy which he displayed on the matter, the purchase of the Durham property and the deeds conveying it to Lance, were much less lengthy businesses than such things generally are. Two days after Lance's departure to Durham, and three before the day fixed for the wedding, saw the purchase as good as concluded by the payment of an instalment of the purchase-money by Sir Peter to seal the bargain. Final legal forms it was arranged should be gone through on Lance's return with Madge from their wedding-tour.

"And they talk about the interminable length of law processes," said Sir Peter, triumphantly, to Mr. Stubbs. "Why, how long have we had this matter in hand, eh? Park, woods, river, farms, in all about one thousand eight hundred acres; rent-roll about five thousand a year; and we've as good as pulled it through in three weeks' time! Now we've just a few telegrams to send off this morning to the Durham people, and then we'll set to work on the day's correspondence."

If Mr. Stubbs had had two pairs of hands, one for the day's telegrams, the other for its letters, he might have been able to satisfy the demands of Sir Peter's energy. As it was, long before the telegrams were despatched, Sir Peter was asking the question, "Anything of importance to-day, Stubbs?" and had begun his usual quick-march which betokened that

replies were ready to ooze out of his fingers' tips.

Mr. Stubbs laid aside his telegrams and read in succession one or two unimportant letters which the morning's post had brought. Then he laid his hand upon a packet of three letters, and his face grew long and serious.

"These, Sir Peter," he said, "I grieve to tell you were, by Mr. Clive's orders, placed on one side unopened in an inner compartment of your writing-table, and I am sorry to say have been forgotten. If you remember when you had the——"

"When I was ill," interrupted Sir Peter. Of late he had grown sensitive on the score of the juvenile ailment, and had repudiated it, asserting that Broughton had made a mistake, and that it had been nothing but nettle-rash after all.

Mr. Stubbs bowed. "When you were ill, Sir Peter, if you remember, for one day Mr. Clive undertook your correspondence. He dictated a general answer to a few letters, and told me to put the rest on one side, as no doubt they'd answer themselves if let alone."

"Just like him! Read them out, Stubbs."

"I'm sorry to say afterwards they were forgotten."

"Ah, Madge, I remember, undertook my correspondence the next day—so she forgot them, eh?"

"I fear I must own to the neglect, Sir Peter. Mrs. Cohen attended to everything that I put before her."

"Ah, well, open and read them; I don't suppose it matters much."

The first letter opened and read was the prospectus of a mining company in the adjoining county. It had no date attached. It received a scanty attention, and was forthwith tossed into the waste-paper basket.

The second letter shared a similar fate. It was an intimation from a brewing firm that they were about to convert themselves into a chartered company. There was no date to this communication also.

The third letter Mr. Stubbs opened with a little preamble.

"It has an Australian postmark. I trust its contents did not require immediate acknowledgement," he said, in a concerned voice.

And then he began to read the story of Gervase Critchett, as told by the Rev. Joshua Parker.

But long before he had got half-way

through it, Sir Peter had cried to him in a hoarse voice: "Stop! Stop! For Heaven's sake, stop!" and had got up from his seat, and had taken the letter into his own hands to read.

His hands, however, trembled so violently that he was perforce obliged to spread the paper before him on the table. And then there had come a mist before his eyes, so that the lines danced backwards and forwards, and reading became an impossibility, so he handed the letter back to Mr. Stubbs.

"Go on," he said. "Read quickly."

He leaned back in his chair for a good five minutes, still and silent, his brain possibly overweighted, not only by the startling news that letter brought, but by the memories of years long gone-by, which the startling news conjured up from the land of shadows.

But that five minutes at an end, Sir Peter was himself again. He jumped up from his chair, seized the Australian letter, and rang the bell violently.

"Ask Lady Judith to come here to me at once—important news," was the order he gave to the servant who answered his summons. "And—and Mrs. Cohen also."

And then as soon as the servant had disappeared, he rang the bell again to countermand the order. Four walls couldn't contain him at that moment, and before the servant could answer his second summons, he had set off to scour the house and grounds in search of Lady Judith and Madge.

Lady Judith, in her morning-room, studying with deep interest a catalogue of patent farming appliances, was suddenly startled by having the price-list shut out from her view by a letter in strange handwriting spread athwart it by Sir Peter.

"Read it," he shouted into her ear, "and tell me what you think of it."

Before, however, she had time to realise the fact that it was something other than a written recommendation of the barrel churns which she was contemplating so lovingly in her picture-catalogue, Sir Peter had disappeared through the window, having caught sight of Madge coming up the drive towards the house.

Madge was wrapped in furs, and had on the thickest of Shetland veils; she had complained a good deal of the cold of late, and had taken to muffling herself up as if it were mid-winter. When Sir Peter had breathlessly told his startling news, she had a sharp fit of coughing which for the

moment prevented her making any comment thereon, and Sir Peter, while executing a quick-march up and down the gravel path, discoursed upon Gervase, his manners and doings from boyhood upwards.

"A handsome fellow he was! My poor mother used to say whenever I put her out that it was a thousand pities Gervase hadn't come into the world first, he would have carried the title with so much more dignity than I should. Poor Gervase! Poor Gervase! I remember he had a good opinion of himself—never would take advice—restless, too, he was—always wanting to do half-a-dozen things at once—used to have a hundred and one schemes in hand at the same moment, but never brought any of them to maturity! Poor Gervase, a sad ending! I wonder if his boy is like him in any way!"

By the time he had got to Gervase's boy Madge had recovered her voice, and was ready to ask a few questions.

"What will you do about the boy—send for him, I suppose?" was the first.

"Of course, of course; what else in life could I do? I shall telegraph to him this very day, sending the message from 'your uncle at Upton.' Poor little lad! And he's in a state of anxiety for fear we shouldn't give him a welcome! Gervase's only boy not to feel sure of a welcome! Thank Heaven for the cablegram, Madge. Fancy that poor boy having to wait three months for the news that his father's people would hold out their hand to him! And that letter already has been most unfortunately delayed. Ah, you don't know about that—never mind, I haven't time to tell you now!" Here Sir Peter in a great hurry pulled out his watch. "Haven't a minute to spare, Madge, I'm off at once to Durham to tell Lance the good news. You explain everything to Lady Judith. I shall just save a train at Lower Upton if I'm quick about it."

Madge demurred vigorously to his hot haste to carry his news everywhere. She felt that her lips—by right of her love and sacrifice for him—should have been the ones to tell this tale to Lance.

But Sir Peter was resolute, and Madge had to realise the truth of Lance's saying, that "if once Uncle Peter took a thing into his head, not the Lords, nor the Commons, nor the whole bench of Bishops combined could get it out."

Lance was seated in his quiet little

country inn writing a few lines to Madge, when the startling announcement was made to him that Sir Peter was below waiting to see him.

Lance had arranged to be at York on the morrow, in order to be present at Eric Brabazon's wedding. He had spent the day in taking a final survey of his newly acquired property, planning alterations and improvements.

From the window where he sat, writing his letter to Madge, he could see the exact point where his estate met the Redesdale land. Redesdale itself, with its park, woods, and meadows, formed the larger portion of the landscape of which the window commanded a view. Between the trees he could catch a glimpse of the house: a handsome, modern structure of palatial dimensions.

Most men in Lance's position, with such a prospect as this facing them, would have owned to thoughts of a decidedly roseate hue.

"All to be mine so soon, and a loving wife into the bargain! And youth and health mine also! Lance Clive, you're a lucky fellow!" If thoughts such as these, with a touch of pride and triumph in them, had found expression in the letter he was penning, it might have been pardoned him.

There was, however, no necessity to plead extenuating circumstances for the letter that lay before him. It was soberly worded to the last degree; the sort of letter which a brother might have written to a loving sister with an eye to its perusal by the whole family afterwards.

And, soberly worded though it was, once or twice his pen had slackened in its task, and his left hand had pressed his eyes as if to shut out a vision, which night and day seemed ever before them—a vision of a girl, with wan, white face, waving a farewell to him from out a shadowy darkness, while her lips, as if in mockery of the farewell she waved, bade him—

"Go back and dance."

The announcement of Sir Peter's arrival sent his thoughts running in all sorts of channels; something must have happened. Illness? Death? His fears flew to the worst.

But Sir Peter's beaming face reassured him quickly enough, and the old gentleman had not been five minutes in the room before the story of the two Gervases had been begun and ended.

Lance listened in silent astonishment.

Many a time when the story of Gervase Critchett's erratic ways had been told him, he had felt disposed to envy the man his life of adventure in spite of the ill-luck which had seemed to attend it. Now the awfulness of the ending of that life—the hopelessness and desperation of the man, with death facing him and those dearest to him—was the thing that touched him most.

"He must have died a thousand times over that night," he said, pitifully, and then there fell a silence between the two which Sir Peter broke by forcing a cheerful voice, and reading over again the story of Gervase Critchett, the younger.

Then other thoughts began to come to Lance. He rose from his chair, and laid his hand on Sir Peter's shoulder.

"Uncle Peter," he said, gravely, "the estate you have been buying for me is so much robbery to Gervase—it must be his, not mine."

Sir Peter's amazement was boundless. Such a notion as this had not for a moment entered his brain. It took him a long time to grasp it.

That he might do what he liked with his own, he had enough and to spare for Gervase, was the first argument where-with he endeavoured to rebut it; an argument, however, which fell pointless before Lance's vigorous reasoning on the matter.

Lance, to his own fancy, stood pictured as an interloper who had somehow crept up the back-stairs to good luck, while the one who had the right to enter to it by the front-door had been barred out in the cold.

"Poor boy; poor little fellow," he said, "to be knocking about in the world in that way, and a stranger here to step into his rights!"

Sir Peter tried his hardest to make him see the matter in another light. But logic had never been Sir Peter's strong point. His arguments were mostly interjections, spoken now at Lance's elbow, anon at the further end of the room.

The sun went down, the moon rose; the inmates of the quiet little inn put out their lights and went to bed; but still Lance and Sir Peter talked on, Lance getting firmer in his reasoning, Sir Peter's interjections gaining in vehemence and intensity.

"My dear boy, my dear boy," he had said over and over again, "I have brought you up to no profession. It would be like

sending a soldier out to battle without weapons, to turn you out into the world to get your own living."

To which Lance replied, also over and over again :

"I have a head and I have hands ; if I can't use one I can use the other ; and no man with both at command can be said to be without weapons."

At last, one of Sir Peter's interjections struck a key-note not to be silenced by argument. It was :

"The tie between you and me, my boy, is as strong as any of blood could be."

Lance faltered a little at this.

"If you don't choose to be looked upon as my eldest son, take the place of second and best loved," Sir Peter went on, seeing what words of his had told most.

Whereupon Lance felt himself driven farther back in the field.

Finally, and this was when the night had nearly ended and both men were a little wearied with the strain of feeling they had undergone, Sir Peter brought out three words :

"Think of Madge !"

And then Lance, paraphrasing the words somewhat thus: "If you refuse this property, how dare you, a pauper, offer marriage to Madge with her wealth!" struck his colours and gave up the contest, on the condition that Sir Peter would commission his solicitors to settle the estate on him for life only, and that on his death it was to revert to Gervase and his heirs.

CAPTAIN SPENCER'S CARD-CASE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

DAVID ROBERTS was a Welshman, and he had a thriving business as a watch-maker and jeweller in the flourishing English provincial town of Moortown. He was a man of long experience in his trade, and besides mechanical skill, possessed considerable taste ; so the great people of the neighbourhood were accustomed to patronise his shop, and secretly congratulated themselves on being there able to purchase articles quite as pretty as any they would have found in Bond Street, at a much more reasonable price. It was not that David habitually kept a large stock of valuable gems ; but he exhibited a very fair display of the more ordinary articles of luxury, and in addition dealt in old china and old coins of a choice kind,

which brought additional grist to his mill.

David was a little, pugnacious, black-eyed Welshman, with a vastly good opinion of himself, particularly as regarded his own acuteness and sagacity. Although engaged in a trade which, more than any other, is the peculiar hunting-ground of rogues, it was his proud boast that he had never once been robbed or defrauded. He laughed scornfully at other less fortunate rivals who allowed themselves to be fleeced, and was confident that no swindler alive was cunning enough to induce him to take a worthless cheque in payment for valuable articles, or divert his attention in order to escape with a tray of watches into the street.

"I can take a man's measure at a glance," he was wont to exclaim grandiloquently. "I don't believe there's a rogue alive who could rob me ! Several have tried, but they've only made things very unpleasant for themselves, without my being one penny the worse !"

David was a bachelor, and confirmed woman-hater, so his natural self-esteem had never been lessened by hearing a few uncomplimentary truths now and then from his better-half. He had only one meek little assistant, who deferred to him in everything, and entirely acquiesced in his employer's estimate of himself. Any stranger who entered the shop had to run the gauntlet of the proprietor's inquisitive black eyes, for he made a point of being always there ; and if the new-comer had no legitimate errand, woe betide him. Mr. Roberts showed him to the door in double-quick time.

One fine afternoon in early summer, David was standing with his usual complacency behind his counter, when a well-dressed young man entered, and asked to look at some diamond rings. David promptly fetched some, piercing the stranger with an eye like a gimlet as he examined first one, and then another, and also keeping a sharp look-out for any confederate who might be lurking outside, waiting his opportunity to snatch a handful of jewellery. But the customer was evidently a peaceable and well-disposed member of the community, who finally decided upon a ring of the value of ten pounds, and in payment laid a Bank of England note for twenty pounds on the counter, with a request for change.

By this time reassured as to the honesty of the stranger's intentions, Mr. Roberts

counted ten sovereigns into his palm, and when he had gone, locked the note up in his cash-box with complacency, after having duly taken the number. He was not so lucky as to dispose of rings worth ten pounds every day, and he congratulated himself accordingly. The next morning, as the jeweller was making entries in his ledger, he was disturbed by a hearty voice saying:

"I say, mate, have you got any pretty gimcracks for a fellow to give to his sweet-heart?"

The new-comer had a decidedly nautical air, and his garb also proclaimed him a seafaring man. Mr. Roberts, according to custom, took his measure at a glance, and then asked him what he would like.

"Let's have a look at some gold brooches, mate. My old uncle's died and left me all his money, and I mean to treat my Polly to something handsome for once."

The jeweller brought out a tray of gold ornaments from the window, from which the young sailor, after some hesitation, selected a gold arrow, of which the price was one pound. To pay for it he produced a Bank of England note for five pounds from a sealskin pouch, and was just having the change counted out to him, when there was a sound outside as of a hastily driven vehicle stopping at the door, and a tall, dark man of about six-and-twenty, with a determined aspect, rushed in, and, without a word, seized the sailor by the arm as he was about to leave the shop.

"Just in time!" he exclaimed, exultantly. "I've been one too many for you this time, my man, although you contrived to fool me so cleverly more than once before! What, you want to escape, do you? Wait a bit!"

With marvellous quickness and dexterity he produced a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and snapped them on the wrists of his captive. Then, turning to Mr. Roberts, who for once could only stare in amazement, without any of his usual sang-froid, he asked:

"What has this rascal been buying?"

"A gold brooch."

"And he paid for it with a five pound note, didn't he, No. 11,889?"

The jeweller in surprise looked into his cash-box, and admitted the correctness of the number.

"And have you sold anything else lately to strangers who paid in Bank of England notes?" continued his questioner. "I'm

a detective, in pursuit of the perpetrators of a daring robbery of notes which lately occurred at a bank in Birmingham. Two men in broad daylight snatched them before the very eyes of the cashier, who fortunately had taken the numbers. This fellow is one of the scoundrels."

"I had a man here yesterday, who bought a diamond ring for ten pounds and gave me a note for twenty," said the jeweller, going to his safe to fetch it.

"Note No. 54,627?" asked the detective, consulting his note-book.

"Yes," said David, handing him the note to examine at his leisure.

"Then we have caught one of the scoundrels, and the other is probably not far off. Some of the stolen property has already been recovered. Will you let me have these two notes to produce to the magistrates in court? The Bench is sitting now, and I've got a cab at the door ready to go to the police station at once with this fine fellow. Of course we shall require you as a witness. Time's precious, so I must be off; but if you'll come round to the Town Hall as soon as you can, I'll meet you there, and see that the case is heard with as little delay as possible. I'm sure you'll be glad to assist in bringing such a rogue to justice."

Tightly clutching his captive, the detective had bundled him into the vehicle before the jeweller had time to collect his senses, and in a moment the cab was out of sight. Mr. Roberts, indignant at having been made the unconscious receiver of stolen bank-notes, merely stayed to lock up the safe, and call his assistant from the work-room at the back to mind the shop, and set off at a run for the Town Hall, which was distant about half a mile. A few idle men were lounging about the door, as was usual when the borough magistrates were sitting; and hurrying into the stone-paved lobby, David accosted the first person he met, who happened to be the superintendent of the local police.

"Have they come?" he eagerly asked.

"Have who come?"

"The detective with the man who has been passing notes stolen from a bank at Birmingham."

"I don't understand," said the other, looking at the little Welshman in amazement. "There's been no such case reported here yet, and I've been here all the morning. There's only one charge of fowl-stealing to be heard now, and that's all for to-day."

"But the detective said he was coming on here at once, and I must attend as a witness," urged the jeweller, as he went to the door and looked eagerly up and down the street for the cab. He stood at that door for a long time, but in vain. Neither detective nor prisoner ever appeared again. At last, when the unhappy little man could no longer doubt that he—he, the astute, the clear-sighted David Roberts—had been cleverly swindled by three adroit rogues out of a gold brooch, a diamond ring, and thirty-nine pounds in hard cash, he sat down and cursed the day he was born. He had fallen into a trap which, when he thought over it afterwards, seemed too transparent to deceive a child; and worse even than the serious pecuniary loss, was the bitter reflection that he had been deceived at last.

He circulated through the medium of the police a description of the scoundrels, especially of the sham detective who was evidently the instigator and prime mover in the whole affair; and went back to his shop, a sadder and a wiser man. Although pride withheld him from publicly disclosing the fraud of which he had been the victim, the secret was not long in leaking out in a provincial town, where everybody knew everybody else's business; and the ironical condolence or open exultation of his neighbours over the man who had so often boasted of his penetration, being himself taken in at last, drove him to the verge of frenzy. At the same time this treatment gave additional strength to his resolution, that if ever he met any of the swindlers again, he would spare no pains or expense in bringing them to justice. He felt certain that he would be able to identify them, for his memory for faces was very good.

CHAPTER II.

"I DECLARE, Spencer, you're the most careless fellow on the face of the earth!" remarked Captain Dalrymple, half-seriously, half-banteringly, to his friend and comrade Godfrey Spencer, as the two young men strolled along the promenade of the important naval station and garrison town of Mudport. "You're always losing something, or forgetting something, or getting taken in by somebody, or——"

"Don't row at me, Dalrymple, just because I don't happen to be as orderly and precise as you are," returned the other, a handsome young fellow, with a pair of mis-

chievous brown eyes. "I can't help being naturally untidy and lazy. I would if I could. And after all, what does it signify losing a trumpery card-case? The old thing wasn't worth five shillings. Though I grant it was annoying to have no card to leave on the new people at the Dockyard, after hunting all my pockets through twice for my case, until I looked like a fool. But it's just my luck."

And he began softly to hum a tune, as though he wished to change the subject.

"Just your carelessness, you mean," ruthlessly retorted the other, whose Scotch method and thrift were often being outraged by his friend's slipshod ways. "I wonder how many cigar-cases, and purses, and sticks, and umbrellas you have contrived to lose since I came to Mudport!—to say nothing of your being always ready to empty your pockets at the request of any plausible vagabond who comes to you with a whining tale. You'll get yourself into some unpleasant mess one of these days, you mark my words."

His friend, whose happy temperament was not easily ruffled, merely laughed in reply, and thought no more of the card-case, which had mysteriously disappeared from his pocket in the course of a stroll. The description given by his friend Dalrymple was so accurate, that I need offer no further delineation of Captain Godfrey Spencer, except to say that though highly popular in his regiment, his careless habits were always placing him in some dilemma or other. Perhaps unfortunately for himself, he was possessed of sufficiently ample means to enable him to bear losses with equanimity, for he was entirely his own master, having lost both parents when a child.

"There's a gentleman in your room, sir, waiting to see you," the Captain's servant informed his master, upon the latter's return to barracks an hour later.

"'Mr. Algernon Lascelles Mortimer,'" read Godfrey from the card which was handed to him. "Don't know the name at all. Are you sure he asked for me?"

"Oh yes, sir. He came about half an hour ago, and when I told him you were out, he said he'd wait until you came back."

Easy-going Godfrey asked no further particulars, but plunging upstairs, entered the small, untidy sitting-room which was so thoroughly characteristic of its owner, and there found himself confronted by a dark, resolute-looking, and gentlemanly

young man of about his own age, who held out his hand with a smile.

"I need not ask if you are Captain Spencer, for I should have known you anywhere from your likeness to your brother George. Your name is very familiar to me, and it is possible that my friend George may have mentioned mine to you in return. Has he?"

"Well, no—I can't call to mind just now that he ever spoke of a friend named Mortimer," returned Godfrey, whose younger brother George was a lieutenant in an infantry regiment stationed at Dublin. "Do you come from Ireland?"

"Well, not just lately. It is about a month since I left Dublin," replied Mr. Mortimer. "And your brother has so many friends—you know how popular he is—that it is not surprising that my name should escape his memory, although I spent many a pleasant evening in the mess-room of the dear old Twenty-second. I always call it so, because so many of my people have been at one time or another in the regiment. But it was quite by accident that I came to call upon you to-day." He paused, and drew something from his pocket. "I believe this card-case belongs to you. I picked it up this afternoon in the High Street, and looking at the cards to find out to whom it belonged, I saw the name of Spencer, and it occurred to me that you must be the brother at Mudport of whom I have so often heard George speak."

"Thanks," said Godfrey, cordially, pleased to have his property restored. "It was awfully good of you to take the trouble to bring it back. I dropped it this afternoon. And so George has talked to you about me? I haven't seen him for more than a year, poor old boy. No, you mustn't think of going yet. Sit down and tell me how you liked Dublin."

He hospitably brought out spirits and cigars, and the two young men had a long talk. Godfrey was delighted with his companion, who seemed to have seen a good deal of the world. It appeared that he was a stranger at Mudport, where he was merely staying at a hotel for a day or two. Although not in the army, he seemed to be acquainted with the officers of most of the garrisons in England, and had an extensive knowledge of military affairs. It ended in his host giving him a cordial invitation to dine at the mess that evening, as it was guest-night. But

Mr. Mortimer declined, on the plea of a previous engagement.

"Then I'm afraid I shall hardly see you again, if you're not going to stay long," Godfrey said, in a tone of deep regret. "I have an engagement for to-morrow, and on Thursday I am going up to town to meet an old uncle of mine, Sir Horace Trevor, of whom you may have heard. He is coming from India to settle in England, after an absence of twenty years. A long time, isn't it?"

"I know Sir Horace well by reputation," said Mr. Mortimer, cordially. "Such a distinguished soldier is a relative to be proud of, Captain Spencer. He has no family of his own, I believe?"

"No, he never married. George and I are his two nearest relatives, and he looks upon us quite in the light of sons."

"He is wealthy, I presume?"

"I believe so. He was always very lucky in the way of appointments. And now that he is leaving India for good, he is bringing all his property with him—plate, and jewels, and so forth—and he wants me to meet him as soon as he lands, to see about taking care of them. It's rather nervous work, you see, to carry valuable property about nowadays. He has a presentation service of plate, and in addition some very valuable jewels, which came to him in rather an odd way. He was able to render important services to an Indian Ranees who ruled a small territory, which was in danger of being snapped up by her more powerful neighbours. She was a widow, with only one baby-son; and but for my uncle, who pleaded her cause before the Viceroy in person, she would have been robbed of her land. She was very grateful to him, but he would take nothing for his services; but when she died it was found that on her death-bed she had bequeathed to him a casket of valuable jewels, with such an urgent request that he would not refuse that testimony of her gratitude that he could not refuse to take them. There's a diamond necklace, I believe, worth several thousands; and other things to correspond. And it will be a relief to my uncle's mind when they are safely deposited in a bank."

"Quite a romance," said Mr. Mortimer, smiling as he rose to go. "But I don't think Sir Horace need feel at all apprehensive. London is, undoubtedly, the safest capital on the globe. Well, Captain Spencer, I'm very glad to have had the pleasure of meeting you, and I trust it

may not be long before I see you again. Remember me very kindly to George when you write."

"Indeed I will," said genial Godfrey, as he walked to the door with his visitor. "By-the-bye, what did you say was your address?"

"I am just giving up my chambers in the Albany, and for a few weeks my movements will be uncertain," returned his new friend. "But I'll write when I am settled again, and let you know. I am rather thinking of going to Norway for a little salmon-fishing. Good-bye, and be sure you give my message to George. I shall never forget the many pleasant hours I've spent in his company."

Godfrey returned to his room, and then for the first time noticed that he had left his writing-table unlocked, and, indeed, all his keys at the mercy of the first-comer, for they were all depending from the lock which was intended to secure the lid of his davenport. They had doubtless been there ever since he went out that afternoon. It was a piece of gross carelessness, for inside were bank-notes, a cheque-book, and various valuables, to say nothing of all his correspondence. All must have been perfectly open to Mr. Mortimer's inspection, during the half-hour he had spent in awaiting his host in solitude. But the idea that any friend of George's would be so dishonourable as to peep and pry into another man's desk was so preposterous, that it never even crossed Godfrey's easy mind. He opened his blotting-book, and took out his uncle's last letter, received that morning, in order that he might read over Sir Horace's instructions once more, so as to be quite sure that he had understood them aright.

"S.S. Bangalore, off Alexandria.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW,—When you receive this, I shall be nearing England, although by not coming overland from Brindisi, I lengthen the time which must be occupied in the journey. But I prefer to stick to the steamer, for I am getting too old now to undertake the long railway journey. I hope you will meet me at the docks, and see me safely through the Custom House to the place where I intend to put up—the Pelican Hotel in Piccadilly. I shall be glad to have a strong young fellow like you to look after me, for I am bringing no servant with me, and my sight and hearing are not quite so good as they were. I may as well tell you that I have a great deal of valuable property with

me, which I mean to deposit at my banker's; and until I have got rid of it, I shall not feel easy in my mind. You have often heard of the famous 'Ranee's necklace,' which I now have among my impediments, and it adds considerably to my anxieties.

"The steamer is due at Gravesend on Thursday next, at noon, when I shall hope to see you. Rooms are already engaged for us at the hotel, and as long as you can obtain leave of absence from your Colonel—whose acquaintance I hope to make—I shall expect you to be my guest.

"Your affectionate Uncle,

"HORACE TREVOR, K.C.B."

"Good old chap," meditated Godfrey, as he folded the letter up. "Although he's never seen me, I feel as if I knew him quite well already, and I'm sure his letters have always been most kind. A fine-looking old man, too," he added, looking at a photograph of the old General which was enclosed in the letter. "Although he's nearly seventy, I declare he hardly looks more than fifty. I only wish George were going to meet us in town too, and then I should be quite satisfied."

"Can I come in for a minute, old fellow?" asked his comrade Dalrymple, appearing at the door. "You've just had a visitor, haven't you? I saw you shaking hands with a man in the lobby."

"Yes; and do you know, I've actually got my card-case back again, Dalrymple," said Godfrey, gleefully, as he took it out of his pocket and flourished it in his friend's face. "There must be a providence which takes especial care of careless people, after all. A man picked it up in the High Street, and, seeing my name, took the trouble to bring it to me; and, oddly enough, it seems that he knows my brother George very well, and has often dined with his regiment at Dublin."

"What's his name?" asked the other, quickly.

"There's his card on the table."

"Mortimer—Mortimer," read Captain Dalrymple, thoughtfully; "and you say he is a friend of your brother's?"

"I suppose so. He knows all about his affairs and the garrison at Dublin, although I cannot call to mind at this moment that I ever heard George speak of him."

"You have never seen him before?"

"No, never."

"And have only his word for it that he is acquainted with your brother?"

"Good gracious, Dalrymple!" cried his friend, out of patience, "I declare you're

always fancying something or other. Pray, what have you got in your head now?"

"I am almost certain that Mr. Algernon Lascelles Mortimer is nothing but a common swindler. His face seemed familiar to me, and I'm sure I've seen him before. Two years ago, when I was stationed at Barminster, a plausible fellow obtained entrance to our quarters on pretence of knowing somebody or other connected with the regiment, and, after borrowing money from several of our fellows, suddenly disappeared with a number of small articles of value from our rooms. He called himself Percival then; but if he is not Algernon Mortimer he must be his brother, for I never saw two men more alike. We sent for the police, and then found that this impostor had been carrying on this game for years—going about to different garrison towns, and scraping acquaintance with the officers, in order to steal anything he could lay his hands on. In the course of his wanderings, he has acquired a knowledge of military affairs which renders it easy for him to delude the unwary."

"Mortimer's all right," doggedly repeated Godfrey. "He spoke like a gentleman; and he's a friend of George's."

"I should like to hear your brother's corroboration of that fact."

"Well, I'll write to him soon, and ask, since you won't be satisfied without. I'm sure, though, you're mistaken. This fellow never tried to get anything out of me; and, to quite settle the question," said Godfrey, triumphantly, lifting the flap of his writing-table, "he was waiting half an hour for me, with the keys in this davenport, and, though I had left twenty pounds in notes, as well as six sovereigns in this drawer, besides cheques, and other things, there's nothing missing. If he had been your man, of course he'd have walked off with the lot. Now, what do you say, Dalrymple?"

"I say what I've always said," his friend answered, quietly: "you are too hasty in bestowing your confidence. Some day you'll find yourself taken in, and then, perhaps, you will acknowledge the truth of what I say."

Godfrey only laughed in his light-hearted way; and nothing more was seen or heard of Mr. Mortimer, contrary to Captain Dalrymple's expectations. But Godfrey was surprised to receive the next evening a telegram from his uncle, dated "Paris:"

"Have changed my mind, and am coming

back overland. Will write. Do not go to London until you hear again from me, as I may stay here a few days."

Such a sudden change in his uncle's plans was unexpected, and astonishing under the circumstances. Godfrey had always believed Sir Horace to be a man of firm and inflexible will, and not likely to vacillate in such a manner. Yet there was the telegram, and to disregard it would be absurd.

He must defer going to London until he heard again from the General; and then it would doubtless be manifest that his uncle had good reasons for this alteration in his route, which he could not entrust to a telegram. Still, thinking of the valuables which the old man had in his possession, he was conscious that he would feel relieved when his uncle was safely in England. But that he feared to wound the independent spirit of the old soldier, he would have gone to meet him in Paris; but he did not like to do so unasked, knowing that Sir Horace was very impatient of anything like interference.

Careless Godfrey would not have dismissed the subject of his uncle's change of plans so lightly, had he guessed that the telegram was a forgery, and emanated from a scheme concocted in the subtle brain of Mr. Algernon Mortimer, who was just what Captain Dalrymple had designated him—a common swindler. Profiting by the accident of the keys being in the Captain's escritoire, a very brief study of Godfrey's correspondence had suggested to his mind a plan, of which the simplicity was only surpassed by the audacity. He, Algernon Mortimer, would go to meet Sir Horace at Gravesend, and lighten his responsibilities by taking upon himself the care of the Ranee's jewels.

A NEW NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

TO CANADA VIA HUDSON'S BAY.

TWO hundred and eighty years ago that adventurous mariner, Henry Hudson, left Gravesend in the little vessel *Hopewell*, at the charge of certain worshipful merchants of London, "to discover a passage by the North Pole to Japan and China." His craft was only what in those days was called a cock-boat, otherwise, a small yawl, and her crew consisted of ten men and a boy.

Hudson did not discover a passage to India; but he did discover that the waters

of the Spitzbergen seas were teeming with whales, and thus he laid the foundation of the whale fishery. He also discovered the east coast of Greenland and a mermaid. This, at least, is what he has recorded of the latter incident :

"One of our company, looking over-board, saw a mermaid, and calling up some of the company to see her, one more came up, and she was then close to the ship's side, looking earnestly on the men. Soon afterwards a sea came and overturned her. Her back and breasts were like a woman's; her body as big as one of us; her skin very white, and long black hair hanging down behind. In her going down they saw her tail, like the tail of a porpus, and speckled like a mackarel. Their names that saw her were Thomas Hills and Robert Rayner."

We should be disposed to say that Hudson was here unconsciously inaugurating the seal fishery also; but the point is not material just now. What happened was that the Hopewell returned to the Thames in September, 1607, without having found a passage either to or across the North Pole.

After this, Henry Hudson made two more voyages to the North. In 1609 he discovered the Bay which still bears his name; and in 1610 he went with the Discovery through the Straits and into the Bay. It was on this voyage that the crew mutinied, and sent him and a few faithful ones adrift in a little boat, which was never heard of more. And the ghosts of Heindrich Hudson and his men still haunt the heights of the Catskill Mountains, and play at bowls when a storm is brewing, as all who know the story of Rip Van Winkle are aware.

Hudson's purpose on the third voyage was to make his way through an opening which had been previously observed, and through which it was hoped to find an alternative to the phantom polar route to the North-west. That opening is now known as Hudson's Strait, and, in pushing through it to the west, the audacious Discovery, only fifty-five tons, and manned by twenty-one men, was laying the foundation of the fortune of the great Hudson's Bay Company, which exists to this day, and which has done so much to open up the northern and western half of the North Continent of America. For, although Hudson himself did not return, the news brought by the survivors of his party led to the despatch of other expeditions. It is of inte-

rest to follow briefly the records of these expeditions in so far as they tend to demonstrate the navigability of what promises to be soon a new commercial and strategic route to our Western Empire.

The Discovery entered Hudson's Strait in June, 1610, and had much difficulty with the ice. She was—as has been said—but a pigmy of a vessel, and ill fitted to cope with the giant grip of the Frost King. But she did get through, and on the return voyage in the August of the following year, found an open channel to the sea.

In 1612 the Resolution was sent, under the command of Sir Thomas Butler, to test the same route. She was able to get through with comparative ease in the month of June, and, after wintering on the west coast of Hudson's Bay, the party returned in the summer of 1613, without meeting with any obstacles in the Straits.

Once more the little Discovery made the attempt, under the command of Robert Bylet, with the famous William Baffin as pilot. This was in 1615, and Hudson's Strait was entered in the month of May. This was too early, and it was the end of June before she got through; but on the return in August the channel was again clear.

Then there was a pause in the quest, and not until 1619 did another English, and also a Danish, expedition penetrate into the mysterious inland sea. These were followed twelve years later by two other expeditions from England. One of these last was under the command of Captain Luke Fox, who thus quaintly describes the ice he encountered :

"The ice in the Strait consists of two kinds, one of which is mountainous—a huge piece, compact, of great quantity, some more, some less—but in this freet" (strait) "you seldom have any bigger than a great church, and most thereof lesse. The other kind is smaller, and is what we call mesht, or fleacht ice. Of this you shall there have numbers infinite, some of the quantity of a roode, some a perch, some an acre or two acres. But the most is small, and about a foot or two above water, and eight or ten under water; and these are they what do enclose you, so as in much wind from the topmast head you shall hardly see any water for them. But while you lie amongst them it is so smooth as you shall not feel the ship stirre."

Comodore Markham, who visited this

region in the Alert in 1866, says that this description quite coincides with his own experience of the ice two hundred and fifty years after Captain Fox. It exactly describes, he says, the peculiar nature of the ice that is usually met with to the present day, during the navigable season, in this channel. And here we must acknowledge our indebtedness to Commodore Markham's recent communication to the Royal Geographical Society, in the preparation of this article.

Captain Fox found little difficulty in the Strait, and got into the Bay by the middle of July. On returning he encountered no difficulty whatever, although it was the thirty-first of October before he reached the Atlantic end of the Strait.

There was another pause in exploration until 1669, when the Hudson's Bay Company was incorporated by Royal Charter, and Gillam was sent out in the *Nonsuch* to establish a settlement. This he did at Fort Charles, at the south end of the Bay, going and returning through the Strait without difficulty. Thereafter, for fifty years, the ships of the Company went back and forward at frequent intervals. The Company also fitted out two or three special expeditions for purposes of discovery around their territory, but these resulted in disaster.

Captain Middleton's exploring expedition in 1741, and Captain Moor's in 1746, however, resulted in considerable additions to the knowledge of the geography and navigation of these waters; and Captain Wales, sent out by the Royal Society in 1768, made the passage of the Strait in nine days, his only difficulty being with contrary winds and calms. The year 1791, however, was an exceptional one, for the ice was so long in breaking up, that a Company's ship, under Captain Duncan, could not get into the Bay until the month of September. This is the only case of the kind on record.

Parry, in 1821, encountered a good deal of ice in the Strait in the month of July, but was less bothered by it than by contrary winds. In returning, in September, 1823, he was only five days in running through the Strait, and saw no ice at all. Parry wrote that as the result of his experience, and that of his predecessors, it should be accepted as a general rule that in most seasons, nothing was to be gained by attempting to pass Hudson's Strait earlier than the first week of July.

Commodore Markham says that he

wholly agrees with Parry as regards sailing-ships, to which the remark was meant to apply. But he points out that steam has made a great revolution in ice navigation, and that a well-found steamer is now able to make her way with ease through Hudson's Strait in June, when a sailing-ship would be hopelessly lost.

The last Government expedition to Hudson's Bay was that of Sir George Back, in the *Terror*, in 1836. This was a bad ice year, and it took the ship a fortnight to get through in the month of August. The whole voyage of the *Terror*, however, was a succession of troubles and disasters, and it was only by a miracle that she was, by clever seamanship, enabled to bring her gallant crew home again.

But, meanwhile, the trading ships of the Hudson's Bay Company were making annual voyages between England and the Factories at York and Moose, and other established stations. Even in the last century they rarely failed to make the voyage, and very few of their ships were lost. As the business grew, sometimes two, and even three, ships were despatched in a year.

Commodore Markham has had access to the records of the Company's voyages for a period of eleven years from 1835 to 1846. He finds that during these years the average time of getting through the Strait on the outward voyages was sixteen days; the longest time was thirty-one days, and the shortest time was eight days. The delays were invariably caused by calms and adverse winds, and not by the ice. No difficulties at all from ice were met with in the homeward voyage, the earliest date of leaving upon which was the sixth of September, and the latest the third of October. That is to say, these were the dates when the vessels left the Factories in Hudson's Bay for London.

This, then, is a summary of the evidence of two centuries and a half regarding the navigability of Hudson's Strait. That passage is five hundred miles long, with an average breadth of one hundred miles, and a minimum breadth, at the narrowest parts, of forty-five miles. It is a deep channel, remarkably free from rocks and shoals, and while separating Labrador from Arctic America, is the only known inlet to the great area of waters known as Hudson's Bay.

This Mediterranean of North America is nine hundred miles from north to south, and about six hundred miles wide, and it covers

an area of about five hundred thousand square miles. Its southern limit is just above the fiftieth parallel of North latitude, and its northern limit touches the sixty-fourth parallel. It has a pretty uniform depth of about seventy fathoms; is free from rocks and shoals; is seldom troubled by storms and fogs; and does not know icebergs. Lieutenant Gordon, sent lately by the Canadian Government to make observations, reports that the temperature of the water of the Bay is fourteen degrees higher than that of Lake Superior, and that therefore, "Hudson's Bay may be regarded as a vast basin of comparatively warm water, the effect of which must be to ameliorate the winter climate to the south and east of it."

Nevertheless, the winters are very severe, and although it has been said that the summer is genial enough to allow of the growth of European vegetables in the open air, the testimony upon that head is a little conflicting. At any rate, there is no difficulty known, or suggested, as to the navigation of the Bay, and the point of interest with regard to the proposed scheme to which we shall presently refer, is to determine for how great a portion of the year the passage of the Strait may be made with reasonable safety, and without undue delay.

The argument is that "a channel which has been navigated for two hundred and twenty years—first by the frail fly-boats of the seventeenth century, then by the bluff-bowed, slow-sailing, exploring vessels of Parry's days, and for a long period by the Hudson's Bay Company's ships—cannot be very formidable, and if sailing-ships can annually pass through it, 'à fortiori,' steamers will find less difficulty in doing so. But it would be necessary that such steamers should be specially built and equipped for the service, and it is desirable that despatch should be used in making the voyage." This is the argument of Commodore Markham, who further says, "The steamers for this navigation should be specially constructed to resist ordinary ice-pressure, and should be provided with power to steam at least ten or twelve knots."

It is by this route that the Canadians propose to form a new link with the Mother Country. The idea is to construct a railway from Winnipeg to Churchill, or Nelson, on the west shores of Hudson's Bay; to form a good harbour at the terminus; and to have a special line of

steamers to run thence during the season to Liverpool or Glasgow. It was with this scheme in view that the Canadian Government instituted a series of observations to which brief reference may now be made.

In the year 1884, a sailing steamer called the Neptune was purchased by the Canadian Government and despatched to Hudson's Strait for the purpose of establishing stations on both sides of the Strait, at which continuous daily observations could be taken and recorded on the weather, tide, temperature, condition and movements of the ice, etc., for a period of at least twelve months. The Neptune made a successful voyage, and the stations were located as follows: one near Ungava Bay, close to the entrance on the south side; one near the Upper Savage Islands at Ashe Inlet; one immediately opposite on the south side of the Strait; one at Nottingham Island; and one at Digges Island, just where the Strait opens into the Bay.

At each of these five stations there was an observer with a couple of attendants provisioned for fully twelve months.

The Neptune then returned to Halifax, and the Captain reported that had he been going right through the Strait to Churchill, he would not have been delayed by the ice for twenty-four hours. On the homeward voyage there was no encounter whatever with ice; and it is noteworthy that the Neptune was the first steam-vessel that ever entered Hudson's Bay.

In the spring of 1885, the English Government placed Her Majesty's ship Alert (well known in connection with Sir George Nares' expedition) at the disposal of the Canadian Government, in order to pursue the enquiry into the navigability of the Strait. Officered and manned by the Canadian Government, the Alert left Halifax on the sixteenth of June; but she does not seem to have been very well managed, for she did not reach Churchill until the end of August, after spending a few days at each station in the Strait. She met with no ice on the return journey early in October. The stations were re-provisioned for another year, and the reports brought back were regarded as favourable "in so far as they bore on the question of the safe navigation of Hudson's Strait during a certain period of the year."

In 1886, the Alert was again despatched, and this time Commodore Markham went

with her, in an unofficial capacity, and to see for himself whether a commercial highway is practicable by this route. Sailing from Halifax on the twenty-third of June, 1886, Hudson's Strait was reached on the fifth of July, where thick weather and loose streams of ice were met with. The ice, however, was never packed sufficiently close to prevent the Alert from making fairly good progress—and the Alert is a slow steamer. Between the ninth and eleventh of July, and for two hundred miles, no ice was seen at all, and on the eleventh of July the first station on the north side of the Strait was reached. The observers there had had a pleasant winter, and reported "that the ice did not form in the Strait before December, and that the channel was perfectly free for navigation during the entire month of November." Game was also reported to be plentiful in the neighbourhood.

The Alert continued her passage through the Strait, but was a good deal delayed by the ice—the slow progress being attributed by Commodore Markham to her deficient steam-power, and to the inexperience of ice-navigation of those in charge. "Practical experience, unceasing vigilance, and a happy knack of doing the right thing at the right moment, are essential qualifications for those seamen who desire to become successful ice-navigators."

On the twentieth of July the Alert reached the observatory on Digges Island, which was the scene of the crisis in Henry Hudson's voyage. It is described as consisting of bare hills of gneiss, rising to a height of about five hundred feet, intersected by broad valleys, carpeted with moss and coarse grass. From Digges Island the Alert passed into Hudson's Bay, and with the exception of a few streams of broken-up stuff, saw no more ice until she dropped anchor in Churchill Harbour on the twenty-ninth of July. Commodore Markham left the vessel there and made his way by canoe to Winnipeg, but the Alert, returning through the Strait, picked up the observers and took them back to Halifax without any more difficulties with the ice.

It has been stated that the reports of the observers have not been regarded as conclusive enough by the Government, and that divided counsels still prevail. But Commodore Markham asserts from his own observations, and from a careful study of the reports of others, that Hudson's Strait is certainly quite navigable,

and free from ice in August and later in the season. Only once since 1735 have the ships of the Hudson's Bay Company failed to make the voyage; and it is said that since old Hudson took the Discovery through the Strait, the passage has been made five hundred times, while the losses due to the ice could be counted upon the fingers of one hand.

If a review be made of all the voyages of which we have given particulars above, it will be seen that the Strait has been entered in May and passed in June outwards, while the testimony is unanimous in favour of a homeward passage up till the end of October at any rate. We thus have a possible period of five months, and a tolerably certain period of three months during which the Strait is navigable for suitably-constructed vessels. Competent Canadian authorities estimate the average period of safe navigation at three months.

Would that serve to make the proposed route remunerative? It all depends on the traffic. Sir Charles Tupper says that last season sixteen million bushels of grain were produced in Manitoba and the North-West Territory, the chief outlet for which was by means of the Canadian Pacific Railway down to Montreal and Quebec, whence it was taken by steamer to England. But a large portion of it could not make use of the route, and had to be sent by way of Lake Superior to New York for shipment.

This is what the Canadians do not want. They wish to be independent of the United States in sending their products to market; and, indeed, if President Cleveland carries out his Retaliation Policy, they will be compelled to find routes of their own. It is estimated that by the Hudson's Bay route the distance to be traversed by the produce of the Far West coming to England would be shortened by one-half, which, at the existing rates of carriage, would be equal to a saving to the farmers of about three pounds sterling per head of cattle, and five shillings per quarter of grain, exported.

This is a very important consideration, and it all seems to depend on the construction of a railway from Winnipeg to a point on the shore of Hudson's Bay—that is to say, a distance of about seven hundred miles. That would bring the capital of Manitoba some eleven hundred miles nearer to us than it is by way of New York. At present, however, the scheme is confined to a railway of only

some three hundred miles in length, from the head of Lake Winnipeg to Churchill, and the capital required for this is so small that it is estimated that if the navigation be open for only two-and-a-half months, the earnings, it is said, would be sufficient to pay interest on the investment. It is not our purpose, however, to discuss the financial aspect of the question. That chiefly concerns the Canadians, who are by no means backward in enterprise, as the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway has proved. The Hudson's Bay scheme is a small affair compared with that huge line; and, as the Canadian Government are willing to grant seven millions of acres of land to subsidise a line from Winnipeg to Churchill, we may reasonably infer that, as Sir Charles Tupper predicts, the day is not far distant when it will be a reality. The subject is full of interest, both in its geographical, its economic, and its commercial aspects.

A NEGLECTED ART.

To all who have had any experience in drawing-rooms, parlours, or wherever human creatures meet for purposes of social enjoyment, it must have appeared that, however good the other concomitants of the hour may have been, the conversation was, as a rule, eminently that part of the entertainment which had been left entirely unrehearsed, and which charged their memories with the most dismal recollections of vapid weariness. There are, no doubt, many explanations which may sufficiently account for the fact, but none are of a nature so peremptory as to forbid the hope of improvement. And though we may not feel any latent qualifications, being plain people, for the rôle of a Sheridan or a Conversation Sharp, nor have any frivolous taste for prattle and "persiflage," we can easily see that conversation ought to be enjoyable, and that there is a distinct call upon us to do our best to make it so. We may safely say that in our social converse there is something worthy of more consideration than is usually bestowed upon it; that the mechanical facility of the tongue may be the means of betraying us into the shallowness and heaviness which mark the chatterer and the bore; that we do not, in truth, appreciate the gift of speech, nor are we sensible of its social obligations; and that there is much to spur, and much to encourage us to

cultivate this talent which usually runs so profusely to waste in our possession.

Sydney Smith professes an opinion that any man can become a wit just as he can become a mathematician, and that by giving to the subject only six hours a day "he should improve prodigiously before midsummer."

But it is always possible for a man to be a very charming talker without meriting the appellation of a wit, and whatever truth there may be in Sydney Smith's dictum as it stands, to amend it by substituting for the word wit the word conversationalist, would be to render it incontrovertible. The faculty of talking is, indeed, too seldom regarded in the light of a talent to be polished and variously improved. It is so freely employed in all sorts of necessary trivialities that, like the dyer's hand, it becomes subdued to that it works in, and appears itself trivial. Its exercise is so common that it escapes our consciousness, and the motions of the tongue being as habitual as those of the legs, we become as "flat-footed" in our conversation, as we are, too many of us, in our carriage. Furthermore, the general disgust at those very proper objects of aversion, priggishness and pedantry, has far too much power over us. Under the influence of this feeling we confound things which are different, and think that we incur the dreaded odium by leaving the beaten track of commonplace, and trying to entertain people with some special subject about which we fancy we can talk well. The pedant and the prig do not try to entertain and interest their hearers, but to gratify themselves; the distinction is a marked one; and the intention of the talker soon becomes apparent.

In comparison with many delightful social arts, such as music, dancing, and private theatricals, conversation is not regarded as having any distinct function of entertainment. Certainly, we often find it entertaining, sometimes illegitimately so with the zeal of scandal, sometimes legitimately with the brightness of good-humoured wit, and the charm of eloquent information; but we are not accustomed to expect that the men and women who talk to us should make any preparations to this end equivalent to those which we suppose them to have made when they sing to us, or dance with us. Yet there is unquestionably a felicity of conversation, which can only be conferred by study and

practice, but which, by these means, can be almost universally gained. And we can more easily excuse a man for paining us by his bad singing, or awkward waltzing, than for wearying us either by talking nonsense, or saying nothing at all.

It is of course quite conventional to be sarcastic upon prepared conversation, and many a sly platitude is "popped" at studied impromptus and premeditated puns. "Why should I disparage my parts by thinking what to say?" says Mr. Brisk in the "Double Dealer." "None but dull rogues think; witty men, like rich fellows, are always ready for all expenses, while your blockheads, like needy scoundrels, are forced to examine their stock, and forecast the charges of the day." But Mr. Brisk appears among the dramatis personæ as a "pert coxcomb," and a pert coxcomb is always ready for all expenses, simply because he has the faculty of being able to enjoy his own witticisms, without any reference to the sentiments of his listeners. He is opulent because he acts as his own banker, and never fails to honour the bills he draws upon himself. Indeed, the style of Mr. Brisk's sneer gives the lie direct to its sense, for it is polished and balanced with the loving pains which the old dramatist never spared upon his work. There is something very unreasonable in these sneers, which are not commonly uttered by wits but by those shallow pretenders who have little to recommend them but their impudence and vivacity. If a man has selected his subjects, carefully considered and arranged his ideas, aptly chosen his quotations, and assured himself of every point in his stories, it must surely betray a completely inverted process of reasoning to find in these things matter of complaint against him. There is too prevalent a disposition to put the man who tries to please us by his talk on trial, and hold him bound to prove to our satisfaction that he is original, whereas the true point is, whether, or not, he is interesting or amusing. If we are moved to laughter let us laugh and be thankful, and not weary ourselves with minute enquiries into the antecedent processes, the result of which, at any rate, is our entertainment. There is a remuneration of praise due to him who has pleased us, and to withhold it is an act of meanness on our part. We know it, however, to be a well-ascertained fact of human nature that men feel the sorest against those who have obliged them, and it is in perfect consistency with this

principle that they should be in an ill humour with those who have put them in a good one.

The "diners out," who made talking the business of their lives, who "got up" their conversation as a barrister his brief, and studied their stories as an actor his part, were certainly very delightful company, and more than earned the good things they swallowed by the good things they said. With the nicest appreciation of the conditions under which they exercised their art, they gently engaged the attention of their fellow-guests during the change of courses, and never made the mistake of saying their best things when the cook was on trial. They managed to give the note of conversation, and, without appearing to do so, to keep it in the channel they affected. Recognising that their business was conversation — not speech-making—they observed Lord Chesterfield's rule :

"Pay your own reckoning, but do not treat the whole company; this being one of the very few cases in which people do not care to be treated, every one being fully convinced that he has wherewithal to pay."

Their continual practice gave the easy air of spontaneity to their most elaborate preparations, and their most carefully-studied impromptus sprang to light with the careless grace of a sylph of the ballet, who has spent many an hour of toil in becoming capable of her ethereal motions and "poses plastiques."

It was not because they possessed extraordinary mental gifts that the company of these men was sought, but because they had made themselves unusually proficient in the art of agreeable converse: which is an art conferring pleasures not inferior to those yielded by any other social accomplishment whatever, from singing to whistling, from playing fantasias on the piano to strumming breakdowns on the banjo, and which ought, in an appreciable degree, to form part of the equipment of every man and woman of average education and intelligence.

Those highly respectable people, the bores, who may well be considered a "great race," in virtue of their imperial exactions upon the time and patience of their protesting fellows, are certainly abused almost to the limits of their deserts. They are constantly exalted on the pillory of the satirist, and made amusing in public in return for being so tiresome in private.

They are, indeed, much worthier of a Dunciad than the men enshrined in Pope's satiric verse. The offence of Budgell, Broome, Blackmore, and the rest of the elect was that they wrote dull books; but they were guiltless of forcibly imposing their dulness on people who wanted to be let alone. A book can be tossed aside, and this is what happened to their books; but a bore, being a person with civil rights, which, in the present state of the law, are not invalidated by his tediousness, and sometimes having a social weight almost equal to his conversational ponderosity, cannot be so promptly dismissed. An afflicting circumstance in the case is that he is usually quite unconscious of the suffering he continues to inflict. The hint courteous, albeit of the finest temper and sharpest point, fails to pierce his quilted doublet. Even Hotspur's rude indifference to Glendower, who "held him, but last night at least nine hours, in reckoning up the several devils' names, That were his lackeys," availed not to silence his prolix tormentor, whose muddy stream flowed equably on, gathering force from every interruption.

The late Mr. Hayward, in one of his interesting essays, says: "A French nobleman, the Duc de Laraguais, armed with legal and medical authorities to the effect that death might be produced by ennui, and that the means by which it was illegally inflicted were immaterial, formally prosecuted a famous Parisian bore for an attempt upon his life." It would appear from the circumstance that this prosecution is recorded as a singular fact, that it did not succeed, for if it had succeeded there can be no doubt that similar causes would have followed, to the extent of becoming as commonplace as actions for breach of promise or defamation of character.

"Time is the stuff that life is made of," and though we might as a jury feel some difficulty in hanging a man for his depredations, even upon that precious part of the commodity which we reserve for our ease and pleasure, we surely have a right to some remedy when our leisure is flooded by the expansive impertinences of the fluent proser, or desolated by the Arctic influences which accompany "the solemn fop, significant and budge."

Yet, even as dirt is said to be but matter in the wrong place, so in many instances is it true that a bore is a philosopher in the wrong company. His conversation, while very delightful to the circle which

shares his peculiar tastes, is unutterable weariness to the man who understands none of those things, and is not willing to be instructed upon them. The phrase, "caviare to the general," properly describes the relation of very many topics to our minds. Without demurring to anything that may be said in their praise, we are not sufficiently attracted by them to make us dissatisfied with our ignorance, and we resent all attempts to force their acquaintance upon us.

The apocryphal Cantab, who complained that he was unable to see what "Paradise Lost" proved, and the complemental Oxonian, who could find neither plot nor poetry in "Euclid's Elements," were presumably clever enough in their respective spheres, but in the absence of other grounds of agreement, they would have been poor company for one another in a railway-carriage. If a man is engrossed with any one subject to such a degree that he feels an extraordinary pleasure in talking upon it, he ought, equally in mercy to his friends and in justice to himself, to seriously face the question whether he is not in all probability an intolerable nuisance. The singularity of his taste, either in the measure of its intensity, or the nature of its object, renders it almost impossible for him to excite or sustain that sympathy among his listeners which is the vital air of agreeable conversation. Yet admitting that it is a grievous fault to overlook the yawning gulf which lies between him and the minds of his hearers; to be blind to all those polite symptoms of weariness which appear in the stolid look and the cold reply, the fault is venial compared with that vice in the listener which consists in a disposition to flit from flower to flower of frivolous gossip, and to find no pleasure in hearing anything that demands and presupposes some exertion of thought. It is always a point worthy of reflection when we condemn a man for being heavy, whether the fact be not the reverse, and ourselves too inert to follow him to wider fields and loftier heights. If there is a distinct duty imposed upon us as talkers, we have an equally distinct duty to discharge as listeners. And it is by the exercise of the latter function that we in a large degree contribute to our success in the former. We widen our capacity of interest, and in this way enable ourselves to enjoy new topics not only as receivers, but as distributors. We are enabled the more

easily to sympathise with our hearers, and thus to divine when they cease to sympathise with us. In matters of dispute our intellectual powers are largely called upon, for we must remember what has been said by others and what we want to say ourselves; observe wherein terms are substantially identical or substantially distinct, weigh arguments, note inconsistencies. Both our memory and our logic thus receive a training in listening, of which we cannot but find the good effects in talking. Our words of persuasion are the more likely to be listened to when we have ourselves shown a desire to hear and weigh all that others may have to offer; our stories will have a better chance of being properly appreciated; and our humorous extravagances will be received with a temper the mirthful inclination of which is not modified by the various degrees of resentful feeling which are the product of neglect on our part.

Above all things, those sweetening elements of social life, good humour and good manners, must be in continual operation. That unpleasant peculiarity of Dr. Johnson which appeared in a habit, when his pistol missed fire, of knocking down his opponent with the butt-end, and the ill-tempered sarcasms of Rogers, are always unpardonable, even when accompanied by the finest wit and the highest attainments. It must surely be very painful to all good-natured people to see any man's well-meant efforts to "pay his own reckoning" peevishly contested, and his coins flung back contemptuously in his face. The super-sensitive being who chafes under the slightest rallery is equally objectionable with the petulant wit, and the pleasure of the company is only to be saved by the presence of the one to act as a foil to the other. We may thus see that a finished conversationalist must combine those excellent virtues of good temper and good feeling, which we are supposed to cultivate every day of our lives, and which are the special characteristics of the gentleman and the gentlewoman.

There are few more delightful pictures than that of a company of pleasant talkers met together under agreeable post-prandial conditions, who, in the words of a French writer, "handle the treasures of the human intellect, not in large sacks and heavy ingots, but in pretty, portable gold coins," and whom a general good temper and fine taste harmonise in a most charming concert of varied talents and conflicting

opinions. At present, the picture seems somewhat ideal, but it would speedily become illustrative of one of the happiest and most usual of social realities if a proper view were generally taken of polite conversation, both with regard to the efforts it demands and the pleasures it bestows.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

ON the following Sunday Mr. Traill, the minister of Stromness, spent the whole of the interval between the morning and afternoon services in repeatedly telling his ward that he thought very highly of a certain young man who had introduced himself to him after what the minister called "the diet of public worship."

"I noticed him when I was preaching, Thora, and perhaps you saw him, too, though he was sitting at the back of the church. He is dark, and his hair is cut wonderfully short—you would hardly think that ordinary scissors could clip so close; and his eyes wandered more than I liked. But there's some excuse for him. He is a Frenchman, it seems, and has come to see to the repair of the schooner which was stranded on the Holms a week or two ago; so it's likely enough that he didn't understand the whole of my discourse. He seems to have not much English yet, and what he has is learned mostly from books; but it's something to see a Frenchman in a church at all, and I think well of him for it. I know the French nation"—long ago in his youth, when Louis Philippe was on the throne, the minister had spent a week in Paris, which, of course, gave him a right to speak with authority concerning the intellect, morals, and religion of the French people—"I know them, and they are a godless race; so I am inclined to think very favourably of this young man, who is evidently superior to most of his fellow countrymen. He is a bit of an archæologist, too; at least, it was on the score of my knowledge of our antiquities and his interest in them, that he sought my acquaintance. I promised to show him my own collection, and to take him to the Dwarfie Stone, and the Maeshowe, and the other spots of interest in the neighbourhood. He is to

take his tea at the Manse to-morrow, so you had better tell Osla to make some scones, and you can get out the best china. I want to read him my paper on the *asterolepis*, that very remarkable fossil which Hugh Miller found in the neighbourhood of Stromness, and to show how it proves that the man Darwin is entirely wrong, and justifies the Bible theory of Creation."

"Do you think M. Harache will care for that?" asked Thora, who had been listening to her guardian's words with more interest than he knew.

"I am sure he will—at least he ought to. But how do you come to know his name?" asked Mr. Traill, in some surprise.

Thora looked a little startled when she perceived that she had betrayed her acquaintance with the stranger; but she had an answer ready.

"I saw him going about, and thought him outlandish—strangers aren't so common in Stromness that one wouldn't take note of one—so I pointed him out to Osla. She wanted to know who he was, so she asked at the inn, and told me."

"I see, I see. Well, we must make him welcome and do what we can for him. It may be that he will carry a light from here to his own darkened land."

For the minister also had a missionary spirit, and would fain have led this young man, whom Providence had cast in his way, from out of the night of Roman bondage into the sweetness and light of the gospel according to Calvin.

"How can I speak to him when I do not know his tongue?" said Thora, with a touch of sullenness, and more than a touch of deceit. But that silent compact made between the two when first they had met, three days before, had implied a determination to increase their acquaintance by any means possible; and since Gaspard had chosen to seek the minister's favour by means of his pet hobbies, it was wise not to spoil the apparent sincerity of his actions by betraying the possible existence of any other motive.

"I wish I knew French," the girl went on. "I shall feel very stupid, listening to you two, and not knowing what you say."

"Oh, he'll speak English," answered the minister, not caring to confess that he himself would be unable to carry on conversation in French; "still, it might be well if you knew a little of some other tongue than your own. I'll look out a grammar to-morrow, and give you one or two lessons."

What the value of the minister's lessons

would have been it is useless to enquire, for they were never given.

Gaspard appeared the following evening after his work on the *Belle Armande* was finished, and proved himself to be an ideal guest. He admired the fossil which, in the minister's opinion, destroyed the evolution theory, and listened with reverence and apparent conviction to the arguments whereby Mr. Traill proved to his own satisfaction that Darwin was a liar, an impostor, and an atheist. He ventured some enquiries on things archæological, and his ignorance of English fortunately covered his ignorance of the subject of his questions. When the minister deftly introduced a theological flavour into the conversation, he took it so well that Mr. Traill subsequently declared that he had a mind singularly open to conviction. This might be so, for really there were no very strong convictions there for this missionary of Protestantism to displace. A healthy-minded man of three-and-twenty does not often give a very large amount of thought to questions affecting his future destiny; his present life offers him too many interests and problems to leave him time to trouble about the next.

Finally, when Mr. Traill mentioned, by way of a jest, the anxiety Thora had felt lest she should not understand the stranger, Gaspard offered eagerly to give her lessons in his tongue, as a recompense—no, "*pas çà*," but as an expression of gratitude for the kindness he had received.

"There's a chance for you, Thora," said the minister, smiling. "Would you like to learn from M. Harache?"

And Thora answered, "Yes."

The two excuses, what he could learn and what he could teach, soon made Gaspard an intimate at the Manse. Perhaps Thora did not profit much by his teaching, for his method was by no means strictly academic; but neither cared much for verbs and nouns. She wanted only to hear more of France, that strange, far-off country which her dreams now made a fairy-land. He desired only some excuse "to look upon her beauty, nothing further." Her beauty, in which he read all that a lover's soul could desire—gentleness, truth, faith, patience, courage, fidelity, love! It takes a life-time's joys and sorrows, a life-time's aspirations and failures, to paint the soul upon the countenance; but to Gaspard's love-blinded brain, the bright eyes and wild-rose cheeks of untroubled youth gave promise of all nobility of soul. Then her

voice! It thrilled his very soul by its sad, languid, musical tones. He forgot that he heard the same accent from the landlady of his inn, and from the workmen who were labouring at the Belle Armande, and was not moved thereby. He noticed it in Thora only, and it spoke to him of life and youth repressed to a round of monotonous duty which wore out both before their time. And when he could persuade her unfamiliar lips to falter out one or two French words, they seemed to him like a caress. He could see no fault or flaw in her. Even the discontent she showed with her present course of life seemed to him but the expression of divine despair.

There is indeed a noble discontent, a Heaven-sent hunger of heart and brain for their rightful food of love and knowledge, to gratify which the soul will overleap all bounds of habit and training, and even seeming duty; but the name and lineaments of that divine longing are often borrowed by a petty restlessness that has its birth only in selfishness and the desire of change. But how shall a man distinguish between the two? Above all, a young man to whom a beautiful woman says, day after day: "Tell me about your country and your home. Your words make me long to go to the places you speak of."

Every evening saw him at the Manse, basking in the light of Thora's eyes. Sometimes, indeed, he had to pay for the privilege, by being forced to listen to the minister's disquisitions on things ancient and modern. Yet these, even to his pre-occupied mind, were not always uninteresting. Gaspard's interest in archaeology was not wholly a pretence. He had wandered through Brittany, and could talk of dolmens and menhirs; and Mr. Traill, when one made allowance for his whims and prejudices, had a fund of knowledge about the remains that abounded in his native islands, the relics of the old heroic Viking days, and yet older Druidic times. Sometimes the young Frenchman could spare an afternoon from his duties on the Belle Armande, and then he and the minister, sometimes accompanied by Thora, sometimes alone, visited those spots in the neighbourhood of Stromness which are dear to the antiquary's soul. Gaspard proved to be a good listener, especially when Thora was absent. If she were with them, his attention would wander, for she was too restless to remain by the old man's side and listen to his words—

she must always wander off to pluck flowers, or seek some new point of view from which to gaze at the familiar scenery, and Gaspard's eyes and thoughts were apt to follow her. Yet it was from the excursions she shared, that he professed most to have profited.

The three of them crossed the restless strait that separates Mainland from Hoy, to see the haunted Dwarfie Stone. Mr. Traill was conveyed from the beach to the great boulder in the mail-cart, a rough farm-waggon, drawn by a stolid bullock; but Gaspard and Thora preferred to exercise their young limbs by a cross-country tramp, leaping from one rough clump of heather to another, and stopping occasionally to pluck a plant of silky cotton-grass, or sweet bog-myrtle, or unfamiliar, delicate, quaint moss. Then the minister told them the legend of the dwarf who had hewn out the two cramped chambers in the great stone, and of the trolls and pixies who had visited him there, narrating the tale with an affected incredulity which barely veiled his hereditary belief in it. There came a sudden storm of rain while he was telling his story, and the trio hurried home; but though they were soaked with both rain and spray before they regained the Manse of Stromness, Gaspard declared fervently that it had been an exquisite day, one he should never forget.

He was less contented on the day when he and Mr. Traill went to the Maeshowe and the Stones of Stennis, Thora being kept at home by old Osla, the housekeeper, to help in some domestic task.

The girl had been inclined to sulk at this claim upon her; but Osla was a tyrant in her way, and ruled both the minister and his adopted child.

"Da lassie's seen a da stanes in da kintra," she said with her Shetland drawl, and her hereditary Norse inability to pronounce the diphthong. "If you will gang a' round de place wi' dis lad you can dae 't; but dere's nae good in de lassie trailing after you like a doggie."

This was to Mr. Traill. To Thora she spoke more gently:

"Dinna you greet, lamb, at biding wi' me. It's no da stanes you wants to see; and if this Yaspard"—the Shetland form of Gaspard or Jasper—"likes you in da right way, he has seen enough o' you to speak his mind; and if he doesna, da less you sees o' him da better."

There was no use in fretting; Osla must

have her way ; and having got it she tried to console the girl by telling her all manner of weird and wonderful stories of Northern witches who rode on the Aurora Borealis, and by repeating old ballads that might have been versions of some of the sagas in Snorro Sturlesen's great romance, the "Heimskringla," with its fierce stories of Vikings and sea-rovers, who thought it shame to die in their beds, or to accept life from a victorious foe.

"And I'll tell you how I first came to Orkney," said the old woman, when other tales were done. Thora had heard the story a hundred times already ; but she was always ready to hear it again, though her imagination never could connect its long-ago romance with Osla's wrinkled, weather-beaten face and shrunken figure. It was no very wonderful story either ; but a woman's own love-tale is always for her the one romance the world has ever known. Osla and a certain Lowrie had been lovers against their parents' will, and since their own minister would not marry them in face of the disapproval of their kindred, they had fled from far north-west in a fishing-boat, and come to the mainland of Orkney, and there, in the most sacred spot in the whole archipelago, within the circle of the Stones of Stennis, they had taken each other for husband and wife.

"Da minister here he said it wasna a right marriage ; but Lowrie askit a lawyer in Kirkwall, and he said that if we chose to call it a marriage it was one. But we had both kened that afore ; it would be a queer Hialtlander that would not think the Troth of Odin a true bond, wherever it was sworn, though we came to the big stone wi' the hole in't in the midst o' the Stones of Stennis, to make it as sure as sure could be."

Thora tried to picture to herself that long-past wedding ; but instead, her mind could only see the group which most probably was standing within the sacred circle at that moment—a group of two men, the elder explaining, and the younger listening.

Mr. Traill and Gaspard had gone first to the Maeshowe, that strangest of mementoes of old times. A simple mound of earth, it seems, but covered with grass a little softer and smoother than that of the field from which it rises. Within is a small square chamber built of heavy stone. It may have been meant for a robbers' den, a wizard's cave, a hermit's cell, or a chieftain's tomb ; no man now can tell.

All that is clear about the Maeshowe is that countless centuries ago some man built up this cavern of great blocks of stone, and made cunning recesses in it wherein a human body might lie, and engraved on the walls inscriptions which seem to the uninitiated only haphazard wavy lines, while of their meaning no antiquary can assuredly say more than this : that the interpretation given by all the other antiquaries is hopelessly and entirely wrong. Then the unknown builder hid treasure in his cavern, and covered it over with earth, and afterwards went elsewhere and died. After that the spirit of Nature took possession of it, and dealt tenderly with the great ugly heap of earth, dressing it with soft grass and dainty flowers ; and so robed, it remained peacefully till that modern creature, the child of curiosity and irreverence, known as the science of archaeology, came along and broke into the mound, took away the golden trinkets it found there to put them into a glass case in a museum, and made the Maeshowe a spot for every idle visitor to peer and pry into.

Then they went to the Stones of Stennis. A solemn awe came over Gaspard as he stood within the sacred circle. With the sea on one side, and the wide lagoon on the other, it seemed as though the flat peninsula, which the circle of great grey monoliths bounded, was an island which lay lower than the surrounding ocean, and was kept from submersion by some miraculous power. The crimson of the sunset flooded the sky and touched to a brighter purple the opening bells of the heather, but seemed to fall powerless on the surface of the solemn lichen-covered stones. Grey, cold, immoveable as justice, impenetrable as night, obdurate as time, they stood as if deriding the power of any evanescent glory of colour to lighten their sombre gravity. But athwart the shafts of the sunlight shining through the crimson glamour, Gaspard seemed to see all the pageantry we picture of Druid worship. The procession of white-robed priests marched round the central altar, and the awe-struck, savage worshippers crouched around, while the sunset crimson was changed to flame and darkened with the smoke that arose from human sacrifice.

For a moment the vision was so real that Gaspard shuddered as if the cries of the victims indeed fell on his ear ; and he was glad to have his reverie interrupted by the minister's voice.

"Here in the centre," Mr. Traill was saying, "is the altar where sacrifice was performed, but where we have reason to believe happier scenes took place. You see this stone with the large hole in it? A man and a woman clasping each other's hands through this aperture and exchanging vows of fidelity, formed the marriage ceremony of this primitive people."

"You seem to be as well acquainted with their customs, sir, as if you had lived among them," observed Gaspard, who rather doubted the accuracy of the minister's information.

"This theory is no unfounded surmise," was the reply, "for the custom survived, under the name of the Troth of Odin, till very recent times. When I came to Stromness thirty years ago, it was very common among the poorer people; and indeed, under the marriage law that then existed in Scotland, the bond was perfectly lawful, though from the first I always insisted to my people that no wedding would be deemed true in God's sight which was not blessed by His Church."

"Priestcraft reigns here too," thought Gaspard, "and raises up barriers beyond those built by law. Why must it always make the path to heaven more difficult by inventing new sins where conscience never dreamed of them?" Aloud he asked: "Are such marriages, then, no longer valid?"

"No," replied Mr. Traill, with, it seemed to the younger man, a vindictive pleasure in the thought; "the law has been reformed, and I can assure my people that in man's sight, as well as in Heaven's, the tie is worthless. But," he added, in a tone of irritation, "it is wonderfully difficult to convince them of it. Only last year, a couple exchanged that troth-plight, and though I insisted on their being married again in a respectable manner, nothing will convince the young woman that she has been guilty of any sin."

"If both she and her lover hold the tie to be binding, I do not see why she should feel any guilt," protested the young man. "The essence of the marriage bond is mutual consent and permanence; if these two conditions be complied with, I do not see that the form of contract is of great importance."

"You are infected with the atheistical doctrines of your country," groaned the minister. "I know how lightly the marriage tie is regarded in France; but I

thank Heaven that here it is held in greater esteem."

Gaspard looked surprised, not knowing what he had said to justify such an accusation; but he merely shrugged his shoulders, and suggested that it was time to return to the town.

At the window of the Manse parlour they saw Thora sitting looking out for them. She was idle; she was always idle except when old Osla set her some household task to do. She had not the art of inventing work for herself, to fill up the long hours of the eventless day, as many women have who lead monotonous lives. Duties so made are unimportant enough, it is true, and seem silly and childish in their make-believe value, to those who share in the world's real work; but they are better a hundredfold than the ennui and discontent which seem to be the only substitutes for them. If Thora could have found an interest in needlework, or in that endless contest with Nature which is called gardening, had she had an eye to perceive the changeful beauty of the scenes around her, or the sad pathos of the lives of most of her guardian's flock, she might have found happiness, and been free from the endless craving for change that now wore out her youth. But she could see nothing that was not dreary in her present life, and thought that everywhere else there must be more of interest and variety.

She did not analyse her feelings so as to find this out, or perhaps she would have guessed that it was only the longing for novelty, the desire for new scenes and new people that drew her to Gaspard Harache, and made his company so precious to her. She only knew that she was happy when he was near her, talking to her, and unhappy when he was away. What interpretation but one could a girl of seventeen give to such a phenomenon? Older women than she have mistaken discontent for love.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JUST before Lance had started for Durham, a terrible storm had swept the Cumberland coast; boats had been dashed to pieces on the rocks, some fishing smacks, which, as a last chance had bravely put out to sea in the teeth of the gale, had been swamped, and not a soul on board had been saved.

In all eight men and one boy had perished; four bodies only, however, had been washed ashore, together with remnants of the boats.

With Sir Peter and Madge in the immediate neighbourhood, it was not likely that destitution would be added to the grief of the bereaved families.

Madge was an angel of goodness to them. In spite of her own increasing inability to face the keen rough air of the coast, every morning found her in the cottages of these poor souls, doing her utmost to assuage their grief and to meet their necessities. It was she who paid all funeral expenses as body after body was washed in by the tide; and finally, when hope failed of the recovery of the other bodies, she requested the Vicar of Saint Cuthbert's to hold a memorial service that should be a fitting tribute to those whose resting-place could be marked by neither mound nor tablet. This service by her special request was to take place on the evening before the day fixed for her wedding.

All the arrangements for the wedding were now completed. It had been decided that it should be as quiet as wedding could

well be. Eight o'clock in the morning was the time fixed for the ceremony. Madge was to be married in her travelling dress, and was to drive straight from the church to the railway station, en route for Italy, by way of London.

Lady Judith had uttered her last lament over the unseemly haste with which the wedding had been urged forward. After saying, in her most scathing manner, right into Sir Peter's face, that "there were some people who would like to live out their lives in half-an-hour, and would spend twenty minutes of that time in winding up the clock and greasing its wheels to make it go faster," she turned her attention to Sir Peter's newly-found nephew and heir, taking for her text the misdoings of Gervase the elder, and old Lady Critchett's foolish indulgence of him.

Madge had lived through one terrible night of suspense—the night after Sir Peter's departure for Durham—wondering with a wonder akin to agony how Lance had borne the news which cut him off from his former brilliant social position. Sir Peter, returning radiant on the following morning with triumphant accounts of the manner in which he had vanquished Lance's Quixotic notions—as he called them—relieved her of this distress.

Naught now remained for her to do, she assured herself, but to forget the past and live for the future only.

"Past cure should be past care," she said to herself, from morning till night of the two days that remained to her before her wedding-day. "The past is dead and should be buried; the future is mine. I have saved Lance from folly and beggary. I may well cry 'Victory!' now."

She looked at herself in the glass on the day before the one that was to make

her Lance's wife, and vowed that she had never looked so young and happy in her life before. She went so far as to scold her maid vigorously; first, for not echoing her assertion; secondly, for venturing to suggest that the memorial service for the poor, drowned fishermen was scarcely one that a bride-elect should be expected to attend on the eve of her wedding-day.

That memorial service was one of the saddest and most solemn that had ever taken place in Saint Cuthbert's old church. Certainly a bride-elect seemed a little out of place in a church draped with black and filled with mourners.

The minute-bell tolled unceasingly during the service. Part of the funeral service was read, then followed Luther's judgement hymn, and finally Saint Paul's grand resurrection chapter.

And through it all, with never a pause, the waves on the outside shore beat their own monotonous requiem for the dead, outsounding in the pauses of the service the sobs of the women in the church; the voice of the preacher even, as he flung down the gauntlet to death, with the cry, "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory?"

Madge felt her self-control giving way. Again and again she essayed to keep her mind fixed on those poor, drowned men, over whom the words "earth to earth" were never to be spoken; the ghost of another drowned soul, as with human voice, seemed to put in its claim to a share in this memorial tribute: "Was not I even more desolate than they, and was not my ending every whit as tragic? You gave me but scant kindness in my lifetime. Is it too much to ask a tear of you now?"

Madge abruptly rose from her seat, and, letting her veil fall over her face, left the church.

She had given orders that the carriage should meet her at the foot of the steep pathway leading up from the valley. It wanted fully half-an-hour of the time she had fixed for it to be there, so she wandered slowly round the church to its western side, to catch all she could of the sea breeze.

Outside in the growing dark the scene was as drear as within the church. The sky was one broad expanse of grey, unbroken save where a pale moon, travelling down to the horizon, showed faintly through some jagged clouds. Beneath, the sea stretched a still more sombre expanse of grey from out which the dirge of the

waves rose unceasingly. Behind her lay the dim churchyard, where the chill ocean breeze seemed to wander, "soughing under its breath," as if it had somehow lost its way among the ghostly white tombstones which accentuated the gloom.

Madge drew her cloak more closely round her, and shrank under the shelter afforded by the projecting corner of the church porch. The days in which she used to rejoice in the wash of the waves and the rush of the sea breeze were past for ever now.

A light shone in one of the church windows above the organ, and presently the tones of Chopin's sublime funeral march sounded. To Madge's fancy, those grand strains had ever seemed less like music evoked by mortal fingers from an instrument made by mortal hands than a story of human agony, desolation, and death acted out before her mind's eye. There were the dull monotonous beats as of heavy hearts, heavy feet conveying a heavy burden; suddenly athwart this there seemed to come a triumphant outburst of resurrection joy as from a church towards which the mourners were journeying with their heavy burthen. Then there began once more the dull, monotonous beat of heavy footsteps, heavy hearts returning with half of themselves left behind.

But to-night, the wizardry of the music conjured up another scene to her fancy. Those dull, heavy, monotonous chords were not human footsteps journeying to a church, but the weary feet of cattle being driven along a heavy road—a slow herd going with lagging tread from the market to the slaughter-house. What had seemed to her a burst of resurrection joy came now as a wail, with the echo of words in it which she had somewhere heard before: "There are some who from cradle to grave never have a chance given them."

Suddenly a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned to find Lance bending over her. She thanked heaven for the shelter of her black veil.

"I knew your figure at once," he said. "I've been home—they told me where I should find you. Madge, come round this corner—the people are leaving the church now—and I will tell you why I have come here to-night."

Madge followed him to the side of the church which she had just quitted, where the dull, dark grey stretch of sky hung above the duller, darker, grayer stretch of sea.

His words did not seem to come easily.

They stood there in silence for a few minutes, a silence broken by the tread of the congregation leaving the church, by the dying strains of the solemn Funeral March, by the slow "break, break" of the waves.

When at last he spoke, his voice was very unlike that of the light-hearted young fellow with whom at one time she had delighted to fence and to squabble.

"I don't think, Madge, the funeral service you've been attending to-night is one quarter so sad as the wedding I was at this morning!" he said. "If you could have seen Eric's face! Depend upon it, there'll be a tragedy in his home before the year is out."

Madge said nothing. The words, "Why should there be?" trembled on her lips, but she dared not speak them.

He went on:

"He loves the girl he has married, to distraction; but he doesn't trust her—it was on his face as he led her out of the church. I said to myself, 'Thank Heaven, it won't be thus between Madge and me! Whatever there is not between us, there will at least be perfect truth and trust.' And then I started back aghast at my own effrontery, asking myself what right I had to expect any woman to trust me all in all, when I had trusted her not at all—when, in fact, half my heart was hidden away from her. So there and then I made up my mind, dear, that before I met you at the church in the morning I would go to you and lay my heart bare to you—that as we are to be husband and wife in name, so should we be in deed and in truth—that there should be no past, no present, no future to come between us."

His voice had kindled with his last sentence. He paused, evidently expecting a word from Madge.

None came, so he repeated:

"No past to separate us; do you see, Madge?"

Madge's lips parted, but instead of a gently-murmured assent there came a low half-stifled sob.

He drew her towards him.

"Don't be frightened, Madge," he said, gently. "I have no confession to make that need part us, unless you so will it. You know half my secret already—it concerns Jane Shore."

Madge shuddered, and shrank from his touch.

"Does it pain you?" he asked. "Shall I stop? Don't you see, dear, I am raising

the ghost of this past, so as to set it at rest for ever."

"Go on," was all she could bring her lips to utter in low, all but inaudible tone.

"It is soon told, Madge," he went on. "You may have thought that I only pitied this girl, and wanted to help her out of kindness. It was not that—I loved her, truly, honestly, passionately; and once here, on this very spot, as we stood together looking at the stars, I made her an offer of marriage."

Madge started and began to tremble violently.

"She would not listen to me," Lance went on, speaking hurriedly now. "She said there was ill-fortune hanging over her head——"

He stopped abruptly, his voice grew unsteady. "Madge," he said brokenly, "do you know sometimes I think that she ended her life solely to prevent me from linking mine to hers?"

But here his words failed him.

It was a minute or more before he could go on.

"And now that you know everything, dear, will you forgive me if I say I can't tear the thought of her out of my heart? Will you think that such a thought as this ought to separate us one from the other, or will you share it with me—the tenderness and pity for her, I mean?"

Again he broke off.

Madge's veiled face and solemn silence made him wonder.

The chill breeze swept past. The leaden clouds overhead parted and let the pale moonlight filter through. It threw a gaunt shadow here and there; one, that of a tall white cross, which stood out from the ranks of square tombstones, fell in clear outline at Madge's very feet.

"Lift your veil, dear," he said. "Put your hands in mine; look up in my face! Let us say to each other that as we join hands so will we join hearts, with never a thought to divide us."

Madge's trembling hand lifted her veil from her white face, but she dared not lift her eyes to meet his.

He held her hands fast, her head bowed over them.

"Look up, Madge," he said, "speak to me. Let me hear from your lips that not this nor anything else can come between us now."

Madge's lips moved, but with the shadow of that cross lying at her feet, she dared not speak the words he craved.

Another shadow fell, at that moment, athwart her hands as Lance held them, and thence to the ground at her feet, a shadow rounded, shaped as of a woman's figure.

Madge started and turned to see who stood behind them.

On the topmost of the steps leading up to the porch and well clear of its shadowy arch, there seemed to stand the tall, slight figure of a woman, clad in grey draperies, with white face upturned to the faint moon.

Madge gave a low, terrified cry. Only Lance's arms prevented her from falling senseless to the ground.

CONCERNING THE BUTTERING OF PARSNIPS.

THERE is a popular belief that of all known varieties of sauce for the homely parsnip, fine words are the most ineffectual; but this maxim, like so many others which seem at first sight to be wisdom undiluted, will be found, on examination, to be a poor pretender, and nothing else. I am not fond of parsnips in any form. I don't believe that Francatelli himself could have made anything of them. They are unpalatable when buttered, and I shudder to think what they must be "au naturel." But probably the common, or domestic parsnip, which the moralist has appropriated to do duty as a metaphorical vegetable, is no more distasteful than the abstraction it is employed to personify—namely, the plain, unvarnished truth, served without that butter-sauce of fine words, of which the rugged virtue of maxim-makers shows such righteous contempt.

Truth, according to the best authorities, is the foundation of all the virtues; and both in ancient and modern times the poet, and the painter, and the sculptor have done their best to embody her in fair and shapely guise. The moralist, writing in general terms, follows the same line; and it is to be hoped that most of us hold in remembrance some words of counsel and guidance spoken by our parents or tutors in special commendation of the truth. So far so good. The question which now arises for solution is, why is it that, when our own familiar friend takes up his or her parable, to let us get for our profit some glance of the plain truth, the truth

at once becomes not merely plain, but downright ugly? She may be spotless, and rigid, and flawless as ever, but all her grace has fled. As exhibited by these good people, she is no more pleasant to the eye than is the unbuttered parsnip to the palate.

It is impossible to believe that truth can be essentially of an aspect so displeasing as this. Philosophers tell us that what we see with our eyes is not the external object itself, but the reflection of that object on certain mirrors contained in the organ of sight. I have a shrewd suspicion that our mind's eye stands in just the same relation to notions or ideas as the physical eye does to concrete objects; and that, when truth comes under the survey of the first named, the mental impression registered is not the truth itself, but a reflection of it. Then I fancy that in nine cases out of ten the mental eye gathers its impressions—or, at least, so much of them as are to be devoted to the purpose of explaining to the bosom friend what truth really is—through spectacles of a very cold, grey tint. I take it that most of us have known what it is to have a visit from a friend full to the bung of wise counsel—visits like these are generally paid when the world has not been treating us very kindly—who breaks in upon our headache, or heartache, or perhaps both, with his moralising. "Now, my dear fellow," he begins, "the truth of the matter is this." I will not weary the reader with an account of what the truth—*teste* my friend—is. He does not tell one that the most circumspect of wayfarers now and then fall into the hands of thieves, and that what has happened to you has happened to the wisest and best of mankind, winding up his visit with an invitation to a snug little dinner in the evening, when, after discussing the best of viands, and tepid claret, and iced champagne, he gives you a kind word at parting, and a nice little cheque to help to smooth the path over those cruel thorns and flints, which somehow lose their sharp points when a little gold-dust is strewed over them.

He delights rather in the raucous jeremiad to the tune of, "I told you so," with plentiful allusions to late heavy losses in business, and calls upon the purse on account of some scapegrace son or nephew, allusions manifestly intended to beat back by anticipation any possible prayer on your part for material aid. The candid friend has assumed his smoked-glass

spectacles. Truth, as he now regards her, is a very stern, unlovely goddess, as you will soon learn to your cost. You will have to listen, if you are a patient man, to an account of your sins of omission and commission, and to a lot of advice as to how you must conduct yourself in the future. You will have to swallow a large portion of unbuttered parsnips, and I hope you will like them.

Doses of truth administered in this fashion are probably good for us; but, like many other similar things, they are not exactly pleasant. It is quite right, no doubt, that the standard of conduct should be set high, only just within the reach of the strongest of us; but in this case we must be lenient towards the weakness of those brethren who faint in gazing at the unveiled goddess; or, to drop into humbler metaphor, those who like a certain quantity of butter with their parsnips.

People of an amicable and sympathetic temper attract the attentions of the expounder of the naked truth much more readily than those whom Nature has dowered with a hard, stand-offish disposition. I am thinking especially of my friend, Mrs. Sidney. The quantity of the truth which this lady has to swallow at the hands of all sorts and conditions of men and women is so vast, that I wonder she has not, herself, become habitually mendacious. I spent a week at the vicarage not long ago, and not the least entertaining moments of an enjoyable visit were those when I listened to an account of the various dishes of unbuttered parsnips she had to eat in the course of the year. From the description she gave me of her parish visiting, I was convinced that Mr. Sidney's ministrations must have been very efficient in promoting the growth of truth, for the quantity Mrs. Sidney would meet in the course of a walk round the parish was enormous.

First let us hear what Martha Jones has got to say. Martha Jones, eighty-one years of age, a pauper, troubled with "disorders" in the summer, asthma in winter, and rheumatics all the year round. Her allowance of three shillings and sixpence a week would not go far in keeping the wolf from the door without the good things which reach her from the vicarage. Martha gives a few words of gratitude in return; but to turn the balance she favours Mrs. Sidney, whenever she finds the chance, with a good lump of the truth as to divers matters in which she is interested. "I

ha'n't seen Master Harry this ever so long. He don't 'pear to thrive much for all I hear. A poor, weak, puny little chap they tell me he is; but, Lord, what else could ye expect wi' such a nurse as he ha' got to look after him? It do put me out how ever you could ha' took on a gal like that Jane Arber to look after him."

Now considering that Mrs. Sidney rates herself—and justly too—as a model mother and manager, and is convinced that her boy and her nurse are the best of their kind, words like the above are a little trying to listen to; but she knows Martha's tricks and manners, and waits for the end.

"I reck'lect her grandfather," Martha goes on, "and he would have been transported for sheep stealin' if he'd got his due. There never was a good 'un o' the lot, and there never will be."

"Did you like the plum cake I sent you yesterday, Martha?" says Mrs. Sidney, by way of changing the subject.

"Oh, 't warn't so bad; but I could tell 't wur made wi' yer own butter. That there gal o' yours don't know no more about dairyin' nor a fule, and to think o' the butifful butter as used to be made in old Parson Wilkes' time; but he looked after his glebe hisself, and knowed what a cow wur when he seed one. You and parson don't know nowt about such things; but 'tis only right as you should hear the truth about the goin's on in your own kitchen."

And so on, at every stopping place in the parish walk, Mrs. Sidney has to taste unbuttered parsnips. Thomas Hobbles, when questioned as to the reason why he had not been at church for the last six weeks, has some remarks to make as to the quality of Mr. Sidney's sermons.

"With all that singin' and chantin', church ain't the place for poor folks as can't nayther read nor write; and parson's sarments, they ha'n't got nothin' stirrin' in 'em. I wish you could ha' heard old Parson Wilkes. He had a lot to say about the bad place, and that wur the only way to keep young chaps out o' mischief. Parson's milk and water stuff 'll never do that. 'Tis what all the folks are saying, and I thowt as you ought to know the truth about it."

In visits to her parishioners of a higher social grade, Mrs. Sidney likewise hears the truth; but here the liberal arts have so far softened manners, that the truth becomes less personal, and refers chiefly to the sayings and doings of other absent pa-

riasioners. Thus Mrs. Graver, after hearing that the Vicar and Master Harry are quite well, will artfully bring the conversation round to the subject of Mrs. Flight of Wood End Farm, and in the course of her visit Mrs. Sidney will hear a considerable amount of truth about the last-named lady; but truth of so dangerous and explosive a nature that, if she were to let it have free course through the village, it would act like moral dynamite on whatever harmony and goodwill existed in her Arcadia. Had she treated as serious all Mrs. Graver's revelations, she ought to have gone away with an awful opinion of Mrs. Flight; but she knows Mrs. Graver's ways, and Mrs. Flight's, too. She knows that had her visit been paid to the latter lady, she would have heard exactly the same story "nominibus mutatis."

It will appear from the above that Mrs. Sidney's "parish day" is not one of un-mixed pleasure. Still now and then there comes a time when she learns that Martha and Thomas are but poor bunglers in the art of saying disagreeable things: that is, of telling the plain truth. These seasons are those when the vicarage is invaded by certain visitors who delight in making a return for their entertainment by giving their hostess a great deal of valuable advice on things in general, about the household economy, and even in parish matters. There is the man who is made wretched a score of times a day, because things are not ordered exactly the same in a remote village as they are within sound of Bow Bells. There is only one post a day. His letters must be ready at four o'clock for the boy to take to meet the postman at some cross roads a mile away. It is three miles to a telegraph station, and five to a railway. Heaven and earth! How is it possible that people can manage to exist under such conditions? He tells Mrs. Sidney that she ought to take her husband in hand, and make him bully the county member, and worry the district surveyor, and get up petitions to the Postmaster-General himself, till matters are mended. Mr. Sidney, according to his showing, would be much better thus employed than in racing from one end to the other of his parish as school, or choir practice, or bedside duty may call him.

"The truth is," Urbanus declares, "you country people want shaking up. It is a wonder you don't drop off to sleep at all hours of the day."

Mrs. Sidney says nothing in reply; but

she cannot help wishing that the air of the vicarage might indeed prove somniferous enough to lap certain of her guests in quiet sleep by day as well as by night. Then there is the influential female relative with revolutionary notions as to infantine diet and nursery ventilation. During her stay, Jane Arber is in a state of veiled rebellion, and, though a superficial assent is given to her system as long as she is in the house, the system, together with all her patent foods and medicaments, is bundled out of the way as soon as the post-chaise has borne her and her boxes off the premises.

Next comes the crotchety college friend, who has drifted off into eccentric ways of thought, and impresses upon Mrs. Sidney, with an ex-cathedra air of authority, that the parson's duty now is merely to teach morality on abstract principles; and that Mr. Sidney would do much better to get down a lecturer on Buddhism, and turn the north aisle of the church into a technical school, than blunder along in the old theological rut. All these doses Mrs. Sidney takes with a smiling face. I believe she rather enjoys it. Anyhow, her friends enjoy thoroughly the good stories which she makes out of the doings of her would-be instructors. Of this I can vouch personally.

I cannot undertake to decide which is more distasteful—the unbuttered parsnips or the naked truth; neither can I say whether the vegetable dressed with an excess of butter is more nauseous than it is "au naturel," as I never eat it in any form. But I know that truth—the moral parsnip—disguised with a superabundance of fine words, is not appetising. I know one or two worthy people who, in their desire to flavour my vegetables, make them so rich that I cannot digest them. Still, I maintain that these are more tolerable than the other set. These have the will, at any rate, to put you on good terms with yourself, and they fail only from want of skill. They are heavy-handed with the butter indeed; but they offend less than those who cut off the butter altogether.

There is a third class—the outcome of that spirit of compromise which is, so our critics say, the very life-breath of John Bull's nostrils. "Not too much butter, but just butter enough," is their motto; and so light and delicate is their hand that every dish they serve up is a veritable triumph. They are truthful; they scorn gross flattery; and if at any time you

spend half-an-hour in their company, you go away with the firm belief that you yourself are one of the nicest and cleverest people in the world.

"Flattery, and nothing else," I hear the sterner-minded reader exclaim. Not a bit, my dear sir or madam. Flattery makes a mess of the truth, while these people subdue its crudities, and render it digestible for the weakest of us. Keeping all the time within the four corners of the truth, they manage to convey to you their meaning just as clearly as the most truculent of Mrs. Sidney's old women; but they leave you serene and satisfied, instead of sore and aggrieved with all mankind.

And this art of theirs, like so many other arts, seems so easy that one is often tempted to wonder how it is that everybody does not practise it. It is like a page of "Robinson Crusoe," or one of Mr. Thorne Waite's exquisite pictures of the Sussex Downs. The words of the one are so simple, the beauty of the other is so exactly like Nature that it seems as if any one with a brushful of green paint might do likewise. It is only when one tries to do the trick oneself that one feels the need of the artist's hand, and if any venturesome person should try, without being to the manner born, or without careful self education, to deal with truth after the fashion of the above-named experts, he will fail just as surely as if he should try to write or paint like either of the masters I have just mentioned.

OLD FULHAM.

WITH the destruction of the old wooden bridge at Putney, and the clearance made for the approach to the granite structure of to-day, has vanished some of the sentimental charm of Old Fulham. The village had a pleasant kind of dowdy dignity of its own, with its old-fashioned, red-brick houses, roomy walled gardens, and the foliage that half-concealed the red-tiled roofs. There still remains the sweep of wooded shore, with groups of ancient trees, and glimpses of grassy glades to gladden the eyes of the voyager on the river, wearied with the gloom and dulness of the array of factories, sheds, and mean buildings that line the shore above Chelsea. With the old bridge—which was not old for a bridge, by the way, having only completed a century and a half of existence—happily disappeared the hideous aqueduct of iron pipes and girders, and Fulham, with a sigh

for the past, might have acknowledged that the graceful, unencumbered arches of the new bridge, were likely, when weathered and toned down by time, to prove a decided ornament to the scene. Then came in the railway engineers, with a scientific girder-bridge just below, and farewell to the charms of Fulham reach!

Before the river was encumbered with bridges of any kind about here, the road from London, such as it was, with ruts and miry pits deep enough to swallow up any ordinary vehicle, ran down to the water's edge, and there was a ferry to convey travellers across the water; and posts and landing-stage belonging to this ferry were discovered in clearing the ground for the aqueduct some fifty years ago. During the Civil Wars a bridge of boats was established by Fairfax, the Parliamentary General, and Putney and Fulham were thus connected, to be divided again when military considerations no longer ruled. There is a traditional connection between the two villages of a much earlier date—and the tradition is given by Bowack, one of the early typographers of the district. The good man mentions it apologetically as "that ridiculous account, namely, that the two churches of the two first named places were, many ages since, built by two sisters of gigantic stature, who had but one hammer between them, which they used to throw over the river from one to another when they wanted it. But one time, in its fall, it happened unfortunately upon its claws, and broke them; but going to a smith that liv'd at this place, he set all to rights again." The etymological inference is plain, and here we have Putney, Fulham, and Hammer-smith, neatly accounted for at one blow. The latter place was not at all out of our record, for Old Fulham included Hammer-smith, until modern times. So far from being ridiculous, these ancient gigantic figures strike us as, on the contrary, rather solemn and imposing; while the story, in varied forms, but all of respectable antiquity, attaches to many other sites both at home and abroad.

A pleasant sunny nook is Fulham churchyard, where the old church-tower keeps watch and ward over so many sleeping generations, flinging out at times sweet melody from its fine peal of bells. There are no more sweetly-toned bells anywhere near than the ten that hang in Fulham tower, and to hear their merry peal from the river is an experience to be

thankful for. There is a public path through the churchyard, and on either hand are the handsome monuments of the worthies of Fulham among the soft green sward. Here are the tombs of many Bishops of London—Compton among them, who, it is said, first set the episcopal fashion of being buried in the outside mould rather than in a vault beneath the chancel. Yonder lies Theodore Hook, "A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," who spent the last clouded years of his life close by. And the newest of all the elaborate memorials of the dead is a granite monument to Lord Ranelagh, recently erected by the South Middlesex Rifle Volunteers, of whom he was so long the commander; a regiment that has its headquarters at Fulham, and that possesses the colours of the old Fulham Light Infantry Volunteers, raised in 1803, and commanded by an earlier Lord Ranelagh.

The path through the churchyard leads into another footway, which brings you upon the raised bank of the river, with cheerful Putney shining from the opposite bank, with its long line of boat-houses and boat-builders' yards. The path is hemmed in by the river on one hand and by the broad moat of Fulham Palace on the other, and there are pleasant glimpses of walled gardens and velvet lawns, and far-stretching thickets and shrubberies. The path is known as "The Bishop's Walk," although it is probable that a good many centuries have elapsed since a Bishop of London took his customary walk along the public footpath, and it must have been in more primitive times than now. Good Bishop Porteus, indeed, in a description of the Palace, has a good word for the Bishop's Walk: "Many persons think this walk a great nuisance to the Palace; but I am of a very different opinion. It gives life and cheerfulness to the scene, and especially on a Sunday"—for it seems it was then the custom for the young men and maids of Fulham to muster there on their way to church, or for the customary walk after service. George Colman, too, the younger, tells a friend, how the avenue and Bishop's Walk are his favourite morning and evening lounge. But the bare and cindery condition of the public walk is in striking contrast to the smooth, shaded, and carefully-tended paths within the private grounds. And as you turn into the Bishop's Avenue, a charming vista of over-shadowing limes and elms, you may be alarmed by the sinister notice: "This path

is dangerous." Whether the danger arises from the episcopal cows which graze peacefully on the water meadows adjacent, and with their sleek coats and calm, sleepy eyes, seem as little mischievous as possible, or from more occult sources of peril, it is not easy to determine. But a passer-by is better informed: "It's the kids," he states succinctly. And it seems that the children of the neighbourhood "snatch a fearful joy" in fishing for sticklebacks and newts from the grassy margin of the episcopal moat, and some have tumbled in and been drowned. To full-grown persons, who have outlived the love of sport, in the form of stickleback fishing, the danger is but remote.

The Bishop's moat encircles the whole of the Palace grounds, and is itself a relic of times—who can say how far distant? Some attribute it to the Danes, who certainly encamped in Fulham about a thousand years ago, and were likely enough to have dug a ditch about their camp. Even before the Danes came, the Bishop had Fulham; it was a gift to Bishop Erkenwald, of London, A.D. 631. An occupation of twelve centuries, disturbed only for a few years during the Civil Wars, appeals strongly to the imagination. What memories haunt the site that has known but one tenant from the rude days of the Heptarchy to the present era of lawn-tennis and garden-parties! From the stern old Bishop who wielded his pastoral staff like a bill-hook, and who could don a steel head-piece and coat of mail on occasion in place of cope and mitre, to the wearer of the silk apron and the looped-up beaver of to-day—what a procession of prelates pass before the mind's eye!

The early Bishops are little but names to us; but as we come to the existing Palace, its builders and its occupants, the roll becomes more familiar. Seen from the garden front, Fulham Palace is a comfortable, but heavy-looking mansion of the Georgian era; but the ground plan of the ancient Palace is still preserved—the double quadrangle with the hall which Bishop Fletcher finished in the sixteenth century, and Bishop Sherlock restored in George the Second's time. And the gardens, with their ancient trees and long-established exotics, preserve the memories of many of those who took delight in their culture. There was Grindall, of Queen Elizabeth's days, who, according to "Worthy" Thomas Fuller, introduced the tamarisk, and who was so successful with his grape-

vine, that it became quite an affair of State to furnish his Royal mistress with grapes from Fulham. We find the Bishop gravely corresponding with Sir William Cecil, and regretting that the grapes are not yet sufficiently ripe for the Royal table. But those very grapes were almost the cause of Grindall's ruin; for the Queen was one day taken ill after partaking of them, and the Bishop was suspected of introducing the plague, if not poison, to the sacred person of the Queen. Another great gardener was Bishop Compton, who, falling into disgrace with King James the Second, was exiled from Court and ordered to remain at Fulham; and who improved the shining hours of his disgrace to such advantage to the episcopal gardens, that they became famous for their foreign trees and shrubs, and the spreading cork tree, the dense ilex, and the dark and massive cedar, still remain as living memorials of his industrious care, more eloquent than the monument of stone that records his virtues in the churchyard hard by. Stout Compton, who braved the King's displeasure, was of an old Cavalier family, and his father was killed at Hopton Heath, fighting for the cause of the King, and the Bishop served himself as a cornet of horse in the days of his youth. Thus when reproached by King James as being more like a Colonel of Dragoons than a Bishop, Compton rejoined with much spirit that he was as ready as any Colonel of them all to shed his blood in defence of law and right.

Among other Bishops, memorable for their connection with Fulham, we have the ill-omened Bonner, the persecutor of the martyr Ridley; Aylmer, who was accustomed to play bowls on a Sunday on the Palace green, but who deprecated censure by the avowal "that he had never missed a sermon on that account." Then there was Fletcher, the father of the dramatist and poet, who died in his chair "smoking tobacco," a happy euthanasia that many might envy. Laud was at Fulham, too, ere he reached the primacy, and found the jolting in his coach, over the rough roads between Whitehall and Fulham, much better for his health than the smooth passage in his barge over the water to Lambeth. Juxon, too, who accompanied King Charles to the scaffold, has left his mark at Fulham, as well as at Lambeth.

Coming to later times, we have Dr. Robinson, Jonathan Swift's "little brown

man, very charitable and good-humoured;" Gibson, the antiquarian, who translated Camden's "Britannia;" Sherlock, whose "Discourses" figure in calf octavo in everybody's library, and were once deemed excellent Sunday reading; Robert Lowth, whose son was a college chum of George Colman the younger; and good Dr. Porteus, a Yorkshireman, who bequeathed his library to his successors.

Leaving the Bishop's Palace—if we followed the track along the river—we should come upon the remains of Craven Cottage, which was built for that stirring Lady Craven, of the irrepressible Berkeley strain, who afterwards became famous as the Margravine of Brandenburg. The Cottage was also one of Bulwer Lytton's numerous suburban residences, and here it was said he entertained Prince Louis Napoleon, once upon a time, when no one dreamed of his becoming Emperor of the French.

Beyond, there is that famous old tavern, the "Crabtree," known—by name at all events—to all who follow the fortunes of the University Boat Race.

These settlements on the river bank are isolated by broad ranges of market gardens, where you have acres of scarlet runners, miles of cabbage plants, with kale, and celery, and every kind of edible plant, interspersed with great stacks of manure. In the distance, you see long lines of new buildings—small villas, rows of cottages—encroaching continuously upon the gardens, among which rise more imposing "Homes" and "Refuges," or the tall gables of a Board School, or the still more massive bulk of the workhouse. But this is New Fulham, with which we have nothing to do, so let us hie back to our starting-place by the bridge.

The pleasing foliage that surrounds the palace is continued, lower down the river, in the grounds of sundry big houses. First, Ranelagh House, which is doomed to destruction, new roads piercing its secluded grounds, and trees, fallen or maimed, marking the successful invasion of the builders. Next is Mulgrave House, which bears the earlier title of those Sheffields who, later on, gave the name of their dukedom to Buckingham Palace. And there is Hurlingham, the fashionable resort of pigeon shooters and polo players, the quiet lanes about which are sometimes blocked by four-in-hand coaches and vehicles of all descriptions. Hurlingham Lane, indeed, is invaded by rows of red-brick villas; but Broomhead Lane, which

runs by the side of the club grounds, still retains its quiet country aspect.

Here, where the trees arch pleasantly above the road, flecked with the bright autumn sunshine, the birds are warbling their plaintive autumnal notes. It is a home of the birds, this Fulham. For centuries they have nested among these quiet shades; and here, if anywhere in this part of the world, the nightingale still lingers in the spring-time. The lane leads down to Broomhead Dock, a quiet, solemn little opening in the river bank, with the river shining before us, and the roofs and chimneys of Wandsworth showing in cloudy reek beyond. A timber-laden barge lies in the little creek, and carts are loading up with its contents — builders' carts no doubt, boding destruction to Old Fulham, but all in a pleasant, leisurely way that harmonises with the whole scene. To the left runs a path along the river, with a bit of foreshore visible, and willows and alders grouped as in an early David Cox — just a last bit of old Thames side, a glimpse of "once upon a time," quite pathetic in its suggestions.

The path leads, no doubt, to quiet Sands End, where Addison once wrote in the garden of Sands End House, amid "a concert of birds, concluded by the nightingale;" and Nell Gwynne had been there before him, they say, and had listened to the same sweet concert. Sands End is now a great gas company's works, with tall chimneys, huge gas-holders, and purifiers reeking with gas tar. That way lies disenchantment, and, as the lane leads nowhere else, but ends quietly in the bosom of the river, we have only to retrace our footsteps.

Coming into Fulham again by way of Hurlingham Lane, we light upon another witness of old times, in the shape of Fulham Pottery—a couple of centuries old, at least, and still doing business in the old way. The Pottery was established by John Dwight, whose patent is dated twenty-third of April, 1671, for "white goyes, statues, figures," and such like ware.

In Old Fulham, too, was a manufactory devoted to Gobelin tapestry, patronised by the Duke of Cumberland, of Culloden fame, but eventually transferred—the moveable part of the establishment, that is—to Exeter. The buildings were in the High Street, near the old Golden Lion, which was once a famous house for its oak panelling and carved chimney-pieces, and

a country resort of the wits and litterateurs of the town, in the days of Shakespeare and rare old Ben. Now there is a continual rattle of omnibuses and carts along the narrow street, and, following the line of traffic, we come to where the roads divide, with Holcrofts on the left, built by Robert Limpany, a wealthy merchant, who was known as the Lord of Fulham. There are sundry monuments to members of the family in the parish church, but they have no foothold in Fulham now, apart from the family vault. The Priory, close by, is on the site of old Claybrooke House, belonging once to an old county family of that name, and afterwards to the Sussex Frewens—matters of interest to genealogists, perhaps, but of no account to anybody else.

Then we are in New Fulham again, with houses, shops, villas, all spick and span. The Munster Park Estate is this, which recalls old Munster House, which was bought by George the First for his favourite, Duchess of Munster, and was afterwards occupied by John Wilson Croker, the Tadpole—or was it the Taper?—of Disraeli's novel. Soon Old Fulham appears again at Percy Cross, where there are fine old houses and ample grounds, with an evidence of the current age in the shape of Fulham Free Library, as handsomely lodged as a lord, and about to open its doors to all comers. At the corner of Parsons Green Lane, opposite the Library, stands the gateway to Park House, which was built upon the site of Quibus Hall, the seat of the Whartons—a quarrelsome and litigious family long since vanished from the scene. Let into the gateway is an unassuming little tablet, with the inscription, "Purser's Cross, 7th August, 1738," an inscription which, despite its simplicity, seems to contain some mysterious meaning. What could have happened on that particular day, a hundred and fifty years ago?

What happened, according to the generally received story, was this. A mounted highwayman on that day stopped and robbed sundry passengers on their way to London, but being detected by the patrol, and followed by a number of horsemen, he dashed across the fields in the direction of Purser's Cross; but finding escape impossible, he clapped his pistol to his own head, and blew out his brains. Now, whether the highwayman was one of the old ruined Whartons who had taken

to the road, and thus expiated his follies close to his former home, or whether we have got hold of the wrong story altogether, and the date refers to some business of which we know nothing, are questions which there is no probable chance of deciding. But it seems likely enough that the highwayman was returned "felo de se," and buried at the cross roads here, and that the tablet is, in fact, a tombstone, placed there, perhaps, for some motive of charity, affection, or regret.

Anyhow, the inscription seems to decide the true name of the place which has, it is said, been only of late years known as Percy's cross. But who on earth was the "Purser," and what business has he here at all? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that "Purser" is a corruption of the unorthographic ages, and that the true name has now been reverted to; the more romantic one certainly, with a historic flavour about it that it would be a pity to lose?

Another relic of Old Fulham is a very quaint and handsome house of no great size, which now bears the name of Duncannon House, but which, tradition says, was once Bolingbroke Lodge, and a residence of the accomplished St. John, the friend of Pope and Swift; and close by is Arundel House, a stately kind of house with a façade of the early Georgian style, and parts of which date from the Tudor period. This house, in the early part of the century, was the residence of Hallam, the historian of the Middle Ages.

Whoever traces out the localities of Old Fulham, will find a pleasant guide in Thomas Crofton Croker, whose "Walk from London to Fulham" gives a full and gossiping account of the neighbourhood, of which he also was one of the "worthies." Croker was a clerk in the Admiralty, owing his appointment to that other Tadpole, or Taper, Croker—no relation of his, by the way—who was much higher in the official hierarchy, but essentially far more insignificant than his namesake. For Crofton Croker will be remembered for his pleasant versions of Irish fairy tales and folk lore, and he was something of a celebrity in his day, having been noticed kindly by Walter Scott, and moving among the best literary circles. Well, here is his former home, Audley Cottage, or, as he named it, "Rosamond's Bower"—a miniature Strawberry Hill, and described by Crofton himself, in a little

brochure "for private circulation only," with a catalogue of all his pictures and curios—a little gabled house, white, with patches of green mould just peeping over an imposing brick wall, with a pair of big gates for carriage folk, and a side entrance for the rest.

The neighbourhood knows nothing about the house, not even its name, which, if it was ever painted up, has cracked off with the rest of the paint and plaster. But there is a caretaker there, a cheerful woman, with a lively little girl belonging to her. This is Audley Cottage sure enough, she says, and it might have been Rosamond's Bower. But as for a Mr. Croker, was he a builder?

Such is fame; and the Bower is now all tumbling to pieces, green and mouldy. A cowkeeper was the last permanent resident. "You might peep in at the dining-room window," suggests the amiable woman; "there's no getting the door open on account of the damp." A dim, ghostly sight was that dining-room, the ceiling all lying about on the floor, and the rafters showing through; and yet what bright and warm little dinners it has seen, with the wits of the day and the rising authors of those times for company! There are touches of fancy still left, the little thatched barn with the doves suggestive of Switzerland, and the tangled lawn with trellises and arbours. Well, some day soon will come a happy despatch, the Bower will disappear into Cloudland, and rows of tenements will take its place; while should the builder be an intelligent man, he will call one Crofton Terrace, and the other Croker Avenue.

There is another old ghost of a house just at the corner of Parsons Green, a handsome old mansion once, now let out in tenements, a chimney sweep living at one end, a huckster's shop in the middle, children swarming in and out, with a cabbage garden in front, and at the back a leafy wilderness. It might be Samuel Richardson's house, the author of "Clarissa." He lived at the corner of the pleasant suburban retreat of Parsons Green. But then the Green has three corners—it is a triangular space, with seats and green turf, and a fine clump of elms on one side, where there are some handsome old houses, now all vacant and "for sale," with the auctioneers' white bills pasted about them. At the base of the triangle runs the King's Road, which has been patched and pieced together, till it

now reaches from Sloane Square to Fulham. Beyond the King's Road are the grounds of Peterborough House. The house itself is modern, but the grounds remain pretty much as they were laid out by that famous Earl of Peterborough, who was the friend of Pope and Swift, and who married Anastasia Robinson, the charming songstress of those days.

Almost among these pleasant shades, we may fancy that we see the courtly figures of those days—the dark, sarcastic Dean, in his wig and cassock, with the little crooked poet, and Peterborough himself, eager and intense.

A skeleton in outward figure,
His meagre corps, tho' full of vigour,
Would halt behind him were it bigger.

And Pope himself, who often "lodged" with his friend, must have given his advice about shrubberies and parterres, while he marvels at the energy of the man who, as Swift describes him,

Flies like a squib from place to place,
And travels not but runs a race,

and who is now helping Pope himself to train his vines and arrange his quincunx, or marshalling his own plantations and trenches.

And tames the genius of the stubborn plain,
Almost as quickly as he conquered Spain.

Further along, the memory of the eccentric Earl is again recalled in the Peterboro' Arms, a snug roadside tavern, with a forge adjoining, from which rings the music of a blacksmith's hammer—just as it rung, no doubt, when Peterborough dashed by in his coach and six; or when the dashing highwayman reined up his panting steed, and flung the lucky smith a guinea for hasty expedition.

This brings us to Eel Brook Common, another open space, laid out as a public resort, very green and pleasant, with seats, and young trees that will be long ere they rival the glories of Old Fulham in the way of foliage.

Walham Green is a little disappointing, especially if expectations have been raised by the eulogies of a poet of the last century:

Hail, happy isle, and happier Walham Green.

Yet the "Green" can still be made out, although covered with bricks and mortar. The national schools represent one corner of it, and the district church of Saint John's stands where the old duck-pond used to be. The village pound was once a feature of

the Green, with a basket shop close by, which gave rise to the fine old crusted joke, that at Walham Green, baskets were sold by the pound. And there is a relic of antiquity behind the church, in the shape of a time-worn, tumble-down gabled house, which might have been once the manor house of Wendon, which they say gave its name, much modified, to Walham Green.

And here we are on the margin of that hidden stream which, running somewhere underground, among sewers and gas-pipes, forms the boundary of Fulham and Chelsea, and gave occasion for the existence of Lillie Bridge and Stamford Bridge, memorable more or less in athletic annals. Stamford Bridge, by the way—whose name would suggest a Roman ford and other ancient attributes—seems to be a corruption of Sandford Bridge, for here the sand of Fulham come to an end—at Sand's End—and we come to the culch of Culch Hythe, or Chelsea. And now we may hail an omnibus in the Fulham Road, and soon find ourselves far away from the scenes of Old Fulham.

A SUMMER GLOAMING.

THE dead day's funeral torches glow
In lurid light athwart the sky,
And whisp'ring trees nod to and fro
As new-born eve goes sighing by.

Then slow-winged rooks turn home their flight
To far-off elms beneath the hill,
While looming shades foreshow the night,
And woods and wolds are strangely still.

The landscape's rim grows darker lined;
The drenching dews fall on the hay;
The cricket chirps the hedge behind;
Shrill pipes a loit'ring thrush his lay.

And like vague shadows of a dream
Weird shrouds of white the long meads drape,
And dim processions by the stream
Of mists creep on in shifting shape.

Through grey-lit gloom bats flit and fly,
And beetles hum on heavy wings,
Till sky meets earth and earth greets sky,
And dusky night to either clings.

CAPTAIN SPENCER'S CARD-CASE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

"AND now let me have a good look at you, nephew Godfrey," said Sir Horace Trevor, when the traveller and his supposed nephew were safely installed in their private sitting-room at the fashionable hotel. "What with the bustle of the Custom House and the jolting of the cab,

"I've scarcely been able to look at you yet ; but it seems to me," he added, as he put his hands on his companion's shoulders and gave him a searching glance, "that photograph of yourself you sent me at Christmas could not have been a very good one, for I don't see that you have much resemblance to it."

"It was an excessively bad likeness, uncle," said the young man candidly. "In fact, it was not good enough to send to you ; but it was the only one I happened to have by me, and I thought you would like it better than nothing. I knew you at once, to-day, by your likeness to the photograph of you I have in my room at Mudport. How I wish George were here, that you might see what a fine fellow he has grown ! He is not much like me—he has blue eyes and light hair."

"Like your poor father," said Sir Horace, with a half-sigh. "And now, my boy, we had better see about getting these packages safely bestowed." He rose as he spoke, and went to a corner of the room, where were two or three small packing-cases, and a little iron-clamped box. He held up the latter to his supposed nephew, saying, "The jewels are in this. Would it gratify you to have a peep at the Ranees's necklace ?"

His nephew's sparkling eyes were a sufficient answer, and carefully locking the door, the old General took a small key from his watch-chain and unfastened the box, of which the lock was of peculiar construction. He removed some wrappers, and displayed the necklace and several ornaments, besides a number of unsetstones. Barbaric as was the style of some of the jewels, according to Western ideas, the size and lustre of the stones made it evident that they were of great value. The younger man took up the diamond necklace and passed it through his fingers, with manifest admiration.

"Beautiful stones, are they not ?" said Sir Horace. "The cutting and polishing leave something to be desired, but a good jeweller will soon rectify that, and they shall be equally divided between you and George, with the exception of the necklace, which is destined for the first bride—either your wife or George's. Those cases," continued the General, "contain a few valuables I especially prize, while the residue of my plate will arrive with the heavy luggage to-morrow. I intend to give them all, with the jewels, into the care of the hotel manager, that he may put

them into the strong-room for to-night ; and in the morning we will take them to the bank."

The other turned perceptibly pale.

"Don't you think it rather a risk to entrust such valuables to the tender mercies of an utter stranger, uncle ? The strong-room might be broken into and robbed this very night."

"I don't think it likely," said Sir Horace, smiling. "The strong-room here is guaranteed fire and thief-proof, and constantly contains property of great value belonging to visitors. I shall be glad to be rid of the responsibility. These diamonds have been a perfect nightmare to me all the way home."

"If I might be permitted to advise, uncle," said the young man, "I think it would be better not to call anybody's attention to the fact that you have any valuables with you at all. London thieves have such extraordinary ways of getting information, that they might attack us even in broad daylight to-morrow, as we are taking the jewels to the bank. Let us have the cases quietly carried to your room, or, better still, to mine, and locked up in a wardrobe for to-night, without telling anybody about them. That will be the safest course."

"Why would you rather have them in your room than mine ?" asked Sir Horace, rather sharply.

"Because, uncle, I am young and strong, and in case of any alarm I should be better able to defend myself. Besides, I don't like to think you should suffer from any anxiety. Let me take the burden on my own shoulders for once," pleaded the young man, respectfully.

Sir Horace pondered.

"There is the risk of fire. In the strong-room there could be no danger of that."

"But, on the other hand, you must call the attention of the hotel servants by having the cases carried there," urged his sham nephew.

"Well, my boy, that's true ; and no doubt you know more of English ways than I do, after being abroad for so long," said the old man at last. "You shall have it your own way, and keep the things in your room for to-night. If the bank had not been closed, I would have taken them there at once. Let's have a look at your room."

Nothing could have been better adapted to the purpose, for it was close to their sitting-room, and isolated, at the top of a

short flight of stairs, from the main passage. The old General's practised eye at once took in all the advantages of the position. It contained a massive wardrobe, deep enough to hold all the cases, if they were piled one on the top of the other. Sir Horace tried the lock, which was of sound construction, and gave his nephew permission to carry out his suggestion. The two men carried the cases, which were not heavy, into the bedroom, and carefully arranged them inside the wardrobe; after which, the supposed Godfrey took out the key and put it in his pocket.

"Now," said he, triumphantly, as they left the room, "with the bedroom door also locked, and the key in my pocket, I'll venture to defy all the burglars in London until to-morrow!"

He accordingly fastened that also, and they returned to the sitting-room.

"And now let's order dinner," said Sir Horace, as he seated himself once more.

The youthful impostor walked to a window, and stood looking down at the throng hurrying along the street below. It was still broad daylight, for it was not seven o'clock, and the days were at their longest. But in reality he saw nothing of what was passing before his eyes. His heart was beating madly with the anxiety to carry out his design without exciting Sir Horace's suspicions. Practised hypocrite as he was, his powers were strained to the utmost. He had never yet played for such a magnificent stake as the Ranees's jewels, and to have them in his very grasp and then be compelled to relinquish them, would be tantalising indeed.

"Don't you think, sir, that I ought to telegraph to George at once, to let him know of your safe arrival? He asked me to do so."

"Perhaps so. I had thought of writing to him to-night; but I am rather tired, and, after all, a telegram would be sufficient."

"There is a telegraph office in connection with this hotel, so it will be very easy to despatch a message," said Godfrey, leaving the window. "If you will excuse me for five minutes I will go and fill up a form at once."

Sir Horace smiled as the door closed behind his companion.

"How fond the boys are of their old uncle, to be sure! Godfrey's a good fellow, although I must say he hardly comes up to my idea of a soldier; but it doesn't do to be too exacting nowadays. More kind

and thoughtful for my welfare he could not be."

Had the General's eyes been able to follow the subject of this eulogium, he would certainly have been puzzled by his eccentric proceedings. Instead of going down to the telegraph office he proceeded to his bedroom, where he unlocked the wardrobe, and, taking out the jewel-case, slipped it inside a black handbag. Then he tried the weight of the other cases, but found that they were not sufficiently portable.

"Too heavy. If I had had a pal I might have managed it; but alone it would be too risky. I might force them, to be sure," and he looked for a moment at a beautiful little bright steel jemmy he took from an inside pocket. "But that would take time, and if they only contain plate, it isn't worth the risk, as I must get away unobserved. The necklace alone is worth a hundred times all I've risked in order to get it. Ah, Sir Horace Trevor, K.C.B., I wonder what you'll look like when you find your nephew and your jewels both missing!"

He carefully refastened the wardrobe, and, putting on his hat, took the bag and left the room, locking the door behind him. In the hall he stopped to speak to the manager.

"If Sir Horace Trevor should enquire for me—his nephew, Captain Spencer—will you kindly tell him that I have been unexpectedly compelled to go out for a few minutes, but that I shall return at the very latest in half-an-hour!"

Then, hurrying into Piccadilly, the thief hailed an empty hansom, and directed the man to drive to Waterloo Station. Then, and not until then, he breathed freely. "To Southampton, and then to America!" he exultantly thought. "With the start I've got, there's no risk of detection, and my fortune's made for life! Ah, Captain Godfrey Spencer, it was a lucky day for me when the accident of picking up your card-case in the street suggested this fine piece of work!"

CHAPTER IV.

HAVING duly reached the station, Algernon Mortimer took his ticket, and then looked about to find a vacant compartment in the train, which was timed to start in ten minutes. He would have preferred a carriage to himself; but the train was so full that the nearest approach

he could obtain to solitude was a smoking-carriage which was only tenanted by an elderly gentleman, placid, large-faced, and spectacled. He beamed so good-naturedly upon the young man, as he came up and placed his bag on the seat, preparatory to getting in himself, that the thief felt that he could not have a more promising travelling companion. But just as his foot was on the step in the very act of entering, he was suddenly dragged back by a fierce pull, and an exultant voice exclaimed :

"What? I've caught you at last, have I?"

It was David Roberts.

"I don't know what you mean," said the "Captain," angrily, trying to shake himself free. "Let me go instantly!"

"Not if I know it! I'm not going to be robbed of a gold brooch and a diamond ring, and thirty-nine pounds in money, and not collar the thief when I see him! It's no use trying to escape me. You're caught this time. I could swear to you among a thousand!"

The old gentleman in the carriage was staring with evident bewilderment, and, attracted by the commotion, a little knot of people began to gather round, among whom was a policeman.

"Policeman!" said the captive desperately, beckoning to that functionary, "I give this man in charge for being drunk and disorderly, and assaulting me without any provocation. I am an officer in Her Majesty's service, and I cannot stop to argue with every drunken vagabond who chooses to mistake me for somebody else."

"Drunk indeed!" said the little jeweller, passionately. "Don't you believe it, policeman. He's a thief and a swindler, who cheated me out of a brooch and a ring, and thirty-nine pounds, a fortnight ago; and I swear I'll bring him to justice for it!"

"But I tell you I am an officer and a gentleman, and never saw this madman before to-night!" retorted Algernon. "I am travelling on important business, and if I lose this train the consequences will be most serious! Do your duty, constable, and take this fellow into custody. There's my card, with my name and address, to show you who I am."

"CAPTAIN GODFREY SPENCER,

Third Battalion Royal Reds,"

read out the guardian of order with manifestly increased respect for the person who claimed the title. "I say, you know, this won't do," he went on, addressing the

excited accuser, "you can't be allowed to go about annoying gentlemen in this way, and I shall have to run you in if you persist in it. The gentleman says he's never seen you before, and it's plain you're mistaking him for somebody else. And if you take my advice, my man, you'll go home quietly without any more disturbance."

"But I tell you he did rob me, by pretending to be a detective! I remember him perfectly, and I'd swear to him anywhere!" said David, excitedly.

"What proof have you got?" asked the constable, disdainfully.

"Proof! My own eyes, to be sure!"

"That wouldn't be enough for a court of law, I'm afraid. If you'd seen as many cases of mistaken identity as I have, you'd be unwilling to swear to your own brother," remarked the guardian of order. "It's clear you're mistaking Captain Spencer for somebody else. If you don't want to be locked up as drunk and disorderly, you'll go about your business at once." And he took the little man firmly by the arm.

"You talk about my own eyes being no proof; but what proof have you, except his own word for it, that he is Captain Spencer?" returned the little Welshman, defiantly.

"Haven't I seen his card?" drawled the policeman with lazy superiority, as if that were a most convincing argument. And it is very singular, if the reader will reflect a moment, to notice the marvellous influence a minute scrap of pasteboard inscribed with any name, however unfamiliar, has in calming the suspicions, and bespeaking the confidence of all ranks of society. Not a day passes, but the production of a visiting-card with a flourish, extricates many a man and woman of dubious antecedents from many an unpleasant dilemma, and serves them as a passport to society.

"His card!" contemptuously returned the jeweller. "He might have had it printed on purpose, or picked it up in the street. Pray what is there so hinder me calling myself the Duke of Somewhere on a card, if I choose? I say he's the very man who came into my shop at Moortown and swindled me out of my money and my goods!"

"There, that will do," said the policeman, very sternly, forcibly retaining David with his strong arm, and motioning to the other to get into the carriage, as the warn-

ing whistle was sounding. "I don't believe a word of your story, and if you're not quiet I shall have to lock you up. I'd advise you not to compel me to call for assistance."

As the train slowly left the station, the last objects to meet the escaping swindler's eyes were David Roberts, with his face convulsed by rage, forcibly held back by the tall policeman, who towered above him, a very giant in size and strength. The sight would have been most ludicrous, had his escape been less narrow. He drew a long breath of intense relief, and subsided into a corner, with a feeling of exultation at his own foresight in keeping two or three of the cards he had picked up, in case they might prove useful in an emergency.

The plan which the perusal of Captain Spencer's correspondence had suggested to him, had not only prospered beyond his utmost expectations, but had also served to stave off an unexpected danger, in the recognition of himself by David Roberts.

"Well, really, sir," began his good-natured opposite neighbour, with an affable smile, "you must permit me to congratulate you on bringing about a successful termination to a very unpleasant scene. Your nerve and judgement were admirable under circumstances of great provocation. For an officer and a gentleman to be accused of being a common swindler was almost too much for human nature to bear."

"The fellow was evidently half-drunk," returned the sham Captain, disdainfully. "I could not feel seriously annoyed with a person so far beneath contempt. That he should be incapable of discriminating between a man in my position, and a fellow who would steal jewellery and bank-notes, shows that his statements are not seriously worth consideration."

"Certainly not," said the other, warmly. "But all the same, it was a trying position for you to be placed in Captain—by-the-bye, I have forgotten your name for the moment?"

"Godfrey Spencer."

"Ah yes! of the Royal Reds, I think you said? Very fine regiment, that. I had a brother in it once. When I was a lad I was wild to wear a red coat myself, and it was all that my father—he was a banker, and intended me to follow the same profession—could do, to dissuade

me from it. I've got over that weakness now; but still I like a chat with a young soldier now and then, though soldiering is very different from what it was in my young days. They didn't require a man to learn 'Paradise Lost' by heart before they thought him worthy of a commission!"

At Basingstoke the train stopped for a few minutes, and there another passenger got in. He was a fine-looking man of about forty, with a keen eye gleaming from beneath a cloth travelling-cap. Algernon Mortimer's loquacious companion, who was evidently not afflicted with shyness, soon began a conversation with the stranger by asking if he would like to see an evening paper.

"Thanks, I've read it," said the newcomer, opening his cigar-case. "No news worth mentioning. It appears that the police have as yet no clue to the Brixton murderer."

All England was just then ringing with the details of a particularly atrocious and dastardly crime, the perpetrator of which had for several days effectually baffled justice, and seemed likely to do so; although every day men who resembled the published descriptions of the murderer were being arrested in different parts of the country.

"I see that two men were detained at Gloucester yesterday, but afterwards set at liberty," answered the old man. "And only the other day, a Member of Parliament was positively arrested on the same charge—the police not knowing who he was, of course."

"Yes, there have been some queer cases of mistaken identity," assented the other. "And, really, you can hardly wonder at it. I have myself made the most absurd mistakes, at times, and I suppose that is the experience of everybody, more or less."

"There was a case in point this very evening," eagerly assented the loquacious old gentleman; while the sham Godfrey Spencer, seeing what was coming, bit his lips in futile annoyance without daring to stop him, for fear of exciting suspicion. "This young gentleman here was set upon at Waterloo Station, in the most insulting manner, by a rude person who persisted that he was a common swindler, and would hardly be convinced that he was mistaken, and was accusing an officer in Her Majesty's service of the most atrocious conduct. Fortunately, Captain Spencer was able to produce his card, and testify that he was an officer in the Royal Reds, and so shake off the importunity of the fellow."

He was so full of the subject that he did not notice what a change had suddenly come over the features of the person to whom he was talking. The stranger shot a keen glance at the "Captain Spencer," who, in some embarrassment, was looking out of the darkened window; and then asked quietly:

"You are Captain Godfrey Spencer, of the Royal Reds?"

"Certainly. Here is my card," said the impostor, thinking it best to brazen it out to the very last.

"Stationed at Mudport?" went on his questioner in a careless tone.

"At Mudport."

"Then, Captain Spencer, I am very happy to have made your acquaintance," said the other after a short pause, as he bent down to strike a match. "And I believe, from what this gentleman was saying, that some foolish person made some unpleasantness at Waterloo by mistaking you for somebody else?"

"He actually accused Captain Spencer of being a common thief!" eagerly put in the talkative old gentleman, delighted to have the opportunity of telling the whole story. He plunged eagerly into the details, repeating almost word for word what David Roberts had said; and his auditor listened without comment, but with evident interest. Nevertheless, Algernon Mortimer was truly rejoiced when the train stopped at Bishopstoke, where he hoped to shake off both his companions, as all the passengers had to alight and change carriages.

Tightly clutching his precious bag, he followed the others on to the platform, rejoicing at the thought that Southampton and the steamer were so near. He turned away in order to avoid his two late fellow-passengers; but the gentleman in the travelling cap contrived to keep near him, at the same time giving an almost imperceptible sign to a policeman.

Suddenly the thief felt his arms clutched from behind in a powerful grasp, and, turning, beheld Nemesis in the shape of a stalwart officer of justice and the traveller who had entered the carriage at Basingstoke. Between two such powerful men he felt he had but little chance of escape; but he determined to maintain an air of innocence to the last.

"What do you mean by this insolence?" he cried passionately.

"Take him in charge, policeman," said the gentleman in the cloth cap, coolly.

"I undertake the responsibility of prosecu-

ting him. He is a liar and an impostor, and will have to explain before the magistrates why he has thought fit to arrogate to himself a name and rank to which he has no right. He is accused of being a common swindler, and he will have to clear himself from that charge—if he can."

"But I tell you, policeman, this is all a mistake, and I'm an officer and a gentleman——"

"You fool," contemptuously returned his fellow-passenger. "Don't think to keep up that farce any longer. I happen to be Colonel Mostyn, the officer commanding the real Godfrey Spencer's regiment at Mudport, and as I see him every day of my life I'm not very likely to be deceived by a plausible scoundrel, who has borrowed his name and his card. What your object is, I confess I can't quite see; but there's some villainy in it, and the police shall find it out."

The convicted cheat hung his head in terror of the danger he had incurred. He was not acquainted with the person of Godfrey Spencer's commanding officer, and it had never entered his head to calculate upon the possibility of some one who knew the real Captain being the witness of his own assumption of his name. How he cursed in his heart the loquacious old gentleman who had brought about his detection at the eleventh hour!

"What have you got in that bag?" demanded the policeman sternly; and wrenching it from him, he forced it open, and there was revealed a small clamped box, with the inscription:

"Horace Trevor, K.C.B."

"Godfrey Spencer's uncle!" cried Colonel Mostyn. "There's some deep villainy in all this, that's evident. That box is palpably stolen property, and that alone is quite sufficient to warrant the taking you into custody."

There was nothing for it but for the wretched young man to submit to his fate. David Roberts was communicated with, as well as Sir Horace Trevor; and bit by bit the true story of Algernon Mortimer came out, first as the sham detective who had robbed the jeweller, and then as the pretended nephew who had persuaded the old General to entrust his jewels to his keeping. Nor was that all. Captain Dalrymple again related the suspicions he had before confided to Godfrey, and, being confronted with the prisoner, unhesitatingly identified him as a swindler who had defrauded his brother-officers at Bar-

minster. George Spencer was written to, and declared that he knew "Algernon Mortimer" only too well, as a scoundrel of that name had scraped acquaintance with his comrades at Dublin, and been expelled from their society for the most barefaced cheating at cards. It appeared that the rogue had many aliases, and for years had subsisted on the credulity of the public, whom a plausible tongue and a good education enabled him to gull.

He was sentenced to penal servitude for fifteen years, to the great glee of David Roberts, who blessed the lucky chance which had taken him to Waterloo Station on his way to visit a sick relative at Wimbledon, at the same time the thief was effecting his flight. Congratulations showered upon Sir Horace Trevor for the marvellously lucky recovery of his jewels; and "The Ranees's Necklace" was a nine-days' wonder. But Godfrey Spencer was observed to be remarkably thoughtful and subdued; and in a few words he explained to his friend Dalrymple the reason why.

"You were quite right, old fellow," he began, with an embarrassed laugh. "You told me that my careless habits would get me into a scrape some day, and I shudder to think of what might have come of my losing my card-case, and leaving my desk open. That scoundrel had a loaded revolver in his pocket, and my uncle might have lost his life for the sake of those jewels—and all through me. He ran a fearful risk when he was alone in London with that desperate fellow. I can't help thinking about it."

"All's well that ends well," suggested his friend consolingly.

"But it's no thanks to me that my uncle and his property are safe," Godfrey returned remorsefully. "I've had a lesson indeed, this time; and it will be a warning to me, to the end of my days, against carelessness. I mean to turn over a new leaf."

AN AUTHOR'S BREAKFAST TABLE.

THE medical officers of insurance companies attach much importance to answers to the question: "What sort of breakfast do you eat?" which often throw a flood of light upon a man's habits. If the reply be "a poor one," he is suspected of living an unhealthy life. Be he author, be he tailor, a man cannot do good work on a poor foundation; but it must be admitted

that the breakfast tables of some working authors would have no attractions for a gourmand. The breakfast of George Bancroft, the American historian, consists of a little fruit, a cup of chocolate, an egg, and a roll. He does not believe that a man can do good brain-work on a full stomach, and he takes nothing more until dinner, when his literary work is over. The veteran author has entered upon his eighty-seventh year, and is reported to go up stairs as nimbly as a youth.

Emerson was more orthodox in matters dietetic. He drank coffee in the morning, tea in the evening, animal food once a day, wine only when others used it; but always had pie at breakfast. It stood before him, and was the first thing eaten. "What is pie for if not to be eaten?" he asked, when somebody told him it was not good for him. Pie, it is alleged, shortened his life. Kate Field points out that Emerson's rare intellect lost its balance at an age when Gladstone and Oliver Wendell Holmes are still at work. Still, Emerson had reached such "a good old age"—he was seventy-nine—when he passed away that it would be hard to prove that he had shortened his life. M. Mignet, the historian of the French Revolution, had nearly reached his eighty-eighth year when he died. He ascribed his extreme old age to sobriety in eating and drinking; the habit of long walks; constant and congenial work; early hours, and perfect contentment with a small income.

Perhaps the most common, as well as the most serious, complaint from which authors suffer is dyspepsia. This was the curse of Carlyle's life, and is believed to have been caused by an insufficient and faulty diet, composed for the most part of oatmeal cake. He suffered from acid digestion and flatulence; a condition in which the mind is especially prone to be depressed. No thinking person reading his life can fail to be deeply impressed with the influence of dyspepsia on the development of his character. He was gloomy, unsocial, taciturn, and intensely irritable; he could not sleep; he could not bear noise; and he required absolute silence whilst working. The gloomy view which he took of the constitution of modern society was a reflex of the mental depression due to bad digestion. His railings and wailings over the degeneracy of the times in which he lived, his hopelessness of any improvement, and his mean opinion of all the literary men and women

with whom he came into contact, were due, in part, to indigestion.

De Quincey suffered from the same complaint. His tastes were a little troublesome to the servant who prepared his repast. Coffee, boiled rice and milk, and a piece of mutton from the loin, were the materials that invariably formed his diet. The cook, who had an audience with him daily, received her instructions in silent awe, quite overpowered by his manner, for, had he been addressing a Duchess, he could scarcely have spoken with more deference. He would couch his request in such terms as these :

"Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional disarrangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise ; so much so, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than in a longitudinal form."

The cook, a Scotchwoman, had great reverence for Mr. de Quincey as a man of genius, but after one of these interviews her patience was pretty well exhausted, and she would say :

"Weel, I never heard the like o' that in a' my days. The body has a' awfu' sicht o' words. If it had been my ain master that was wanting his dinner he wad ha' ordered a hale tablefu' wi' little mair than a waff o' his arm ; and there's a' this claver about a bit of mutton nae bigger than a prin. Mr. de Quinshey would mak' a gran' preacher, though I'm thinking a handle o' the folk wouldna ken what he was driving at."

De Quincey, Wordsworth, Southey, Leigh Hunt, and many others were all fond of tea. Hazlitt's indulgence in it led to his being called "Pimpled Hazlitt" by his opponents. For the last four or five years of his life, Hazlitt never touched any other liquid but tea. During the previous four or five years he used to drink large quantities of cold water. I have frequently seen him take four or five quarts while sitting after supper, which was his favourite meal. Wine, and all fermented liquors he had forsworn before I knew him, and he religiously kept to his resolution. This, he used to say, was the reason why Blackwood's people called him "Pimpled Hazlitt," thus holding him up to the world as a dram drinker. Had they told nothing but the truth of him, they would

not have made him out to the world as anything worse than he really was, and he did not deserve to pass for anything better. Whereas, by ascribing to him that vice which was the farthest removed from his actual habits, they gained a great point against him.

"Had I really been a gin drinker and a sot," I have heard him say, "they would have sworn I was a milksop."

Wordsworth, like Carlyle, kept a very poor table. "The Wordsworths have no regular meals," wrote Miss Mitford, "but go to the cupboard when hungry, and eat what they want." Wordsworth, like Cardinal Newman, was fond of sugar. When he visited Charles Lamb at his lodgings in Enfield, one of the extra teas in the bill was charged sixpence. On Lamb enquiring what this meant, the reply was that "the elderly gentleman," meaning Wordsworth, "had taken such a quantity of sugar in his tea."

The great authors of France have, as a rule, been simple in their habits. Victor Hugo was thus described at breakfast : "He eats slowly, with majestic air, masticating his food like an old lion. You feel that he is a man always in good health ; one who bathes every morning in cold water ; who works with open windows ; who, when he comes home in winter from the Senate, does not even close the carriage windows. He seems to grow no older." Béranger limited his daily expenditure to eight shillings and threepence. He began with bread and milk, and never drew the line for the general total until he had entered his last sou and the cause of its disbursement. He never allowed himself the luxury of coffee after meals, and his only drink was sugared water. His principal food came from the fishmongers and pork-butchers.

A writer who yields to none of his contemporaries, either in the quality or quantity of his work, is Elisée Reclus. He is at present engaged on his great "Géographie Universelle," which has occupied him eight years, and will probably occupy him as many more. He produces a number every week, a volume every year, and has never missed being up to time. He begins his daily task at seven in the morning, and, save a few short intervals for food and exercise, keeps hard at work until eight in the evening. He is a very moderate eater, takes little animal food and no wine, and to his abstemious habits he probably owes his excellent health and capacity of sleep,

for he is a man of slight frame, and by no means robust.

Speaking generally, authors do not study health. They work until they break down. Some plead that they have no time for regular meals or for recreation; others, again, are so absorbed in their work that they cannot tear themselves from it until it is done. Wilkie Collins, for instance, confesses himself a sinner in this respect. "When a man is 'old enough to know better,' he generally commits some of his most flagrant indiscretions. This new book, 'Heart and Science,' so mercilessly excited me, that I went on writing week after week, without a day's interval of rest."

Kant, the German metaphysician, was one of the few men of note who made his physical state a subject of special study and of scrupulous care. He studiously investigated the means of preserving health, and diligently practised the art of prolonging life. He had little faith in the power of doctors to cure the ills of the flesh, and believed that they might be dispensed with altogether, unless they occupied their time with the study of chemistry, galvanism, and new discoveries in science. Regularity in eating, drinking and sleeping, with proper recreation after work, he esteemed of far more importance than medicine, because they prevent sickness. In 1778, he writes that his constitution is so feeble that he can preserve his health only by means of great uniformity in his method of life, and in his mental state. Five years after, he says that a hygienic rule, which he found long ago in an English author, had been adopted by him, namely, that every person should have his own peculiar way of being healthy, which he cannot alter without risk.

It would not be safe, however, to follow Kant's method of living. He worked eight hours on very poor food, a pipe of tobacco, and a cup of tea; but he made up for his haste at breakfast by spending an extravagantly long time over his dinner. He is recorded to have spent three hours over this event. His biographer tells us that for many years he ate only one meal a day, but that with a keen appetite. The dinner usually consisted of three courses, namely, soup, dried pulse with fish, and a roast, together with a dessert of cheese, to which fruit was added in summer. He always drank wine and water at dinner, never beer, against which he had a strong prejudice. If he heard of any one who

died in the prime of life, Kant would say, "he probably drank beer," and, if the indisposition of a person was mentioned, he was apt to ask: "Does he drink beer at night?" He regarded that beverage as a slow poison, and wine as absolutely beneficial under all circumstances."

Goethe hated tobacco quite as strongly as Kant hated beer. The poet drank fifty thousand bottles of wine in his lifetime; but Mr. G. H. Lewes explained that Goethe drank "a wine which his English contemporaries would have called water; the amount he drank never did more than exhilarate him; never made him unfit for work or society."

Although a wrinkle may be gained from an author's method of living, it is obviously impossible to draw any general conclusion. Every man has his own system.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE later in the evening, Gaspard appeared at the Manse with a book in his hands. Thora, who had seen him coming, hastened to open the door for him.

"Why did you not come to tea when Mr. Traill asked you?" she exclaimed, with some irritation. "I want to have a lesson to-night, and you were so late in returning from the Stones that we have no time, especially since you have wasted an hour in going to your hotel."

"Not quite an hour, mademoiselle," returned Gaspard, though he was pleased that she should care so much about his appearing. "And I wanted to go elsewhere than to the hotel—to the post-office, to see if this book had come."

"What is it?"

"Let us go into the garden, and I will show you."

They passed through the house into the narrow, steep strip of garden ground where a few hardy flowers battled bravely for existence against all disadvantages of soil and season. In one corner grew two stunted elder-trees, so bent and twisted by striving to escape the influence of the bitter sea-salt winds, that they formed a sort of rugged bower. A rough bench was placed in the shade of them, and Gaspard and Thora were accustomed to sit here during those so-called French lessons which

took up so much of the young man's spare time.

"Tell me now what the book is," she asked again.

He took off the paper in which it was wrapped, and showed her a daintily bound copy of Lamartine's "Graziella."

"I thought you might like to have it," said Gaspard, diffidently. "It tells a story which nearly resembles your own—of a girl, a fisher-maiden, whom a young Frenchman met on a coast, not so desolate as this, perhaps, yet not more beautiful—at Naples."

"And how does the story end?" she asked, with some interest.

"Sadly, alas! as I hope the tale of your life will not end. Graziella dies; Lamartine weeps for her."

Thora's interest had died away. She picked up the paper that had enfolded the book, and looked at the post-marks stamped upon it. Kirkwall, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and the rest she traced, each name speaking of an unknown world which she strove vainly to picture; at the last came "Paris."

"Did you send to Paris for this book for me?" she asked, with a touch of awe in her voice.

"Yes; I knew that I should be able to get there the most beautiful copy that was ever published, so I asked a friend I have in Paris to send me one."

She touched the book more reverently now. It had come from so far; if it could speak it could have told her so much! Distance alone could touch Thora's imagination.

"And have you ever been in Paris?" she asked Gaspard.

"Yes."

"Tell me about it—what the houses are like, what the people do, how they speak and live. It must be all so strange."

Gaspard's own acquaintance with Paris was that of a holiday-maker, not of an inhabitant; so the account he gave of the great city, its boulevards, its theatres, its gardens, was full of light and colour, and very dazzling to an inexperienced mind.

"Ah! If I could see it all!" sighed the girl when he had finished.

"In some ways it is not so beautiful as this home of yours, mademoiselle," Gaspard answered. "To-day, when Mr. Traill and I were standing in the great circle, I thought I had never seen anything so weird, and strange, and lovely."

"Do you really care for the Stones of Stennis?" she asked in bewildered incredulity.

"Ah, what cold words you use!" exclaimed the young man. "Yes, I care for them; they fill me with interest, with reverence. You must be proud to live here, where all around there are so many things to rouse one's curiosity and to interest one's imagination."

"Do you think so? To me everything seems so old, so dead, that we ourselves are scarcely alive. You see Stromness now, and think because the days are long, and the sea smooth, and the sunset is scarcely over before the dawn begins, that it is beautiful, and life is sweet; but if you were here in winter, in the long nights—nights as long as the days are now—when you sit silent for lack of anything to speak of, though there is no sound but the sea raging and the wind blowing, and you can think of nothing but the chance of the boats being lost at the fishing—then you would not speak of beauty or interest. I hate it all; I should like to live in such a place as that Paris you describe, where new streets arise, new events happen every day."

"Oh, ma belle Thora, if I might take you there!" he exclaimed, passionately, in French. She did not grasp the meaning of his words, but the eagerness of his voice brought a faint flush to her cheeks, and the passion in his eyes raised a questioning glance in her own.

"If I asked you to go to France with me, would you do so?" he asked after a pause, speaking in a more hesitating and diffident voice.

"To France—with you!" she repeated, slowly, as if measuring the words. As a matter of fact she was merely revelling in the picture they brought before her—a fairy picture of magic delights, vague, but the more fascinating for that, illumined by such a sun as never shone in earthly sky. It never struck her as possible that life in France might be the same in its essentials as life in Orkney. She would not have believed that there, as in her own home, were labour, weariness, monotony; surely it was a magic land of light and joy. Her habitual restlessness had become a passion, which had now concentrated itself into one clear desire—to go to France, the one place beyond the range of her own vision, which was more to her than a name.

"Yes," she replied to Gaspard's question, with a sigh of intense longing, "I would go to France with you."

He had been watching her face eagerly, and thought he read in it a battle and a conquest in her mind. He had himself

that intense reverence for family ties which is so natural to a Frenchman, although it seems to a Briton exaggerated and unreal. He could not have severed himself from his mother and sisters, even from his master, who was also his adviser and friend, without a wrench that would have been agonising; and while he believed, though without fully realising its depth, in Thora's indifference to the little town where all she could remember of life had been passed, it seemed to him that she could not part from the old man who had brought her up, and the kindly, ignorant woman who had nursed, and petted, and worshipped her, without intense pain. If, he argued, he who was a man of the world (he thought) clung so closely to home and kindred, this simple, untaught, northern girl must feel the bond in an intenser form.

So, reading Thora's face by the light of his own mind, he thought that, almost unwillingly, she allowed love for him to conquer love for those who had tended her infancy and cherished her youth.

"Yes, I could go to France with you," said Thora.

Gaspard put his own interpretation on the words.

"Then you love me, my angel!" he exclaimed with a passion in which awe had not yet given place to triumph. "Is it not impossible? Am I not mad to think that all I dared to hope for has been given to me; that you, my beautiful Thora, my northern star, love me and will be my wife? Say it again, *chérie*, or I shall not dare to believe you. Say that you will come with me to my own land, to show all there how great a treasure I have found in these lonely islands."

She looked a little bewildered, even distressed, by his words.

"Then you—love me?" she asked, dubiously.

"I adore you, I worship you," he cried. "I give myself up to you; I am yours for ever. Take my life, Thora, and do with it what you will. It is yours now; yours to rule as long as I live; only give me your love."

He was kneeling before her now, his dark face lightened to unwonted beauty by the earnestness and passion of his soul. What woman is there but must feel a responsive thrill when such love is offered her; when a man lays his life at her feet and bids her rule it as she will? She was moved from her usual egoism. For a

moment, at least, she desired to tender gift for gift.

"I love you. I will do whatever you bid me," she murmured.

Lovers are a class by themselves—not pervious to the arguments or amenable to the laws that rule the rest of the world—and it seems a part of their inevitable destiny that their wishes should come into collision with the wishes of parents and guardians. Thora Sweynson's guardian was no exception to his class.

"You want to marry Thora!" he repeated, in utter bewilderment, when, an hour later, Gaspard sought him out and told him of his wishes. "I never thought of such a thing, or I need not say that I should never have allowed you to come so freely about the Manse. You must yourself perceive how impossible such a marriage is."

The minister was surprised, and irritated, and everything else that elders usually are, when a young man and a maiden, who have been thrown together day after day, show how well they have liked each other's society. One would think that love was an experience utterly foreign to young hearts, so phenomenal do these worthy souls seem to consider its appearance.

"I do not see the impossibility of the marriage. I am not rich, but my salary is sufficient, and my mother can add to my income. I ask no dowry," said the young Frenchman. "Why is the marriage impossible?"

"For many reasons. First, there is the difference of religion——"

"That need not empêcher—how do you say it?—hinder," cried Gaspard, losing his English in his excitement. "I care not for creeds, I will adopt the belief of you and Thora without hesitation."

"Do you think I would permit that, sir?" returned the minister, sternly. "Bad as your religion is, it is the only one in which you do believe, and I should encourage you in a sin if I advised you to adopt another, though a purer worship, to gratify a mere earthly passion, and not from any conscientious conviction."

"But then, convince me; I am ready to believe all you tell me. You have already told me often of the errors of the Catholic Church; I believe it all; I will believe that you, and you alone, know the truth. Do not let this stand between Thora and me."

"It must; and I should mock the God I serve if I professed a moment's belief in the sincerity of your conversion. Recan-

tation, had it been heartfelt, would have shown itself before so powerful an earthly motive came to induce it. As Thora's guardian, I refuse my consent to her marrying you."

"Then, monsieur," replied Gaspard with perfect respect, but with equal firmness, "I must remind you that you are not the father of Thora, that you appointed yourself to be her guardian, and that you have thus no right to control her actions. I have informed you of my wishes as a matter of respect, and I should be grateful if you consented to them; but your refusal does not affect my determination to make Mademoiselle Thora my wife."

Mr. Traill's face flushed, and he rose from his chair as if to order the young man to leave his house; but suddenly he resumed his seat, and letting Gaspard finish what he had to say, replied to him with somewhat sarcastic gravity:

"It was scarcely necessary, sir, to consult me when you had already determined to set my authority at defiance. But that is not the only point to be considered. How old are you?"

"Twenty-three," answered the young man, feeling some surprise at the question, and at the sudden change of tone on the part of the questioner.

"I do not know much about modern French customs, but I do not think that any alteration has been made in the law of marriage—that article in the code, I mean, which forbids a man under the age of twenty-five contracting a marriage without the consent of his parents. Are your parents acquainted with your intention, and do they approve of it?"

Gaspard was taken aback; he had not thought of this point.

"My father is dead, and I have not yet informed my mother of my wishes," he answered, briefly.

"Then I should suggest your doing so before taking any further steps to gain them."

"Sir, we are in Britain, not in France; the Scottish marriage law prevails here, not the French. No power on earth can prevent my marrying Thora."

"You would then, I presume, take her to France?"

"Yea."

"Knowing that the moment you stood on French soil your marriage would be invalid, as being contracted without the knowledge, or against the will of your surviving parent. Thora would not be

your wife there; you would be free to desert her, to marry another woman if you chose. No one would reproach you; your action would be lawful."

"Monsieur, do you take me for a coward—a villain?"

"I take you for a Frenchman."

"Suggest nothing against the honour of my nation," cried Gaspard, with some of the magniloquence of youth.

"You are right; I have no right to apply a general prejudice, however well founded, to a particular case. But I know you to be a very young and very passionate man, whose love for a beautiful, penniless, and ignorant girl, may endure, but more probably will fade in a few months, either from absence or satiety. I am bound to protect Thora's interests, and to prevent her forming any tie that is not legally binding."

"You wrong me," cried Gaspard. "You understand neither me nor my love. I cannot be false to Thora, I love her too well; but if I could, my honour would forbid my treating her as you suggest. The law of honour is more powerful with me than the Code Napoléon."

"Very fine words," said the minister, "and likely to impress young people, and, maybe, lead them to their destruction; but when one has got to middle age, one knows that an ounce of law is worth a pound of honour and a hundredweight of love, especially in dealing with human passions. I am not a married man myself, but I have given some attention to observing the married state, and my impression is that it derives its permanence from the fact that having once entered it, no one can get out of it without more scandal and expense—especially expense—than they care to risk. Nothing tends to forgiveness of each other's faults more than the knowledge that it will be worse for oneself not to do so—the feeling that, being tied together, each has to make the best of the other."

"This may be very true," exclaimed Gaspard, impatiently, interrupting the minister's meditations on the philosophy of marriage; "but it has no immediate interest for me. I leave you to your thoughts, and to the reflection that you have done your best to separate two hearts that love each other, but also with the assurance that your efforts will not succeed."

"Hush, young man, you are too impatient," replied Mr. Traill, returning to the subject in hand. "You young folk

think that life is to pass like you moon sailing across the sky; but we, who have so often seen the storm-clouds gather over it and hide its light, may well be more weatherwise than you. See, I will give in more than I intended to do. You are a pleasant-spoken young fellow, and I like you, foreigner and Papist though you are. Besides, Thora may as well wed the man of her fancy, if it be possible. Write to your mother, tell her what you desire, and, if she consents to your marrying Thora Sweynson, I will wed you myself, and pray that such a union may be the means of freeing your soul from Roman darkness. Thora is well grounded in the faith, poor lass; I taught her the Shorter Catechism myself. Mind, I do not in the least expect that Madame Harache will yield to your wishes; but if she gives her consent, I shall not withhold mine. Does this satisfy you?"

Gaspard said "Yes," and thanked the old man, but rather ruefully. He knew, now the question had been brought before his mind, what were likely to be a French-woman's views on the subject of a daughter-in-law without a "dot." But he wrote an excited and passionate letter to his mother, describing Thora in glowing terms, and praying, as for some heavenly boon, for her consent to his marriage with his divinity. He used every superlative expressing bliss and woe to describe what his condition would be according as his prayer was granted or refused, and addressed premature words of gratitude to a mother who, he was sure—so he said, though he really felt but little certainty—loved her son too well to blight his life by frowning on his love. In short, he wrote the letter of a very young man who was very much in love, and sent it to a woman of fifty—a woman of the world, a woman who had never in all her life encountered an emotion in herself or another which her will could not subdue.

She had received another letter from Gaspard only three days before the arrival of the one telling of his love for Thora Sweynson, and on reading the second, she proceeded to answer the first as if the other had not reached her. Her reply was as follows:

"MON FILS BIEN-AIMÉ,

"It is with joy that I learn that the repairs of the Belle Armande are now near to completion, and that you may hope

soon to quit for ever the desolate island in which fate has compelled you to pass so long a time. You have shown great courage in your banishment, never complaining of the inconveniences for which you must have suffered so much; but dwelling rather on the picturesqueness of your surroundings. Alas! the picturesque is always the uncomfortable! You have shown courage and patience, and I honour you for it; but you will never again be expected to display such heroism. I have arranged a marriage for you with Sophie Meudon, and her father will not wish to risk the life of his son-in-law. Mademoiselle Sophie has just returned from school; she is just seventeen, blonde as an angel, very amiable, and, though not beautiful, 'très-gentille.' She will have a good dowry, and her father, who regards with admiration your talent and industry, is ready to embrace you as a son-in-law. I congratulate you, in advance, on the good fortune you are about to enjoy. A mother's happiness is to see that of her children. Barbe and Lucie (who, though they do not know that Mademoiselle Meudon is to fill that relation, already adore her as a sister) send you the assurance of their unalterable affection. I give you a thousand embraces. Your very devoted mother,

"HÉLÈNE HARACHE"

To this letter was appended a postscript, written as if in haste and distress of mind:

"Your second letter has just arrived. It has shocked me, plunged me in the deepest affliction. I am not more severe than other mothers towards the follies of youth, but the idea of your marrying the barbarian and heretic with the unpronounceable name is deplorable. It would be impossible under any circumstances; it is ten times impossible now that your future is arranged for. I insist that you give up all thought of such a marriage. I do not consent to it; I shall never consent to it. Be assured of this."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
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CHARLES DICKENS

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I SAW nothing—absolutely nothing," said Lance. "All I know is that Madge gave a startled cry and fell forward fainting. Her nerves, I should say, were over-strung—she has been far from well lately, you know—and she fancied she saw something. It was a thousand pities she attempted the funeral service."

The Vicar had come to Lance's aid in the churchyard, and between them they had got Madge down to her carriage, and thence home. Arrived at home, she had gone from one fainting fit to another during the early part of the night, and now, weak and exhausted, lay upon her bed while Sir Peter and Lance together discussed the strange occurrence.

Sir Peter echoed Lance's regret. "Yes, a thousand pities," he said, pushing back his chair and indulging in a brisk trot round the room, "but I've no doubt she'll be all right again by the morning; a good night's rest works wonders"—this was said at Lance's elbow. "And the little trip to Italy is just the very thing she's needing"—this was said at the door. "I say, Lance!"—here he came back at a run to Lance's elbow once more, with a look on his face which proclaimed a serious subject for thought on hand now.

Lance looked at him absently. He was leaning forward as he sat gazing dreamily into the fire. His appearance was scarcely that of a happy-hearted bridegroom who expected to have his happiness crowned on the morrow.

Sir Peter was determined to have the whole of his attention.

"I say, Lance," he said again, raising his voice, "I do hope they'll remember to unmuffle that bell at the church; it would be dreadful if they started your wedding-peal to-morrow with a muffled C."

Then he set off on tramp again once more.

"Oh, they'll think of it right enough. The men are supposed to have an idea or two about their work."

"I think I had better send down a message in the morning to make sure—or two, perhaps; one to the Vicar, and one to the verger?"

Here he paused in his quick march for a moment in front of his writing-table, as if intending there and then to despatch his notes to Vicar and verger. He took up a pen, felt its nib, then laid it down and rubbed his eyes.

"The truth of it is, I'm horribly sleepy," he said, deprecatingly, as if the fact called for an apology. "I've had, on the whole, a busy day—a busy and exciting day, I might say."

Lance roused himself from his reverie.

"If I were you, I should go to bed. You'll have lots to do to-morrow, you know."

Sir Peter rubbed his eyes again.

"Yes, I suppose, off and on, there will be a good deal on my hands," he said, complacently, "and one can't do without sleep altogether."

"I wouldn't try if I were you. It's past two—"

"Yes, and I must be up early. I've told Simmonds to call me at five. And by the way, Lance, don't you think an awning should be put up from the church to the gate?—it might rain, you know."

By the way, I wonder if it will rain; I'll just tap the barometer again."

"The one outside your bedroom door is more trustworthy than this, and here's your lamp, Uncle Peter," said Lance, facilitating as far as possible the old gentleman's departure.

Half-way up the stairs he paused, calling to Lance over the balusters. "I say, Lance, I suppose there really is nothing to keep me up any longer? Madge is really coming round all right, isn't she?"

"Lady Judith said she left her asleep half-an-hour ago, and her maid has gone to bed in the next room—there can be nothing to keep you up. Good night."

Sir Peter went a step or two higher, then came to a standstill again. "And you may set your mind at rest about that bell, Lance," he said. "I shall go to sleep with it on my mind and think of it the very first thing in the morning, so don't you trouble about it."

But Lance made no reply this time. He had gone back to the study, and his gloomy thoughts swooping down upon him once more, his ears were shut to Sir Peter's voice.

He leaned moodily against the mantel-piece, staring into the live coals—his thoughts a turmoil so far as the present was concerned, and a blank as to the future.

What was it that had changed Madge so much of late? What was the reason of her extraordinary terror in the churchyard, and above all, why was it that she had failed, in response to his direct appeal, to give pledge for pledge, and reciprocate trust with trust? These were the uppermost of the doubts which presented themselves for solution. But below these, sounding a deeper note, were other doubts and questions equally difficult to answer. Did this marriage that he was about to contract with Madge really promise happiness in the future for her or for him, or, to put it on a lower ground, even contentment and satisfaction? Had he been wise in thus yielding to Uncle Peter's wishes? Was not the past too real, too living for it to be hurried in this way into its grave of oblivion?

The fire burned low; the lamp on the table grew dim while these thoughts, in slow procession, trooped across his brain. The room was a large one; it seemed all shadows at the farther end, save where the half-open door admitted a faint patch of lamplight from the dimly-lighted, outer hall.

Across this faint patch of light there suddenly fell a stronger gleam as from a lamp carried by hand. A tremulous hand, too, it must have been, for the gleam wavered; now high, now low, it fell upon the floor.

"It's Uncle Peter back again," thought Lance, leaving his leaning posture at the fireplace and going to the door.

But in the doorway he paused, astonished to see not Sir Peter but Madge descending the broad flight of stairs in some long, trailing white gown.

His first thought was that she was walking in her sleep; a second look undeceived him. Her steps were too rapid and unsteady for those of a sleep-walker, also her eyes had not the fixed, staring expression of a dreamer, but were bright and dancing. The light of her lamp thrown upward on her face emphasized its pallid wanness, framed in a cloudy halo of short, dusky, dishevelled hair.

"Why, Madge, what is it?" he cried, advancing to meet her and taking the lamp from her hand.

"I have something to say to you—something I must say at once—to-night, for I cannot live through another night with it unsaid," answered Madge, in low, unsteady tones, as she passed in front of him into the library.

He followed her in simple blank astonishment. He set down her lamp on a side table and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Say on, dear, if it must be said," he answered, kindly.

And standing thus facing her, and looking down into her troubled face, he was struck with the havoc which sleepless nights and anxious days had wrought in her. Madge, at her best, would never have been a beauty; but he had been accustomed to see her piquante, radiant, full of animation and spirits. It seemed impossible that aught but years of actual bodily suffering could have sharpened her features in this fashion, traced such rings round her eyes, and lines of care about her mouth.

Her eyes did not meet his as they stood thus. They went wandering hither and thither, now to the dark corners at the farther end of the room, anon to the half-opened door with a searching, terrified look in them.

"What is it, Madge?" he asked. "What do you think you see there?"

And then another fear took possession of him. This might be the first stage of

some delirious fever. The right course would be to get her as quickly as possible back to her room.

He took her hands in his.

"Wouldn't it be better to get back to your room, Madge, and try for some sleep?" he asked. "To-morrow, you can tell me anything you like, you know."

Madge did not seem to hear him, though he could feel her thrill to his touch. Her eyes were still wandering from corner to corner, the terror in them deepening.

"Do you see anything?" she asked, presently, in a frightened whisper.

"Nothing—absolutely," he answered, the impression that she was suffering from delirium growing upon him. "Come, Madge, let me see you up the stairs again to your room. It'll soon be morning; try and get an hour or two of sleep."

She drew a long breath and looked up in his face.

"Sleep!" she repeated. "I tell you there will be no sleep for me till I've told you the truth—the whole truth from beginning to end!"

She looked down on his hands which still clasped her cold trembling ones in a warm grasp, and suddenly bowed her head over them and kissed them passionately.

"Oh dear, dear hands!" she cried, brokenly, "how can I speak words which will make them grow cold as death to me!"

Lance grew alarmed.

"I don't think anything you could tell me would bring that about, Madge," he answered, gravely; but for all that his heart quaked for what her tale might be.

She looked up in his face piteously.

"Not if I were to tell you—that it was I who drove Jane Shore out of the house and sent her to her death?" she asked, bringing out the words with difficulty, and with many a pause between them.

His hands let go at once.

"What!" he cried, hoarsely, and he recoiled a step, staring at her blankly.

Madge's breath came in gasps.

"It's true! It's true!" she cried, bringing out her words now in a rush. "I found out her secret, and flashed it out on her on the night of the ball, in the picture placed opposite the mirror in my boudoir; and—and—you know the rest."

And the confession made now, she sank, trembling, into a chair which stood near, covering her face with her hands.

Lance drew a step nearer. His face had suddenly grown hard, white, rigid.

"Will you be good enough to tell me what that secret was, and how you found it out?" he asked, in a voice that matched his face.

Madge drew her hands from her face, looking up at him wonderingly. Was this Lance's voice, with a ring of iron in it, in place of its usual mellow kindliness?

His set face repeated his question.

Then Madge, with trembling lips, and in a tone so low that it sank at times to a whisper, repeated the story which the newspaper paragraph had told. Once or twice she nearly broke down; it was a hard story to tell to the man standing there facing her, with arms folded on his chest, and white, set face.

Only once he interrupted her to ask the question who had possession of the newspaper now. But that one interruption nearly brought her story to an abrupt ending, and it was with many a halt and a voice that threatened to fail her altogether, that she resumed and told the finish of that ill-fated night of the ball—Jane Shore's visit to her room, and her farewell threat.

Lance drew a long breath as she finished speaking, but said never a word.

She clasped her hands together, looking up piteously into his face. "Oh, Lance!" she cried, "do not look at me like that—speak to me, tell me you forgive me now that I have told you the whole truth!"

His face grew harder still. "Will your telling me the whole truth raise her from the dead and give her back to me?" he asked in harsh, cold tones. Then he turned his back on her and went towards the door.

She sprang after him and laid one hand on his arm. "Lance, Lance," she cried, passionately, "do not leave me like this! We must not part in this way!"

It was easy to read her sentence in his eyes. They said plainly enough: "Everything is at an end between us! All I ask of you now is to keep out of my sight to the last hour of my life!"

"Speak to me, speak to me," she implored, "one word, just one word of kindness or pity!"

"Kindness! Pity!" he repeated.

Madge's head drooped. "I know, I know," she said, "what you would say—that I had neither kindness nor pity for her. But if you did but know what I have suffered, what I do suffer—"

Her voice gave way, though her eyes were dry. She bowed her head on the hand which clutched his arm.

"You could not help forgiving me if you only knew how I have been—how I am punished," she went on, piteously. "She has kept her word; she stood behind me in the churchyard to-night; she followed me home and sat beside my bed; she came down the stairs with me."

She broke off for a moment, then suddenly lifted her face to his once more.

"Look in my face," she said, humbly, pleadingly. "You can see what I have suffered!"

His words came stern and wrathful now:

"You looked in her face and saw what she had suffered; but did that teach you pity?" he asked, striving as he spoke to release his arm from her clasp.

But there had come to her fingers a strength twice their own, and their clasp did not loosen. There rose up in her mind some faint sense of injustice. It seemed as if her great love for him, as well as her suffering, must be written on her face, and plead for her.

"You do not know—you do not understand," she faltered, then broke off.

The story of this great passionate love of hers would be even harder to tell than had been the story of her mercilessness to the woman who had threatened to frustrate that love.

"After all these years——" she began, then broke off again.

All his reply was the endeavour once more to unloosen her fingers.

She could bear it no longer.

"Oh, Lance, Lance, it was for you, because I loved you," she cried, passionately. And then tears came to her at last, and she bowed her head once more on his arm.

But it was to be neither rest nor hiding-place for her now. He released himself from her clasping, trembling hands. For once he raised his voice.

"Then I would to Heaven that you had hated me, since your love has done this for me," he said, hotly, turning away from her towards the door once more.

She put herself between him and the door.

"Oh, Lance, Lance," she implored, "don't leave me thus; only say you'll forgive me, or if you cannot do that, say you will try to in the years to come—some day, some long way off, perhaps."

Then she threw herself on her knees at his feet, crying brokenly:

"Oh, Lance, Lance, kill me, punish me,

do anything cruel you please to me, but only tell me you'll try to forgive me in the years to come. We must not part in this way. In this life we may never set eyes on each other again."

He put her clasped hands stretched upward to his face away, and passed on to the door. He turned and gave her one farewell look as she crouched on the floor in her tumbled white draperies, her weeping face hidden now in her hands.

"I pray Heaven," he said, in low constrained tones that emphasized his prayer, "that in this life I may never set eyes on your face again."

OLYMPIA.

THE connection of the show at what is rather absurdly called "Olympia," with an Exhibition of Irish industries is rather remote. You are to make-believe a great deal, and persuade yourself that the parade of Kerry cows, and the horse show with a leap or two, have taken place in the park of an Irish mansion. Then you are further to imagine that, a good part of the day being left, the family and the visitors form themselves into a committee of sports and fill up the time with a sham fight. There is an old tower in the grounds, as there is in many an Irish demesne. This is held by part of the company disguised as Sepoys, who hoist a green flag—not Irish, we are assured, but Mahomedan. Before fighting these Sepoys amuse themselves, after their fashion, with jugglers' tricks, and a dance of nautch-girls, and tent-pegging, and the sword-dance and such like games. Then the British troops come on; there is a skirmish, the Sepoys are driven in, and the fort is stormed.

The thing, of course, winds up with fireworks, Roman fire, wheels, and a gas "good-night," with rose, shamrock, and thistle.

These are some of the accessories of what "the Press unanimously declares to be the most useful, practical, interesting and attractive of all the Exhibitions." Comprehensive enough, and attractive to those who are fond of "assaults of arms," and to those who like a "real Irish piper"—a little man in green, with stockings and knee-breeches, and buckled shoes—playing jigs on pipes which have a bellows instead of the Scotch "bag," and are, therefore, independent of the mouth; and who enjoy sitting about listening to the

really fine English organ, or gathering round the young lady who plays on a Limerick piano.

But how far this or any Exhibition is useful and practical is a question. An Exhibition is for a nation what an "at home" is for an individual. It means that you have put your house in order and have something to show which it is worth peoples' while to come and look at. This something at Olympia is not the sham fight, or the theatre, or the fireworks; these are just like the public singer whom some people provide for the additional delectation of their guests. What friends come for is not the singer, it is me and my library, or picture-gallery or garden, and the talk that I and those whom I bring together are able and willing to give them a share in.

So to Olympia friends, as distinguished from mere pleasure-seekers, come to see what Ireland is doing in the way of manufactures. And this is unmistakably "useful, practical, and interesting," besides having for a great many true friends of Ireland the charm of novelty. Here are all kinds of things made in Ireland, and just as good as those manufactured over here: sweetmeats, from Great Britain Street and O'Connell Street, Dublin; iron-work, brass-fittings, cutlery, glass, pottery, marble. Even calico, as good as the best, is made in at least two places—Portlaw, near Waterford, and Drogheda. But of all the Irish manufactures, except the linen, that which is best represented is the woollen. For years "the trade" has known that exceptionally good tweeds are made in Ireland; but they have not communicated their knowledge to their customers. Many an Englishman has worn, on his yearly trip to the Lakes, or to Scotland, a suit of "Irish frieze," without in the least suspecting where the well-looking stuff came from. "Frieze," he thinks of as the coarse, weather-stained stuff, thick as a board and almost as unyielding, which is the pig-drover's ordinary wear, and which "Paddy from Cork" is supposed to trail on the ground that any one who is "blue mouldy for want of a beating" may step on it, as he walks up and down flourishing his shillelagh.

Unhappily, Irish goods had got a bad name. How, is a long and sad story. Ireland has always been managed by an "Ascendency," who looked to England for support, and repaid her help by upholding everything English. That was all fair;

but it was too bad when they went on to assert that Ireland was a modern Nazareth, out of which it was impossible that any good thing should come.

Years ago, talking about butter with a Bristol salesman, an old friend of mine, I said:

"Well, I've had so much 'mild Waterford,' and 'best Cork,' and 'Clonmel' of you, that suppose I have some of that 'prime Dorset' for a change?"

"You can if you like," he replied, "but if you do you'll be eating just the same as you had last time. That's 'best Cork,' only we call it 'Dorset.'"

"Why?"

"Because by giving it that name, we get a penny or three-halfpence more a pound for it, that's all. You see nobody believes that the Irish can make the best butter. Why, bless you; there's more 'Dorset' sold in Bristol alone than was ever made in the county."

I hoped that that state of things had gone by, that "no Irish need apply" was obsolete, at least so far as eatables went. But, no; the other day in Cork, looking over one of the largest butter concerns, I saw a hundred or so of neat little white firkins, "all made in Copenhagen," said my guide, answering my unspoken enquiry. "And when we've filled them, we sell the butter as Danish; and I'm ashamed to say that at some of our Irish tip-top hotels, they won't eat anything but 'Danish.'" Below there was a row of natty French baskets. "Yes; these we fill with best Brittany. That brings the highest price of all, yet every pound of it comes from a dozen miles round Cork."

Then the second and third qualities are sold as "Irish," and people think that the Irish can't make anything worth eating or wearing, and the very excellence of their productions is used as an argument against them.

Olympia ought to give the death-blow to this mischievous nonsense; ought to put an end once and for ever to the self-depreciation, not at all of the Socratic kind, in which "the classes" in Ireland have so long indulged.

Irish woollens have made their way in Australia and in the States; they are as popular in Austria as Irish frieze used to be in Italy in the thirteenth century; and henceforth no Londoner who has visited Olympia with his eyes open, can well be ignorant of the different kinds—Mahony's, of Blarney, "four-leaved sham-

rock" trade mark; Clayton's, of Navan; O'Brien's, of Cork; Athlone Woollen Company; Caledon Mills; Thomastown Mills; Laragh Mills at Castleblayney; besides the home-spun woven in the cottages by the peat-fire during the long winter nights, and the wet, dreary days when nothing can be done on the land. There are stalls of this homespun inside the Exhibition; and outside, in "the Donegal village"—with its paper walls coloured to look as if built of big, irregular stones, and its thatch that ought to be roped down with straw-bands weighted with big stones, and the hayrick and peat-stack in the yard, and the boundary fence of the same material of which the grotto is made—you may see a homespun weaver at work. In the village, too, you may see the dyeing. You may also see Timmins of Portadown, weaving damask; and Bridget Gildea, of Ardara, "sprigging" handkerchiefs. The places are as unlike as the workers—Portadown in County Down, the most English part of Ireland, a bitter Orange centre; Ardara in the wildest part of West Donegal, not far from the Rosses, that black, wretched, low-lying track (ros means a marshy valley, as it does also in Cornish) which suffered so in the great famine.

The Kerry dairy I have seen thrice—twice in strawberry-time (and here let me tell you those Irish strawberries and Kerry cream were something to be remembered); once when the strawberries were replaced by apricots. This time it was night, and to sit there sipping cream and chatting to the pretty, fresh-coloured, daintily-dressed Kerry milk-maids, amid the rush of the Switchback "Ballyhooly" Railway, and in the twinkle of the variegated lamps, was not at all unpleasant. Those milk-maids are well looked after; they all live together under a firm yet kindly superintendent, Miss Kirby, and have their own priest, and are well able if they please to hire a cab on Sundays to see their friends, seeing that they get the magnificent sum of a pound a week. Oh, Canon Bagot, Canon Bagot, grand promoter of separators and creameries, and all other new-fangled ways of turning cream into butter; I never happened to come during one of your lectures. Had I done so, I should certainly have asked how you expected these young women were to settle down again in their quiet villages after three months or more of London, and the adulation of 'Arry and the noise of the

"Canadian grand tour," and the "Ballyhooly" Switchback still ringing in their ears.

You may do worse than buy a six-penny pot of Kerry cream—I can testify that it will keep good for four days—and a pound of Kerry butter in a pretty carton box; and, if you remember the address, you may order your next couple of fowls from Cummings, of Kingstown. He will also send you Irish eggs, and his dainty little boxes are so clean that the idea of any but the freshest of new-laid eggs coming out of them is preposterous. One happy change had passed over the Exhibition between my July and my September visit. In July a Belfast man, in charge of a tweed and serge stall, answered my enquiry: "How do you like the place?" with, "Ugh, it's too full of Whitechapel Jews." How these gentry got admission, I cannot tell; but there they were—opticians who, when you asked if their wares were made in Ireland, candidly told you: "the pebbles of the spectacles are ground there;" bog-oak sellers, who either did not know, or else wouldn't confess, that the little brooches and such like are not cut out of oak at all, but are made in some far finer-grained wood; musical instrument vendors, whose only claim to a place in Olympia was that they were "sole agents for Ireland for so and so's harmoniums." How any one could think that Irish industries were promoted by allowing these gentry to come to the front is "one of the things that no fellow can understand."

Why, again, should Carson's paint be included among Irish exhibits? And on what principle has the Junior Army and Navy Stores a stall here because it has a branch in Dublin? Brophy is an Irish name; but he is head-master of a London Institute, and his non-arsenical wall-papers are made in Manchester Square. The inevitable soap, of course, is here; where is it not? Yet, please to remember, there are at least two stalls of Irish-made soap, and that Lewis of Dublin is a first-rate perfumer in every branch; and his "Eblana Water"—sold on his stall—is a good substitute for Eau de Cologne. Doulton's ware is sufficiently known, without being pushed to the front at Olympia. Black-rock pottery, and that made at Monkstown, also near Dublin, should have filled the whole space, along with that Spanish-looking ware which Mr. Vodrey had invented just in time for the Dublin Exhibition of

1882. Then we must remember that the wall plaques and "sanitary arrangements" bearing the name, "Jennings, Lambeth," were really made at Belleek. You will not see any of these on the Belleek stall, nor will you, on the other hand, see any of the highest style of Belleek ware: perhaps the managers did not like to trust their very best things. But you will see a quantity of very pretty teapots, and cups, and cream-jugs, and épergnes and biscuit figures, none of them like anything else, for the late Mr. Armstrong, who started the Belleek works in that far-off corner just where Ulster and Connaught meet, impressed his individuality on the work so strongly that "his mark" still persists.

What else? I'm not a living catalogue, though I hope, if I was, I should be a better one than that sixpenny deception which I was deluded into buying. Go and see for yourself. You had better not drink any whisky. I am not a teetotaler; but it goes against me to see raw spirits sold at an Exhibition stall, and young girls toasting off their glass of undiluted fire-water. I cannot help thinking what a scene it would be if every exhibiting whisky-maker retailed his wares in like manner, and the stout-makers as well, and the aerated-water men.

Buy a packet or two of Irish toffee, and half-a-dozen cakes of "butter-Irish," and, if you like to give a few packets to my friend Father Davis's Baltimore boys, I shall not quarrel with you. Poor lads! It must be far wearier than a longsea-voyage for them to be taken from fresh, breezy Baltimore, and stuck here day after day to make a pretence of mending their nets. The Baltimore fishery, by the way, shows what may be done by helping people to help themselves. "I won't give them money doles," said Baroness Burdett-Conts, "but, if you can undertake to see that they spend it in getting boats, I'll lend them some." Father Davis undertook the work—oh, if there were a priest like him at every little fishing place all round the island!—the Baroness lent the money; the boats were bought and rigged; the fish caught, and sold; the loan-instalments punctually repaid—"Not one defaulter," the Baroness's man of business told me last July—and since this began, Father Davis has got Government to help found a fishery school, where boys from every part of Ireland are trained, and then sent home to help their neighbourhoods to better methods.

The great famine ruined the fisheries; and, as Ireland never got anything like the same help in the way of bounties, etc., which was given to Scotland, the success of that Baltimore experiment ought to lead Government to go in extensively for intelligent help to Irish fisheries, avoiding jobbery, that curse of Government work all the world over.

There has been jobbery enough over what has been done. At a lovely place on the west coast, a friend of mine saw a fine new pier, forming a quasi harbour; and was astonished at the absence of boats.

"What's this built for?" he asked his guide.

"Faith, sir, it's mighty convenient for Captain Scratch, who lives at the big house. He moors his yacht there, and his friends that do be passing, moor theirs; but divil a fisherman uses it, for there's no fishermen about here at all."

The astute Captain Scratch had not only secured some Government money himself, but also got a good deal out of the priest, who had begged hard for a public works' grant for the parish. Still, grants of any kind are better than "charity." Some of the islanders, in the Arran isles for instance, are getting quite demoralised with doles. Their best friends, Mr. Michael Davitt among them, strongly deprecate the begging, and insist on industries being started—a fishery if possible, this being much needed to give men, who at present have nothing but their skin "currags" (coracles), a fair chance against the outsiders who have decked boats, and can therefore go to the deep-sea fishing grounds.

Their islands are full of prehistoric remains, and beehive huts, and old, old churches. I should be sorry to think of their exchanging home-spun for shoddy, and their brogues of untanned hide for Northampton or even Cork-made boots.

Boots remind me of Irish tanning, one of the decayed but still surviving industries. There used to be fifty tanneries in Cork alone; and almost every village had one. They fell into the background like so many things, because their masters did not keep pace with the times—neglected the new inventions that cheapen cost if they do not improve the product. For a while, during the Crimean War, Government drew a good part of its leather from Ireland; and it would be a useful, as well as a graceful thing, if Government was to give a few contracts in the sister island.

This holds good not of leather only. There is one writing-paper mill in Ireland, one only in a country many parts of which are admirably suited for the manufacture. The neighbourhood of Dublin is studded with ruined paper-mills, killed by the removal of the paper duty. If Government were to insist that at least the paper used in the Irish Government offices should be Irish made, the Clondalkin and other mills would spring into life again, and the running sore of emigration, which is draining the life-blood out of the land, would be checked.

So you see there are serious considerations involved in this Olympia show; it is an effort in which England must help, else it will fail as other efforts have.

Well, "Olympia" will do good by making Irish industries known in England. And Yorkshire and Lancashire need not be afraid; Ireland will never be a dangerous competitor. There are a thousand and one things which will always be made in England, and never even attempted in Ireland. But the Irish will have more money to buy these if the industries in which they used to excel, and which still, despite the long bad times, have some life in them, are encouraged. We know little of the best Irish scenery. Everybody has at least heard of Killarney, and the Giants' Causeway; but the cliffs of Moher, the Horn Head, the caves of Lough Swilly, and Carrigan Head—all figured in the Religious Tract Society's "Irish Pictures," are as unknown to the English public as are the Clonmacnois crozier, the Ardagh chalice, Saint Molaise's Gospel-case, and the other art-treasures figured in the same volume. The author of these "Irish Pictures" apologises for saying nothing about "Home Rule." Surely the apology is needless; it would be a sad thing if we could not take an interest in Irish scenery, and Irish antiquities, ay, and in Irish manufactures, without taking sides on the Land Question, or becoming political partisans. These things are outside, and above, the range of politics. What Ireland has long needed is to become "the fashion." It has always been just the reverse. "The Cinderella of the United Kingdom," is too true a description of her relation to the rest of our islands. Hence discontent and restlessness. She is always looking for the Fairy Prince, and has been only too willing to accept pretenders of all kinds. Olympia may help her to that position which Scotland has held in "Society" ever since George the Fourth went to Edin-

burgh and strutted about in Highland costume.

The Irish are much too imitative; that is why they have joined in the boycott against their country's manufactures. When they find them popular in England, they will be sure to discover in them excellences hitherto unnoticed. A sign of the times is a series of articles on "Irish industries," in such a paper as Myra's Journal. A few years ago one would as soon have expected Myra to be discussing the fashions in vogue in the planet Mars. Yet now Myra writes with an evident knowledge of the subject, and freely scolds the Irish for their want of patriotism in this matter of manufactures; a humiliating contrast to the determined way in which Poles and Hungarians encourage home industry. For Londoners the main thing is to be sure there is in Ireland something worth encouraging; and on this score one who has seen Olympia can have no doubt at all. Why, the art serges from Laragh Mills are alone worth a visit—and, as for Mrs. Hart's stall, have not so many Duchesses ordered her red frieze cloak that she has felt warranted in naming it "the Duchess"?

SWANS.

THOUGH the old coaching house with the sign of the Swan with two Necks—a corruption of two nicks, alluding to the double chevron, the peculiar badge of the Vintners' Company, who have for several hundred years enjoyed the privilege of keeping swans between London and some miles above Windsor—has long ceased to exist, and cygnets no more figure as of yore on civic bills of fare on Lord Mayor's Day, the bird itself still graces the Thames, and yearly, in the month of August, the swan markers of the Crown, and of the Dyers' and Vintners' Companies, ascend the river for the purpose of marking the young birds, a custom known as "upping," which has become corrupted into "hopping."

Formerly the citizens, in gaily-dressed barges, went up the river on such occasions, and, landing at Barn Elms, partook of a cold collation and danced upon the grass. Even so late as 1793 the Companies sent six wherries as far as Marlow; but the number of swans is now much diminished, and their value has also declined.

Owing, it may be, to the romantic stories of mythology, which represent Jupiter as

having, on one occasion, assumed the shape of this graceful creature, the swan was formerly regarded as a bird Royal, which no subject might possess without licence from the Crown, which was only granted subject to the condition that every bird in a "game" of swans should bear a distinguishing badge of ownership on the bill.

The protection thus specially afforded would lead to the inference that the bird was not originally a native of the British Isles, and accordingly we find it stated that it was introduced from Cyprus, by Richard Cœur de Lion. The value of these birds in the reign of Edward the Third may be estimated from the fact that in days when the best capon sold for sixpence, the best hare for fourpence, and when twelve eggs fetched but a penny, the price of a swan was fixed at four shillings, poulterers being forbidden by proclamation to exact any larger sum. In the time of Edward the Fourth no one was permitted to keep swans who was not possessed of a freehold of at least five marks yearly; and by an Act of Henry the Seventh, persons convicted of taking swans' eggs were liable to a year's imprisonment with fine; while stealing, netting, or driving the birds themselves, was punished with even greater severity.

Large flocks formerly ventured below London Bridge, and in 1381-2, "swannes" which thus came through the bridge became the perquisites of the Constable of the Tower.

Paulus Jovius, describing the Thames, 1552, says that it "abounds with swans swimming in flocks, the sight of which and their noise, are very agreeable to the fleets that meet them in their course."

Leland, in his Swan's Song, imagines a Thames swan,

With archèd neck
Between her white wings mantling,

sailing down stream, from Oxford to Greenwich, describing the various places of note which pass before her view; and Shakespeare may thus have seen them "proudly rowing with oary feet," and so makes York compare the strength of his followers at the battle of Wakefield to a swan encountering the force of a tidal stream:

As I have seen a swan,
With bootless labour swim against the tide
And spend her strength with over-matching wave.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth, commissioners were appointed specially to

control the swanneries on the river Witham in Lincolnshire, and among them Dymoke the champion, who, it will be remembered, held the manor of Scrivelsby by tenure to appear armed on Coronation Day, and challenge all or any who affirmed that the King was not the lawful heir to the Crown. Ordinances were drawn up by these commissioners, in conformity with which, every swanherd on the river was directed to attend the King's swanherd when required, and all owners of swans were to have their names recorded in his book; no swanherd was to mark a swan save in the presence of the Royal swanherd or his deputy, and the nicking was to be performed in the cygnet stage of existence, when the young birds were to receive the same marks as had been borne by their parents before them. The King's swanherd also kept a book in which were recorded the various swan marks, together with the names of all owners of swans and their swanherds. No fewer than four hundred swans appeared on table at the installation dinner of Neville, Archbishop of York, 1464, when the birds fetched two shillings each, "being fourpence less than the price of a prime fat wether."

In the time of Elizabeth, upwards of nine hundred distinct marks were recognised by the Royal swanherd, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole kingdom, and whose office, to which he was appointed by the Lord Chamberlain, was sometimes called the "swanship." The mark, usually consisting of annulets, chevrons, crescents, crosses, initials, etc., and called by Sir Edward Coke "cigninota," was cut with a sharp instrument, or else branded with a hot iron upon the upper mandible; and swans of a certain age not marked, or, as it was termed, clear-billed, became Crown property, except in certain cases when a special grant conveyed a right to seize and keep any adult swan which might not have been marked. Thus the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and even some of the Colleges, are still privileged to keep what are usually referred to as "games" of swans, though that wise lady, Dame Juliana, in the Boke of S. Albans, assures us that we ought to speak of "an herde of swannys." The city of Oxford also was, at one time, possessed of a swannery, and Eton College still enjoys the privilege of keeping swans on the Thames. The Royal swan mark is composed of five open rather long ovals, pointed at each extremity, and has remained unchanged since the

commencement of the reign of George the Third.

The Thames, Trent, and Yare, are the chief English streams in which swans are now met with; but many of the old Abbeys possessed swanneries, as, for instance, the one at Abbotsbury, which, at the dissolution, passed to the Earl of Ilchester, on the water called the Fleet, inside the Chesil Bank, on the coast of Dorset. This swannery seems to have existed for centuries without any material alterations, and in the reign of Elizabeth we are told that "the premises, wreck of the sea, exception from the power of the Lord High Admiral in this manor, the water, soil and fishery called East Flete, and the flight of swans, called the game of swans, yearly breeding, nesting, and coming there, were held by John Strangeways, Esquire, of the Queen in chief. Also the site of the monastery, flight of swans breeding, etc., in the estuary called the Flete in Abbotsbury." The swannery now contains about eight hundred or nine hundred birds, which are often exceedingly quarrelsome during the breeding season, when fatal fights are by no means uncommon. Cart-loads of stubble are placed by the keepers within easy reach, from which the nests are built. Each nest contains from five to eight eggs, and the cygnets, when a month old, are marked by having a small round hole punched in the web of the foot.

The corporation of Norwich exercises a protecting right over the birds found in the river Yare, and the swanpit at Norwich seems to be the only place now existing for fattening cygnets for the table.

Yarrell relates that early in the month of August, the swans, fifty to seventy in number, are collected in a stew and fed with barley; they are usually ready to be killed in November; after which time they lose their fat, and the flesh becomes dark and tough. A printed copy of verses is—or was—usually sent with each bird, containing a recipe for cooking the swan, which was on no account to be skinned.

The mute or domestic swan is found in a wild state in Europe and Asia, as well as in the countries between the Black and Caspian Seas. Water is its element, and Bewick writes that at the setting in of frosty weather, wild swans associate in great numbers, and, thus united, use every effort to prevent the water from freezing, which they accomplish by constantly dashing it with their extended wings. While engaged with their young, swans are full

of spirit, and their vigorous wings preserve them against the attacks even of the eagle, and it has been said that a fair blow from the wing of a swan will break a man's leg. Swans have been known to live as long as fifty years, and so fierce are they when guarding their eggs that instances have occurred in which black swans, though little inferior to themselves in size, have been killed by their white relations; one such occurrence took place in the Regent's Park, and is thus related:

"The two white swans pursued the black one with the greatest ferocity, and one of them succeeded in grasping the other's neck between its mandibles, and then shook it violently. With difficulty the black swan extricated itself from the murderous grasp, hurried on shore, tottered forward a few paces, and fell to die. Its death appeared to be attended with great agony, and its foes continued sailing, with every feather on end, up and down towards the spot where their victim fell, seemingly proud of their conquest."

The wild swan, or Hooper, is not unfrequently found in England during severe winters. The birds arrive in autumn in large flocks from the North, penetrating even as far as the counties of Hants and Sussex. They are readily tameable, and a curious occurrence is related with reference to some which bred in the Zoological Gardens in London in 1839. The cygnets, when only a few days old, were sunning themselves on the margin of one of the islands, while the parent birds were swimming near. A carrion crow made a descent and struck at one of the cygnets, whereupon the old male swan came up in an instant, seized the crow with his beak, pulled him into the water, and in spite of all resistance, held him there until he died.

Great numbers of wild swans are killed in Iceland for the sake of their down and feathers, being ridden down with horses and dogs in the autumn, when they are somewhat impeded in their flight through moulting. It is said that they can fly at the rate of one hundred miles per hour, and they emit a note resembling the word "hoop," repeated some ten or a dozen times, which sounds aloft like a trumpet-call. The impression produced on the hearer, however, appears to vary, for while Montagu assures us that the sound reminded him of the "wild swan's death hymn," described by the ancient poets, others speak of it as resembling the notes

of a violin, and others again liken it to the music of silvery bells.

Sometimes Polish refugees seek the shelter of our shores; and specimens are found of the Polish or Immutable swan, so called from the fact of the young ones being white, like the parents, and not passing through the grey, or intermediate, state of plumage.

Especial interest attaches to the black swan of Australia, so long considered to be a myth. It was on the sixth of January, 1697, that the Dutch navigator, William de Vlaming, visiting the west coast of Zaidland (Southland), sent two boats to explore an estuary which he had discovered. Four black swans were caught by the sailors, while engaged on this service, at the mouth of what is now known as Swan River, West Australia—a colony which has adopted the bird as its armorial device—and two of them were taken alive to Batavia. Subsequent voyagers, Cook and others, found that the species ranged over the greater part of Australia; but it has since rapidly decreased in numbers. Its flesh is stated to be both tough and flavourless.

The swan's nest consists of a large mass of aquatic plants, often piled to a height of a couple of feet, and perhaps six feet in diameter, in the midst of which is a hollow containing the eggs, which are of a greyish-olive colour. If the water threatens to rise, more material—which the male bird brings to the spot, and the female works in—is added to the deposit beneath the eggs, which are thus gradually raised beyond the risk of danger. The nests are usually found upon the bank, close to the water, in some sheltered spot, and generally on the shore of a little island. During the first period of their life, the young swans mount upon their mother's back, and are so conveyed from one place to another, the Pen, as the female bird is called (the male being the Cob), either lowering herself a little in the water, or, otherwise, assisting their ascent with her foot.

So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,
Keeping them prisoner underneath her wings.

Henry VI., part 1, act v., scene 3.

This habit of carrying the young has been observed in the case of many other water birds, as, for instance, of the horned grebe in Iceland, whose young have been remarked as being concealed beneath the wings of the parent bird, and have been seen to fall thence into the water when it

has been shot. The family continue to associate through the winter, but, under the influence of returning spring, the parent birds drive away from them the young brood of the previous year, and oblige them to shift for themselves.—Shakespeare, it will be remembered, likens our island to the eyrie of the royal bird:

I' the world's volume
Our Britain seems as of it, but not in it;
In a great pool, a swan's nest.

Formerly, when a swan made her nest on the banks of a river, rather than on the islands, one young bird, called the ground-bird, was given to the owner of the soil, who protected the nest; a money consideration, however, is now given instead. The matrimonial engagements between swans are kept with exemplary fidelity, and last, it is said, throughout their lives.

Swans are neither strictly vegetable feeders like geese, nor are they so carnivorous as ducks, occupying, in this respect, a position somewhat intermediate between the two. Occasionally they will seize and swallow small fish like bleak or roach, and in the spawning season, they will devour the eggs till they can eat no longer.

The swan being identified with Orpheus, and being called also the bird of Apollo, the god of music, powers of song have been often attributed to it, and as often denied. It has enjoyed the repute of wailing a dirge before its decease, whose echoes die away over the prostrate form which has uttered it.

Thus on Mæander's flow'ry margin lies
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.

The song has been made the medium of satire:

Swans sing before they die.
Methinks, 'twere no bad thing,
Could certain persons die before they sing.

Shakespeare makes Prince Henry at his father's death exclaim:

'Tis strange that death should sing!
I am the cygnet to this pale faint swan,
Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death;
And from the organ-pipe of frailty sings
His soul and body to their lasting rest.

King John, act v., scene 7.

It is said to have a soft, low voice, plaintive if monotonous, and Colonel Hawker has printed a few bars of swan melody formed with two notes *O* and the minor third (*E flat*); and the musician, it is added, kept working his head, as though delighted with his own performance. But the late

Mr. Waterton had once the rare opportunity of witnessing a swan's death, and the silence which the bird maintained convinced him that its dying song is nothing but a fable, the origin of which is lost in the shades of antiquity.

Swans have been used as a device in heraldry; a white swan having been adopted as the badge of the House of Cleves from the well-known legend of the Knight, who miraculously arrived by the Rhine in a little boat drawn by a swan, and married the heiress of Cleves. Formerly men swore by the swan, as they did also by the peacock (by "cock and pye"), and even, according to Athenæus, by "cabbages" and "capers;" and crusaders often took the swan oath on setting out for the Holy Land. Mathew of Westminster records how Edward the First, then Prince Edward, went to the Abbey, where were brought in solemn pomp before him, two swans, gorgeously caparisoned, with beaks gilt, and on them the King made a vow before Heaven and the swans, that he would march into Scotland to avenge the fate of John Comyn, and punish the perfidy of the Scots.

PAYING THE PIPER.

ALTHOUGH the energetic and ingenious Mr. Augustus Harris succeeded last year in galvanising it into something like life again, and proposes to continue his endeavours to keep it in a state of more or less vitality, it is not to be doubted that, as a great public institution, Italian Opera may be locked upon as being practically defunct. Gone, never to return, are the days when everybody who was, or wanted to be taken for, anybody raved about Malibran, or Pasta, or Grisi, Rubini, Lablache, Ronconi, Alboni, or Mario. Gone are the days when a "box at the Opera" was almost as necessary to a leader of society as her carriage; when a certain air of exclusiveness, impalpable but unmistakable, hung about stalls and crush-rooms; when Fops' Alley was the natural home of the fashionable lounge. Gone, too, are the simple operas—gone, or put away on a high shelf out of reach—in which our fathers and grandfathers took delight. The Donizettis and Bellinis—one may almost say the Rossinis and Meyerbeers of our youth—have lost their admirers; and of Verdi, even, but two or three works remain attractive. The severer German school,

with its elaborate stage settings, seems to accord best with the tastes of a generation that, frivolous as it is, effects an intensity and seriousness which would hardly have suited the simpler habits of forty or fifty years ago; while the necessity for appealing to the general public, whose ideas of prices are considerably less lavish than those which prevailed in the old days, has made itself felt as one of the many causes of the decay of that old-fashioned exotic, Italian Opera. The conditions of its growth and culture have all changed, and it is no wonder that the once flourishing flower should have drooped to its death.

And yet, when one considers the matter more closely, it becomes evident that another factor has been at work, to which, more perhaps than to any other one thing, is the decay of the Opera to be attributed. It is, perhaps, rude to say so, but the simple fact is that the ruin of the Opera in England has been brought about by the Prima Donna, who, naturally enough no doubt, took advantage of the insane competition in which managers lost their heads and their money, and opened her mouth so wide that she absolutely swallowed everything else connected with the business. Finally, there was nothing left for the public to see or hear but the one or two ladies who could command their own terms, and who demanded so much that it was impossible for the luckless impresario to pay enough to provide even respectable accessories. And so it came to pass that, on the nights when Madame Chose or Signora Cosa did not sing, nobody went to the theatre at all; and that, on the nights when they did appear, the expenses were so heavy that any reasonable profit was wholly out of the question.

Of the truth of this statement, ample proof is to be found in the two amusing volumes of autobiography which Colonel Mapleson has recently given to the world. The publication of one's Autobiography, or Memoirs, or Reminiscences, is one of the pet crazes of the day. Never was there an age when people were so fond of seeing themselves in print; and Colonel Mapleson is strictly in the fashion in giving us the history of his varied experiences as a manager of Opera. More than that, the Colonel is not only fashionable, he is amusing as well, which is not at all usual; and knows how to tell a good story at least as well as he knows how to manage a company of singers, or to organise a grand artistic tour of the world. And above

all things, which is most important for our present purpose, he proves for us to demonstration the axiom that the overpaying of singers—especially of Prima Donnas—has been practically the ruin of Italian Opera in England and America. In Italy itself, where there is still some Opera to be found, the absurdity never attained such colossal proportions, although it is possible that some of the Italian salaries which Colonel Mapleson mentions—such as five pounds a week for Mercadante, the composer of *Il Giuramento*, as conductor; or one hundred pounds per night for Mademoiselle Titiens as “star;” which were what the Colonel paid at the San Carlo, in Naples, in 1863—do not fairly represent the figures of to-day. And it is also worthy of note that the principal extortioners of the pound of flesh have not been Italians at all.

Signor Mario and Madame Grisi, who were certainly two of the greatest lyric artists the world ever saw, and absolutely unapproachable by any pair of dramatic singers of the present day, received from the Colonel three hundred pounds a week on provincial tours, and must be reckoned to have been dirt cheap at the money, for they never gave themselves airs, were most obliging, and would have sung every night if the manager had asked them to do so, and “far from insisting that she should never be called upon to do anything that was not expressly set down for her in her written contract, Madame Grisi would often volunteer her assistance in cases where it was really very useful.”

The manager, in some of his later perplexities, and when he contemplated the prodigious salaries he had to pay and the very little he got in return for them, must have looked back with something more than regret, to the happy days when such a Prima Donna and such a first tenor were the backbone of his company. In 1872 things had already altered, for, as Colonel Mapleson was paying Mademoiselle Nilsson two hundred pounds per night, Madame Patti—who had previously been content with a trifle of eighty pounds nightly—insisted upon receiving two hundred guineas, and from about this time the trouble began, for with two ladies, neither of whom would take less than the other, and with two managers, each of whom was prepared to outbid his opponent, common sense and simple arithmetical calculations of possible profits gradually retired more and more into the background.

And at about this time Colonel Mapleson

having engaged a tenor—“my agent reached Rome before Mr. Gye, and secured the prize,” he says—“at the reasonable rate of two hundred pounds a month, an American agent offered the prize five times as much after his successful first appearance; an offer which, as the gentleman was already under contract for five years, made him ‘partially unmanageable,’” the Colonel records.

The two hundred pounds a night business for a Prima Donna went on for some time, and that amount seemed to be recognised as the legitimate and usual payment for the services of a lady of the first rank in the profession, and in 1875, Mademoiselle Titiens went to America for a series of concerts on a guarantee of one hundred and sixty pounds per night and half the receipts beyond a certain amount. It was not apparently until Colonel Mapleson, Madame Patti, and the United States came into conjunction, that the era of really frenzied and preposterous salaries fairly set in, but in the autumn of 1882, the Colonel, having nearly arranged with Madame Patti for the magnificent sum of eight hundred pounds per night, was obliged (to prevent Mr. Henry Abbey, a rival American manager, from carrying off the lady) to raise his offer to a “cool thousand;” burdened with which almost impossible load the next season had to begin. Singers and actors, it will be remembered, always ask for larger terms in America than they can get here, but a jump from two hundred to a thousand is rather startling, especially when we learn that Madame Nilsson only raised her price for America to three hundred pounds per night. Probably the success of the season of 1882 had made Colonel Mapleson indifferent to a paltry hundred or two per night. For, notwithstanding the prodigious salaries which he was paying to some of his singers, the business was sometimes fairly profitable. Fourteen thousand dollars were taken at one performance of “*Semiramide*” in New York; and “*Lucia*,” with Adelina Patti, drew a like amount from the citizens of Philadelphia.

One of the ingenious gentlemen who delight in useless little exercises in arithmetical analysis, applying their great minds to the calculation of the amount which was paid to Madame Patti for each note she sang, discovered that each note in “*Semiramide*” was worth to the Diya forty-two cents and five-eighths—a statement which was promptly contradicted by

another gentleman of the same tastes in another city, who put the value of each note at thirty cents, and also stated that "Lucia" was worth forty-two cents and a half per note.

The season of 1883 began in New York, and Colonel Mapleson found himself and his thousand-pound-a-night Prima Donna vigorously opposed by another Opera company, at the head of which was the enterprising and energetic Mr. Henry Abbey, who was bent—or so the Colonel tells us—on the total annihilation of Colonel Mapleson. The result is chronicled in one sentence: "Notwithstanding the successful performances which I continued to give," the Memoirs tell us, "the receipts never reached the amount of the expenditure—as is invariably the case when two Opera houses are contending in the same city," or, to put it in another way, when absurd competition between two managers raises the expenditure to an amount with which even first-rate business cannot cope.

Colonel Mapleson seems to think that a portion of the blame of these excessive salaries must be attributed to Madame Adelina Patti; but such a contention is obviously untenable. Why the lady should refuse such offers as were made to her, even though the fees were, as the Memoirs complain, twenty times as much as was thought ample by Signor Mario and Mademoiselle Titiens, it is impossible to see; nor is Madame Patti to be blamed if, instead of being comparatively careless on such points, as were Mademoiselle Titiens and Signor Mario, "no one ever approached her in the art of obtaining from a manager the greatest possible sum he could by any possibility contrive to pay." The criterion of the real value of anything, as we have been often told, is what it will bring in the open market; and if Colonel Mapleson was left during the New York season with an average of twenty-two to twenty-three dollars per night for himself, after paying Madame Patti her thousand pounds, and "distributing a few hundreds among the other members of the company," the fault lies in the system of wildly outbidding each other, by which operatic managers played into the hands of any popular singer who was clever enough to take advantage of the situation.

The strict business principles on which "the most money-making of Prime Donne" conducts her affairs, or has them conducted

for her, are very plainly shown in a story which Colonel Mapleson tells so well that it would be a pity not to allow him to speak for himself. It should be premised that Madame Patti's nightly thousand pounds were due and payable at two o'clock in the afternoon.

"On the second night of our engagement"—at the Globe Theatre in Boston—"we performed *La Traviata*. That afternoon, about two o'clock, Patti's agent called upon me to receive the five thousand dollars for her services that evening. I was at low water just then, and enquiring at the booking office, found that I was two hundred pounds short. All I could offer Signor Franchi was the trifle of eight hundred pounds as a payment on account.

"The agent declined the money, and formally announced to me that my contract with Madame Patti was at an end. I accepted the inevitable, consoling myself with the reflection that, besides other good artists in my company, I had now eight hundred pounds to go on with.

"Two hours afterwards, Signor Franchi reappeared.

"'I cannot understand,' he said, 'how it is you get on so well with Prime Donne, and especially with Madame Patti. You are a marvellous man, and a fortunate one, too, I may add. Madame Patti does not wish to break her engagement with you, as she certainly would have done with any one else under the circumstances. Give me the eight hundred pounds, and she will make every preparation for going on the stage. She empowers me to tell you that she will be at the theatre in good time for the beginning of the opera, and that she will be ready dressed in the costume of Violetta, with the exception only of the shoes. You can let her have the balance when the doors open and the money comes in from the outside public; and directly she receives it she will put her shoes on, and at the proper moment make her appearance on the stage.' I thereupon handed him the eight hundred pounds I had already in hand as the result of subscriptions in advance. 'I congratulate you on your good luck,' said Signor Franchi, as he departed with the money in his pocket.

"After the opening of the doors I had another visit from Signor Franchi. By this time an extra sum of a hundred and sixty pounds had come in. I handed it to my benevolent friend, and begged him to

carry it without delay to the obliging prima donna, who, having received nine hundred and sixty pounds, might, I thought, be induced to complete her toilette, pending the arrival of the forty pounds balance.

"Nor was I altogether wrong in my hopeful anticipations. With a beaming face, Signor Franchi came back and communicated to me the joyful intelligence that Madame Patti had got one shoe on. 'Send her the forty pounds,' he added, 'and she will put on the other.'

"Ultimately the other was got on; but not, of course, until the last forty pounds had been paid. Then Madame Patti, her face radiant with benignant smiles, went on to the stage; and the opera, already begun, was continued brilliantly until the end."

There is little here of the carelessness in money matters which is popularly supposed to be a characteristic of the artistic mind. Madame Patti is evidently a woman of business, and looks upon a bargain as being a bargain and nothing else. And, after all, why not? A bird in the hand is safe, but there is no knowing what may happen even to two in the bush. And, talking of birds, it may be mentioned that Madame Patti's parrot had acquired what Colonel Mapleson calls "the disagreeable habit" of crying "cash, cash!" whenever the Impresario entered Madame Patti's car.

This car itself affords a very good measure of the preposterous scale in which money has been lavished on Prima Donnas, and furnishes one very good reason why the operatic managers who have made money are much scarcer than black swans. It cost twelve thousand pounds, and was fitted up with an ostentatious luxury which some people will call simply silly, and others positively wicked. Colonel Mapleson describes it thus:

"It was, without doubt, the most superb and tasteful coach on wheels anywhere in the world. The curtains were of heavy silk damask; the walls and ceilings covered with gilded tapestry; the lamps of rolled gold; the furniture throughout upholstered with silk damask of the most beautiful material. The drawing-room was of white and gold, and the ceiling displayed several figures painted by Parisian artists of eminence. The woodwork was of sandalwood, of which, likewise, was the casing of a magnificent Steinway piano, which alone had cost two thousand dollars. There were several panel oil-paintings in the

drawing-room, the work of Italian artists. The bath, which was fitted for hot and cold water, was made of solid silver. The key of the outer door was of eighteen carat gold."

The only possible excuse for such monstrous extravagance as this is, that it was intended for advertising purposes. From any other point of view it is suggestive of Bedlam.

How many attendants the occupants of this Cleopatra's-galley on wheels required to wait upon them does not appear, but, on this head, Colonel Mapleson's account of the retinue of a tenor, who is certainly not of the very highest rank, will bear quotation.

This gentleman "went, not long since, to South America, with a staff consisting of the following paid officials: a secretary, an under-secretary, a cook, a valet, a barber, a doctor, a lawyer, a journalist, an agent, and a treasurer. The ten attendants, apart from their special duties, form a useful clique"—Madame Patti does not carry with her a clique, by the way—"and are kept judiciously distributed about the house according to their various social positions. The valet and the journalist, the barber and the doctor, are said to have squabbles at times on the subject of precedence. The functions of the lawyer will not, perhaps, be apparent to every one. His appointed duties, however, are to draw up contracts, and to recover damages in case a clause in any existing contract should have been broken. The hire of all these attendants causes no perceptible hole in the immense salary payable to the artist who employs them; and the travelling expenses of a good number of them have to be defrayed by the unfortunate manager. Only an Oriental prince, or a musical parvenu, would dream of maintaining such a suite."

Quite so, Colonel Mapleson, but why "unfortunate manager"? Foolish, will strike most people as being a more appropriate adjective.

In the Far West, especially in San Francisco, enormous business was done; but this must have been considerably discounted by the seven-hundred-and-fifty-pound house at Salt Lake City—which, although good enough under ordinary circumstances, was not remunerative when it fell short of the salary of one singer alone by two hundred and fifty pounds—and by the seven hundred pounds in the little city of Cheyenne. Indeed, it is difficult

to discover whether there was any nett profit at all at the end of the season, for Colonel Mapleson, in reviewing the result, says: "my losses were going on, for a long time, at the rate of twelve hundred pounds a week," so it may, perhaps, be fairly inferred that the crushing expenditure was too much even for the magnificent receipts in California, or the five-thousand-pound concert in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

The following season, greatly assisted by a grand Opera Festival at Chicago, was successful, but in the next came disaster. San Francisco would not have the company, as it did not include Madame Patti, and the city of the Golden Gate became Colonel Mapleson's Moscow, the story of the retreat from which he tells with an absolutely delightful good humour and cheerfulness.

Thus it seems impossible to get away from the fact, that with a spoilt darling of the public such as Madame Patti, the manager is in the unpleasant predicament that, if he engages her, her salary practically swamps the enterprise, and that, if he leaves her out of his company, the public will have none of him. In fact, it is a case of "*nec tecum nec sine te vivere possum.*" The only escape from the horns of the dilemma appears to lie in the direction indicated in Mr. Harris's management of last year, to which reference has already been made—in educating the public again to understand that a thoroughly good ensemble is infinitely better, from every point of view, than the system under which the star's salary starves the rest of the show, and in getting them to value, as they should, a good all-round company, at a higher rate than the traditional "*ma femme et quelques poupées.*"

The proverb says that he who pays the piper has a right to call the tune. And there is no doubt that he has; but whether the tune will come when he calls for it, as was the case with Owen Glendower's spirits from the vasty deep, extremely problematical. Money is only one of the troubles of the operatic manager. The tempers, the illnesses—real and imaginary—the jealousies, the spite, and the childish tricks of too many of his singers, are even worse trials to him, and the quarrels which go on, even in the best regulated companies, must daily convince him that the poet's statement that "birds in their little nests agree," is, so far as singing birds go, a mockery and a delusion.

For a host of good stories bearing on these points and many others, and for a cheery, genial account of a life in reference to the troubles and anxieties of which Colonel Mapleson says: "I can scarcely think of any dilemma in which I have been placed, however serious, which has not presented its bright, or, at least, when I came to think of it, its amusing side," readers should turn to the "Mapleson Memoirs." They will certainly be amused, and possibly, according to their various natures, edified.

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

It is a great pity that the general run of people are not somewhat more methodical in their modes of thought; for frequently the consideration of an important matter is of the most slipshod character. Preconceived opinions are applied to the subject in hand, and some sort of conclusion immediately jumped at. A more irrational method of conducting an intellectual process it would, indeed, be difficult to conceive. I know that it would be absurd to expect that individuals, constantly engrossed by the world's business, should plunge deeply into the region of metaphysics. Ordinary intellects are perhaps scarcely fitted, certainly not inclined, for the task. Were they to undertake the investigation of some profoundly abstruse problem, they would be promptly and inextricably involved in the quagmire of their own sophisms.

I, myself, am nothing of a logician. It would, therefore, ill become me to complain of the deficiency of others in that respect. Yet I believe that a little more of the rational element might, with very great advantage, be introduced into our modes of thought.

It would be neither practicable nor desirable to enlarge fully upon the many directions in which this failing manifests itself. There is, however, the particular aspect that I have selected as the topic for this chat; and from which many of our failures to arrive at the truth derive their source, viz., "Our point of view."

By our point of view, I mean the attitude that we assume in regard to any given matter, and which is naturally influenced by our circumstances, intellectual bias, education, personal interest, and a hundred other things besides. To form ideas upon any subject that occupies our

thoughts, solely from observations taken from our point of view, is in many instances to give the lie to the facts. It is but seldom that our point of view will be wholly right, and every other conceivable point of view wholly wrong. The golden line of truth will more probably be discovered in the "juste milieu."

Science has recognised this necessary condition of progress. He who devotes himself to some field of scientific research divests himself of preconceived opinions, discards his prejudices, and utterly sinks his own peculiar point of view, travelling along the tortuous pathway of investigation and experiment with an open mind. He desires simply to unravel the truth, and instinctively recognises, with complete disregard of self, that the truth he seeks may, and perhaps will, be found in a totally different quarter from any that his tentative and conjectural theories have suggested. He takes a comprehensive survey of the whole array of facts, and then, having exhausted every available shred of evidence, carefully draws his conclusions.

If instead of a problem, in which material phenomena are concerned, some purely metaphysical point engages the enquirer's attention, he does not prematurely thrust his own crude ideas forward; but after carefully examining every hypothesis from every standpoint, selects that only which offers a satisfactory solution. This is the only sensible method of proceeding. But this is just the method which people in general will not adopt. Present to a person of ordinary, or even less than ordinary, ability a point of some subtlety for his explanation, and before the query is out of your mouth the solution is out of his. Temerity and assurance know no bounds, and again we see how true is the poet's dictum, that :

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

The man of discrimination is careful in his statements and diffident of pronouncing his judgements. He has a reputation to lose—a consideration which need not, and probably does not, trouble the fool. A conviction, to be of any value, must be based upon a general consideration of all the facts, viewed from every "point of view," and not upon "a hop, step, and a jump" process, equally shocking to the inductive and syllogistic schools of logic.

Of course everybody has his "point of view," his way of looking at things.

Formed by habit, it becomes part and parcel of one's individuality. Equally of course, people's "points of view" will differ. I am given to look at matters from one standpoint, you from another.

From Haman's "point of view," Mordecai was an arrant rascal, meriting the gallows, at least to the extent of fifty cubits; whilst from the standpoint of the royal Ahasuerus, he was "the man whom the king delighted to honour." From the "point of view" of the ultra-fanatical politician, the greatest geniuses of the opposite party are nothing more than a coterie of evil spirits, who scarcely conceal their horns within the most unexceptionable of tall hats, their caudal appendages beneath their elegant dress-coats, and their pedal conclusions in the most irreproachably polished of shoes. The "Ins" make an appointment. From their "point of view," the gentleman selected for the post is "a man whose exceptional ability has long been exercised for the behoof of his country, and whose acceptance of the position will give an added dignity to the office." Yet the "Outs" from their "point of view," characterise the whole affair as "a scandalous job," as "a barefaced attempt to pitchfork into a sinecure one who has betrayed absolute incompetence throughout the course of a singularly barren public career, and whose appointment will only serve to bring representative institutions into contempt."

When at last, in the evolution of political thought, the popular voice demanded the abolition of pocket boroughs, the reformers, from their point of view, could see in the object of their attack nothing but "anomalies," "crying scandals," "hotbeds of bribery," "sinks of iniquity," making a large demand indeed upon the copious vocabulary of opprobrious epithets. They of the defence, from the standpoint of antiquated prescription—discarding, of course, all interested considerations—discerned in the proposed change a violation of the laws of property; an unwarrantable encroachment upon vested interests; the irrevocable removal of an institution intimately associated with the glorious constitution of this country, and deeply rooted in the affections of the people; the thin end of a (hypothetical) wedge, that one day would upset the very throne itself, involving throne, church, and old nobility in a common ruin.

From the point of view of Milton, re-

garding chiefly what was glorious and sublime in human character, man is

A creature, who, not prone
And brute as other creatures, but inducd
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright with front serene,
Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven,
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Descends.

But, from the unnatural standpoint of the carping cynic, this same man is a poor, wretched thing; an absurd anomaly; a freak of Nature; the only redeeming feature in the cynic's strictures being that from time to time some of his shafts rebound and strike himself; for is he not also of the race that he condemns?

One man, from his point of view, glares with inquisitive impertinence upon the affairs of others, ever on the "qui vive" for an opportunity of uttering his favourite dictum of "serve him right," walking the world a self-constituted prophet of Nemesis. To his jaundiced eye no calamity befalls his fellow but it is "a judgement upon him," and in his narrow philosophy, and yet narrower heart, he thinks of his God only as a capricious tyrant, rankling with the bitterest spite.

There is "the fat and greasy citizen," the jocund soul, "in fair round belly, with good capon lined," who displays a truly remarkable fondness for guinea-dinner forms of philanthropy. What wonder if, from his point of view, he conceives the summum bonum to be already accomplished—"the greatest happiness of the greatest number," the greatest number, in this instance, being Number One?

But what of Poor Joe, hounded from haunt to haunt, the sport of officious constables, lurking at midnight in the shelter of a doorway with his head pillowed against the stonework, hoping that sleep may prove less obdurate than the lynx-eyed activity of the law? And what of her, the "poor unfortunate," the victim of her own and the scapegoat of others' sins, who in the black darkness of the night plunges headlong from the dark bridge into the darker tide,

Rashly importunate,
Swift to be hurled,
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world?

Who shall cast the first stone of reproach at them because, from their point of view, and out of the bitterness of an unextinguishable anguish, they spurn life itself as hardly worth the terrible effort of living?

Those who are unfortunately obliged to call in green spectacles to the assistance of their vision, obtain a decidedly distorted view of Nature. They gaze upon the works of Nature and man through unnatural media. To them, rocks, clouds, rivers and sky, are all of as verdant a hue as the emerald of the fields. Their impressions are strangely at variance with the truth. It is just so with persons who assume one immutable point of view, and, with an obstinacy that defies all reasoning, logical or persuasive, form biased and distorted opinions concerning their fellows and their concerns, the world and its problems. Wrapped in the exclusiveness of their own narrow creed, they see naught but evil and folly in the tenets of the rest of the race. Or, from the standpoint of their own smug philosophy, they regard all those who are not of their one-sided school, but have burst the fetters of intellectual thralldom, as not having emerged from mediæval darkness.

There is much to be said upon both sides of everything; or, if the matter has more than two sides, depend upon it there is much to be said upon every side. No single human intelligence can contain all the wisdom of the world, for the part will always be less than the whole. To form accurate and discriminating opinions, we must place ourselves in imagination in those "points of view," from which others take their survey of men and things. We should thus discover what they would have to say upon the theme in hand, and doubtless find that many of their impressions are glittering with the gold of truth, whilst many of our own ideas, viewed in the light of their wisdom, stand convicted of shallowness, insufficiency, and falsehood.

Who would pretend to a knowledge of some historical building, who had merely taken a superficial glance at its front elevation, or boast of his familiarity with a range of hills, who had caught but a distant glimpse of their extremity, rising like a dark triangle against the sky? The northern aspect is not the object itself; neither is the southern aspect. It must be contemplated from every aspect before you can be said to know it. It is just so with subjects of thought. No merely superficial glimpse, no intuition is sufficient. To trust intellectual problems to the aliphod process of intuition, to exalt our unaided intuition to the throne of our thoughts, is to ignore the important fact that other people have their intuitions also,

which lead them frequently to very different conclusions.

To place ourselves temporarily in the standpoints of others for the purpose of circumnavigating a fact, which I advocate, is one thing. It is quite another to drift about from "point of view" to "point of view," in an utterly aimless manner like a vessel bereft of rudder, or of compass. I had rather have a man opinionated, adhering rigidly to one "point of view," than possessed of no principles of his own—veering about "with every wind of doctrine;" ever assenting to the last speaker's proposition; an intellectual jelly-fish with never a morsel of vertebra or cartilage in his construction. Some people change their opinions far oftener than the vane takes a new position. The fox in the fable, gazing upon the luscious attractions of the pendant grapes, was prepared to defend by every method known to syllogism or induction the conclusion that the grapes were sweet. Two hours passed over that fox. Circumstances were gradually altering the case. A logical train was developing in his mind as he "licked his chops." Finally he was as ready to advance the proposition that the grapes were sour as formerly to demonstrate their saccharine merits. So the unarticulated "thinkers who never think" vacillate from pole to pole with truly marvellous celerity. They assuredly do change their "point of view," but, to quote a hackneyed expression, they fail to "benefit by the change."

To perpetrate a "volte-face" every time that we are confronted with a new idea is not to exercise discrimination. A somersault displays a class of agility which may be highly commendable in a physical sense; but the acrobatic thinker, who turns head over heels upon his own philosophy, and jumps through the hoops of his old argumentative system, is a ludicrous, rather than a meritorious personage. When I advocate the changing of one's "point of view," it is not that I recommend the adoption of any other point of view, but that each may be tested in order to ascertain which approximates most nearly to the line of truth.

The distance of the sun from the earth is generally arrived at by observing the planet Venus in its transit across the solar disc. A certain result called the solar parallax is deduced from the joint observations of many astronomers distributed at parts of the earth as remote as possible from one another. "Parallax," we are

told, "is the apparent change in the position of an object due to a change in the position of the observer." Every social problem, every political propagandum, every subject of thought has its parallax. Every individual who treads the crust of earth, whether colossus or pigmy, has his parallax. To arrive at just conclusions respecting any object in the field of vision, we must change our "point of view," not adopting any one "point of view" as meeting the full necessities of the intellectual vision, not unquestioningly swallowing every dogma that may be "put upon us as pigeons feed their young." We should exercise a wise discrimination as to what is true and what is false in the standpoints of others, and above all in that sacred precinct, hedged in by prejudice and guarded by conceit—our own "point of view." Let us once regard that venerated spot as harbouring, perhaps, some little fallibility, and we are in a fair way to a fuller discernment of the true relations of things. We shall take not merely our own single observation of the intellectual transit as affording sufficient data for the formation of just conclusions, but, accepting with "open minds" the evidence of others, arrive at the true parallax of every question that engages human thought.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.

"JE n'y consens pas; je n'y consentirai jamais." These last words of his mother's letter were definite enough; and Gaspard knew that Madame Harache was a woman of her word, who did not say things she did not mean, nor express a resolution she purposed breaking. Had she said of any other project of his, "I will not consent to it," he would at once have accepted the decision as final, and have made up his mind either to renounce his plan or to defy his mother. Probably he would have decided for renunciation; for he was not of that nature which makes a man cling to his own way simply because it is his own way. In most things he would, either from amiability or from indifference, have pleased another rather than himself,—and this, not from that weakness of nature which can be pestered into yielding, but from an equable, peace-loving tem-

perament which would rather give up a scheme than raise a quarrel. There was, perhaps, a strain of weakness in this anxious amiability to please others at almost any price; but beneath it lay a certain permanence of soul, which kept amiability from degenerating into sheer inveterate lack of will. He was the sort of man whom a clever woman can put in a corner, but who, once there, will cling to his two walls, and will not be persuaded by any lure to leave their shelter and give his opponent further advantage—a man weak to overcome, strong to resist.

But, in this matter of giving up his hope of marrying Thora Sweynson, Gaspard could not yield at once. It did not concern himself only. When a man has gained a girl's heart, he owes a responsibility to her as much as to any other who claims his allegiance by the bond of law or love. Her feelings have the right to influence, though not, perhaps, to determine his actions; she is inevitably the central point around which his thoughts crystallise and ultimately shape themselves into deeds, not because he loves her, but because she loves him.

At present, however, it seemed that, in face of Madame Harache's refusal to consent to the marriage her son desired, all action was impossible. The refusal was the only part of the letter that Gaspard remembered after he had read it. The proposed marriage with Mademoiselle Meudon passed through his mind without awakening even the glimmer of surprise he might otherwise have felt at his mother's determination to make him marry at all. He had never given any thought to the question; but he felt instinctively that she was not likely to wish for any influence over him that might lessen, and perhaps supersede, her own.

Certainly, Madame Harache would hardly have cared to marry her son if she had not looked upon matrimony as a safeguard against such missions to distant places as this Orcadian one of Gaspard's; and, even then, she would not have been so determined on it if Sophie Meudon had not been all that she desired in a daughter-in-law, a girl whose money and connections would be useful to Gaspard, and who, moreover, seemed to carry modesty and obedience to the point of stupidity, a girl whom she (Madame Harache) might hope easily to rule.

But the marriage was by no means such

a settled thing as she gave Gaspard to believe. She had had an interview with Monsieur Meudon, in which the two parents had agreed that, if the young people liked each other, such a marriage was desirable, and had parted after a few compliments on the merits of each other's children.

"You think too highly of my son," said Madame Harache, finally, in courteous deprecation; "yet I believe he is indeed of the material from which one makes a good husband. He has never caused me anxiety; the follies in which other young men indulge are foreign to his nature. He will adore his wife—above all, a wife so charming as Mademoiselle Sophie will be."

"Ah! these follies, madame, are not always to be regretted," answered Monsieur Meudon. "A man appreciates 'la vie de famille' the more for them; he does not know wherein his real happiness lies till he has tried the false happiness they give. Still, Gaspard is a young man whom I honour and trust; otherwise, I should not be willing to confide my Sophie to him, although the marriage is the one I would most desire for her. She is so gentle, so modest, so timid, so innocent of the wrongs and cruelties of this world. She needs a good husband."

"She does. I have observed her, how quiet she is. Yet La Tante Cathérine—forgive me, I should have said Madame Reyer—says she has much intelligence."

Madame Reyer—La Tante Cathérine—was a sister of Monsieur Meudon's, who acted as his housekeeper and his daughter's chaperon, a middle-aged lady of unenthusiastic disposition, with a rare talent for silence. This talent she used to the utmost when conversation turned upon her niece. She waited till friend or neighbour had said all they could in praise of Sophie's gentleness and modesty (her two most obvious characteristics), then added quietly, "elle a beaucoup d'intelligence," or "mais cependant il ne lui manque pas de l'intelligence." Some listeners thought they perceived a satiric tone in the remark, and thence concluded that her aunt considered Sophie rather beneath the average in brain-power, and insinuated in this fashion that she just escaped hopeless stupidity. The majority, however, thought the words merely signified a protest against Mademoiselle Meudon's moral qualities being magnified at the expense of her intellectual powers—affection claiming more for the beloved object than the outside world could perceive in it; as when the

mother of a baby whom one has conjecturally described as healthy because of its lack of obvious charms, says reproachfully, "and it is pretty, too."

But Madame Reyer valued a good, satisfying, non-compromising remark too much to spoil its usefulness by too clear an explanation of its shades of meaning.

Monsieur Meudon told his sister of the project of marriage set on foot by Madame Harache. "But let Sophie know nothing of it," he said; "she is too young still for marriage, and we must wait for Gaspard's return before we consider the matter too seriously."

"I will not tell her," said Madame Reyer, with one of her satiric smiles, "it will not be necessary."

"What do you mean, Cathérine?"

"I tell Sophie few things, yet she learns many," answered La Tante, enigmatically.

Monsieur Meudon was still bewildered; but he knew that his sister was not to be coerced into explaining more of her meaning than she chose. He considered himself a prudent man, but as for Cathérine! He was a regular tattler by her side. "You should have been a man and a diplomatist, *ma sœur*," he said to her once; "you would have been in the first rank."

"No," she had replied, "only in the second. I can keep silent, but I cannot look stupid. The first rank in diplomacy belongs to those who know all and seem to know nothing."

The words had been uttered years ago; and Sophie—a child of eight years old, somewhat over-indulged by her father because she was motherless, and made the companion of him and her aunt—had been hushing her doll to sleep in a corner of the room. For a moment the cradle-song ceased, then was resumed rather more loudly than before. Sophie had learned her life's lesson.

Madame Reyer forgot her remark; and never thought of connecting any of her careless words with a fact which she noticed more and more in her niece as she grew towards womanhood, namely, that her obvious and unconquerable dullness in comprehending mere lessons was compatible with a mysterious acuteness in discovering things which were not included in the course of her instructions.

"She uses her brain too much in looking for mysteries, to have any to give to history and music," said La Tante, with a touch of scorn, and puzzled herself a little in wondering if it was from the Meudon

side that Sophie took her characteristic. "She is like me," she decided, "in being curious, and knowing when to be silent; but my brother and I like straight paths, she prefers crooked ones. That must come from her mother."

Seeing, however, that her niece was determined on her rôle of amiable stupidity, she permitted the general opinion of her to pass unchallenged, save by the complimentary statement, "*elle a de l'intelligence*." And beneath the irritation which Sophie's peculiar talent caused her, she felt a certain amusement when, as sometimes happened, she could trace its workings. She would even permit opportunity for it, for the sake of observing the result. There was a certain callousness about Madame Reyer, the result of a mind too narrowly analytical, a nature in which the brain dominated the heart. She did not love her niece enough to be distressed, though circumstances often made her feel annoyed, at her manoeuvres to discover secrets that were hardly worth finding out. It amused her, as it amuses some people to see a kitten steal the milk that would be given to it in a few minutes. Such observers forget that the kitten is certain, sooner or later, to steal something not intended for it, and La Tante Cathérine showed no greater comprehension than they of the tendencies implied by acts that were in themselves unimportant and harmless.

On the day of Madame Harache's visit to his office, Monsieur Meudon, though so determined to keep the matter of Gaspard's vicarious proposal to himself, could not help glancing at his daughter with a new interest. He was trying to picture to himself what effect her slim figure and rather stooping carriage, her somewhat colourless hair and eyebrows would have on a man. She was not pretty; but there was an air of tender helplessness about her that moved his heart, and her slimness still belonged to that angularity of youth which, to some minds, has more fascination than a riper beauty. There was certainly something touching in her aspect.

"She looks young — *la petite* — in spite of her eighteen years," he said across the dinner table to his sister. "It is not easy to think that she has become a *demoiselle à marier*."

Madame Reyer noted a quick flutter of the girl's eyelids. But after a moment, Sophie lifted her head very slowly, and turning towards her father gazed at him with a bewildered look, while her lips

parted in a vague, sweet smile. Her smile was exquisite; it transformed her face from its usual rather heavy expression to one of childlike innocence and brightness.

"A *demoiselle à marier, papa!*" she said, in a slow soft voice, and laughed a little, slowly and softly too. "How strange the phrase sounds, applied to me!"

"It must come some day, *chérie*. That is what you are now; some day you will be a wife. Ah!"

Sophie rose from her place, and went to her father's side.

"No, no," she murmured, kissing him. "One must love one's husband better than one's father, *n'est-ce pas?* And that would be impossible for me."

Madame Reyer looked on the scene with cynical interest. "She will make him tell her everything this evening," she said to herself, and by way of giving her prediction the opportunity of verifying itself, she left father and daughter alone for half an hour. On her return she saw that Monsieur Meudon looked a little discomposed; but Sophie was bending over her embroidery as calmly as usual.

Next morning she said to her aunt, quietly: "It is then Gaspard Harache that I am to marry."

Madame Reyer expressed no surprise at the girl's information; but she answered her coldly. "It is Gaspard Harache that his mother and your father want to marry you to; that is not quite the same. A young man does not always accept the wife his relatives wish; and after his travels, Gaspard may wish to marry in the English fashion, without consulting his friends."

A sudden crimson flushed the girl's cheek. "You mock me, *ma tante*," she said, "because I am not beautiful."

"Not at all. If you can once gain a man's attention, you will keep it; you are more clever than people think you, and you have tact. It is the first glance that will be difficult. If you gain that from Gaspard, you will gain all. I only suggest to you the difficulties you may meet with."

"Ah!" sighed the girl; but it was a sigh of thought, not of regret.

"She will succeed," thought her aunt. "It will be interesting to see her at work."

To Madame Reyer the world was very much an oyster, not for her to open, but to enjoy—to savour and digest without much consideration for anything but her own pleasure. She was interested in her

niece; she found endless amusement in the subtlety that lay beneath that placid countenance, and her amusement made her tolerate a character which otherwise she would have despised, being, after all, an upright woman, who was incapable of a meanness. But she had no sympathies, and, had she known the full complication of affairs—the disturbing element of Gaspard's love for Thora Sweynson, in the otherwise perfect scheme—it would only have interested her the more. She was looking forward to the study of Sophie, destitute of beauty or of obvious talent, winning the love of a young man. Had she known that it was to be a duel à outrance, between a plain woman and a pretty one, interest would have risen to delight. She would still have predicted Sophie's success, having a profound belief in the dominance of brain over beauty.

"It is the question of soul and body," she had said once in arguing the point dispassionately, with no personal interest in it; "and a bad soul can conquer even a fine body. Do you suppose it was her beauty that brought lovers to the feet of Ninon de l'Enclos when she was eighty? Assuredly not. But she had talent, the instinctive knowledge of men's natures, which is worth more than beauty or youth; it was that which conquered. She was a bad woman, a depraved woman, you will say; but she was sensitive—as a barometer is sensitive, I mean, without emotion or conscience. Beauty! Bah! it is not beauty that rules the world, and the beauties of old times were often plain enough. They say that Cleopatra was freckled, and that Marie Stuart had a squint; yet men thought them lovely, and sacrificed life and soul for them. To make men think you beautiful—that is another matter from being so, and is worth more."

Had Gaspard Harache, however, heard Madame Reyer's arguments he would not, at this stage of his life, at least, have believed them. Thora and her beauty were everything to him, and his mother's letter, refusing her consent to his marriage, plunged him into a sort of rebellious despair. He could not give up Thora, yet he was impotent to win her while her guardian insisted on his mother's consent, thus peremptorily refused. He went to Mr. Traill and told him the result of his appeal; resisting the temptation to pretend that it had met with a totally different answer.

"So your mother will not hear of your marrying Thora," said the minister, after Gaspard had in a few words told him all. "I don't wonder; there was never a mother yet that liked her son to marry a stranger; it's the 'daughters of Heth' over again. For Thora's sake I am glad. It would have been a sore risk for her to have gone among a strange people and strange ways; and she might even have been perverted from the true faith. Yes, it's a good thing; in my momentary weakness I was going to consent to a marriage that the lass might have lived to rue."

"Never while I lived!" exclaimed Gaspard, impetuously, interrupting the old man's reflections. "If I might only have the chance of proving how I could strive to make her happy!"

"Ah! so you think," said Mr. Traill; and then, seeing the gloomy look on the young man's face, he could not keep from adding: "And in good truth, laddie, I'm sorry for you."

"You are sorry for me!" exclaimed Gaspard, bitterly; "and yet you will not leave me one spark of hope. Is it so easy to give up a woman whom one loves, whom one adores? I cannot do it; she is my soul; I cannot part from her."

"What do you mean?" asked the minister, sharply.

"I mean—nothing. I only speak my despair."

"I hope so. If I thought you intended any harm to Thora——"

"Not that! No, I swear to you I mean no harm. But to love her—to devote my life to her—is there harm in that? And why should the veto of my mother, who has never seen her, who does not know how sweet and pure she is, render it impossible? God knows that my love for Thora has no wrong in it! He can judge our intentions as well as our acts."

"When it's a woman that's in the question, you've got to consider other folk besides God," answered the minister. "That sounds like blasphemy; but He knows it's not. And I think you'll please Him better by giving up your own wishes for the sake of Thora's good name, than by bringing shame and disgrace upon her through your selfishness. I've no belief in the love that degrades its object."

"Nor I," returned Gaspard. "I would kill myself rather than make Thora a shade less pure than she is; she is for ever sacred to me. But if I were willing to

give up my country, to live here, or anywhere in Britain?"

"You would regret it soon enough. No woman can wholly fill up a man's life; and then, if you tire of her, what is to hinder your leaving her, and going back to your own country as a free man? There's no use in your making such suggestions. There is no form of marriage possible between you that is valid all the world over; and to any other I will not consent. Understand this, and as you are a man of honour, strive no longer after a thing that cannot lawfully be yours. When do you leave Stromness?"

"The 'Belle Armande' sails in three days. I have arranged to return to le Havre in her," answered Gaspard.

"During that time you must not enter the Manse, nor hold any communication with Thora. I am sorry that our pleasant intercourse should end so abruptly; I was fond of you, Monsieur Harache; but that cannot be helped now. We must be strangers to each other."

Gaspard accepted the dismissal. He murmured a few words of thanks for the minister's hospitality, and went out. In the narrow passage he met old Osla, who was hanging about, waiting for him.

"What did he say?" she asked, eagerly.

"Are you to have your own way?"

"No, Osla; it is impossible. Your master speaks truth, but it is hard to bear."

"And are you to go away, and never see the bonnie bairn again, and she breaking her heart for you? Oh! these auld folk, how cruel they are!" protested Osla, under her breath, forgetting that she, too, was, according to her reckoning of years, one of the old.

Her words shook Gaspard's resignation.

"I must see her again," he exclaimed, "if it is only to bid her farewell. Can you arrange it, Osla?"

"Ay, that I can," said the old woman, whose heart went with the lovers. "Just ye come into the garden at eight to-night, and gang to the corner where the elder-trees are, and I'll see that Thora gets out to meet you."

It was September now; the long summer days were over; and at eight o'clock in the evening there was darkness enough to cover Gaspard's slipping round the Manse to the corner of the garden, and Thora's gliding out of the house to meet him.

He told the girl in a few, bitter words of his appeal to his mother, and of the

minister's unconditional refusal to permit a marriage between them. She could scarcely repress a cry of despair. The hope of reaching her fairy-land that had buoyed her up of late was snatched from her without hope of recovery.

"Gaspard, Gaspard," she cried, "I cannot bear it, you must not leave me here. To have known you, to have hoped so much, and then to lose you and all you promised me. It is too hard, too hard!"

"My Thora," he answered, with a grave tenderness, though he repressed the longing he felt to clasp her in his arms, "my Thora, it is not more hard for you than for me. I love you with all my soul; without you my life is cold, and miserable, and worthless to me; but what can I do? My mother, your guardian, unite in opposing our love; it is impossible for me to oppose them."

Thora turned her head angrily away.

"You love me like—a Frenchman," she cried, bitterly. "You care more for your mother's bidding than for my love; you are a man, yet you submit like a child, like a cur! Go back to your own country; I do not want you; I do not care for such love as yours. He who will not make an effort to win a woman, does not deserve to get her."

She moved away a step or two; but Gaspard caught her hand and detained her.

"Thora," he exclaimed, "do you not understand that it is for your sake I hesitate! Ah! chérie, you are too innocent to understand how you tempt me. If I did not love you better than myself, I should bid you defy all risks and come to me. If I but knew of a way to make you mine that would bring no cloud on your smooth brow, do you not think I would take it gladly?"

The girl pressed closer to his side again. "Gaspard, there is a way," she whispered. "There is a marriage that demands no consent of friends or kindred, nothing but the heartfelt love and true promise of man and maid—there is the Troth of Odin."

Gaspard started. "You do not know what you are saying," he answered, trying to speak coldly, while he longed with all the fervour of youth and passion to cover with kisses the lips that pleaded his own

desires. "You would tempt me to selfishness. You know how Mr. Traill regards the bond of which you speak."

"Mr. Traill! Is his opinion worth anything, except when he is speaking of antiquities! Everybody laughs at what he says about the troth-plight. Oala, his own housekeeper, was wed by it, and dare he say a word against her! It is a true marriage, as good as if ten ministers blessed it."

Gaspard struggled still against himself; but more feebly. It was not easy to be strong with Thora's face so near his own, and Thora's voice arguing against his conscience, for what meant happiness to her as well as to him. The world and its laws stood between them; but the world is such a despicable foe in the eyes of youth that it seems a shame to yield to it, and its laws appear to be made only to be defied. When one studies them closely, one begins to ask if it is right to obey regulations founded on mere selfishness, and on the assumption that a man's lower nature is that which permanently rules him—and passion emphasizes the question and gives the answer.

"Do you accept the Troth of Odin as true and lawful, Thora?" asked Gaspard at last, after a long pause.

"Yes."

"Then, so will I; and I swear to be as perfectly faithful to its bond as if the whole world saw and approved our wedding."

Passion had conquered. Honour, vanquished and forgotten for the moment, stood aside and bided her time.

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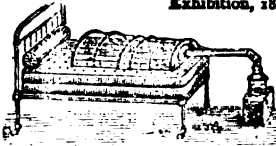
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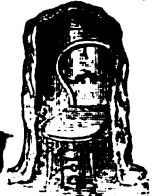
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By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MADGE crouched on that floor till day-break, hiding her face in her hands. Not till the cold, grey light of early dawn began to find its way in through the chinks of the shutters did she dare to withdraw those hands, lest from out some dark corner there should loom forth a white face and shadowy form.

Her limbs were stiffened, her brain felt dazed, and all power of weeping seemed to have left her, when, at length, she made her way back to her room. All power of feeling seemed to have left her also. Had Lance stood before her once more, she could not have raised the feeblest plea for pity and forgiveness for the Madge Cohen who had sinned and suffered. The reaction from the overstrain of passion was so complete as to seem a positive lull of pain. Over and over again she said to herself, as she threw herself face downwards on her pillows, "He prayed heaven that he might never see my face again," but the bitter words touched no answering chord now. An odd feeling of drowsiness was beginning to creep over her, and she seemed to feel, think, see, and hear, as it were, through a haze.

As the day grew, sounds of movement about the house began. She heard Lance's footsteps pass along the gallery outside her room.

Then in a dim, far-off sort of way she heard his voice outside below her windows giving some order, and presently the sound of wheels told that his dog-cart was being

brought round. She knew in the same dim, far-off way that this meant departure. He was going away, for how long she knew not; and she lacked power—and will, too, it seemed now—to prevent him.

For one moment there came to her a sudden wild longing to look her last at him. She made one great effort, gathering together all the strength that was left in her. It was inadequate, however, to carry her to the window. She succeeded in lifting herself from the bed, only to fall helplessly into a chair, on whose high back she had rested her hand for support. And seated there with face turned towards the window, through which the rosy light of morning was now streaming, she heard the crack of Lance's whip, the plunge of his horses, and presently the sound of wheels dying in the distance.

Then drowsiness seemed to enfold her once more, and thought became a blank to her. And one coming into that room and seeing her seated thus facing the window with head thrown back, and the bright morning sunshine falling on her pale face, might have exclaimed: "One could fancy that sleeping woman was dead!" or another gazing down on her might have said: "Hush, one could fancy that dead woman was sleeping!"

The hour which Madge had passed crouching on the study floor, had been a busy one for Lance. It was in a white heat of passion that he had shaken her touch from his arm, and turned his back on her; but it was a white heat that had method and purpose in it. As he had stood listening to her confession, that purpose had formed. The woman he had loved had been surrounded with mystery from the first day that he had known her, and the cloud of a terrible suspicion rested on

her grave. To clear that mystery, to lift that cloud, should henceforth be the purpose of his life; till this was accomplished everything else in creation would be as naught to him.

His heart was very bitter against Madge. At that moment it was simply out of his power to form any—even the most shadowy—conception of her great love for him. He realised only that she had failed in what seemed to him one of woman's best qualities—pity for the forlorn and desolate—and had, by an act of unexampled cruelty, wrecked his whole life for him. If she had been a man, he said to himself, he would have known how to deal with her; as it was, her conscience must punish her; and so he dismissed her from his thoughts.

He left the study with the intention of making immediate preparations for a journey to Corsica, where he purposed fully investigating the attempt at murder with which Madge had associated Miss Shore. Before he started, however, he would see and explain matters to Sir Peter; also, he would put a few questions to Mr. Stubbs, and demand of him the newspaper containing the paragraph from which Madge had drawn inspiration for her picture. Both interviews, he judged, must wait till a later hour. Meantime, he roused his servant, gave sundry directions as to his packing, and transmitted orders to the stable for his cart to be brought round in time for him to catch the first train from Lower Upton.

On his way back from the servants' quarters he had occasion to pass a small room where Madge was accustomed to write her letters, and where had been placed a small davenport for her sole use. A light shining under the door of this room attracted his attention; it seemed to be extinguished at the approach of his footsteps. A suspicion of burglars for one moment flashed across his mind, and he at once opened the door, to find, not burglars, but Mr. Stubbs immediately behind it. This was the same room in which Madge had, upon one occasion, discovered the self-same individual in a listening posture.

Lance stared at the man, who looked disturbed and flurried.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" cried the young man; and now, for the first time, it occurred to him that, possibly, this man, whom he had been wont to describe as "a harmless old fellow, who did what he was told, and never

got into anybody's way," was not quite what he had imagined him to be.

"I was just on the point of going to bed, sir; I've had a heavy night's work—I've been going through some of Mrs. Cohen's papers," here he glanced at the davenport, "at her request, sir."

Lance still stared hard at the man. He did not see written on his face the fact that Madge's sudden illness had filled him with consternation, and had sent him listening about the house in the dead of night; that, from what he had heard, he had drawn the inevitable conclusion that it was high time he looked to himself, and made provision for the future. All Lance saw in the low brow and narrowing eyes which fronted him was a look of mingled cunning and servility, that filled him with an unutterable contempt, not alone for this miserable specimen of humanity, but also for the woman who could stoop to such a confederate.

"I believe," he said, keeping his eyes fixed contemptuously on the, evidently, disconcerted Mr. Stubbs, "that Mrs. Cohen has employed you in more than one confidential capacity?"

Mr. Stubbs plucked up courage.

"I am proud to say, sir, I have enjoyed Mrs. Cohen's entire confidence, of late," he replied.

"Very well, then, be so good as to fetch me a newspaper which on one occasion you took the trouble to lay before Mrs. Cohen—it contains the account of an attempt at murder at Santa Maura."

Mr. Stubbs's face turned to an ashy whiteness. So, then, his conjectures had been correct. Madge had snapped the alliance between them by making full confession of the part she had played. The question was now, how far she had betrayed his complicity in the matter?

"Did you hear what I said?" asked Lance, his face taking an expression which seemed to Mr. Stubbs a remarkably unpleasant one.

"It's here, sir; here, sir," he said, going to the davenport and taking thence a newspaper, of which Lance at once took possession. "Mrs. Cohen has kept it here ever since I gave it to her. And, sir, will you be so good as to remember that in this matter, from first to last, I have acted entirely under Mrs. Cohen's orders?"

"I congratulate you on the fidelity with which you have carried them out. May I ask your motive for placing a paragraph of

this sort in Mrs. Cohen's hands, instead of in Sir Peter's or mine?"

"I knew Mrs. Cohen's anxiety on the matter, sir; we have been on a very confidential footing, as I've already told you, sir, for some time past. Mrs. Cohen's orders were imperative—I did my best, sir, to carry them out."

Lance, with his wrath against Madge still at white heat, began to see a sufficient reason for the appointment of this wretched being to the lucrative post of land-steward at Redesdale.

What Mr. Stubbs considered an unpleasant expression of countenance deepened on his face.

"I have only this to say," he said, contemptuously, as he folded the newspaper and put it in his pocket, "I shall advise Sir Peter to send you about your business as quickly as possible, and you may thank your stars that you are an old man, instead of a young one, otherwise I should send you out of the house a little quicker than Sir Peter could." Then he turned on his heel and left the man to his own reflections.

Five o'clock was striking as Lance went along the gallery towards his own room. With the last stroke of the clock Sir Peter's door opened, and Sir Peter, fully dressed, came out.

"What, you there, Lance!" he cried. "Now, isn't it a good thing I can wake myself at any hour I choose? If I had depended upon Simmonds I should be sound asleep still, and there's that church bell and a hundred other things to see to before breakfast——"

Lance laid his hand on the old gentleman's shoulder.

"Come into my room for a few minutes, Uncle Peter, I've something to say to you," he said.

"Eh?" said Sir Peter, blithely, "no doubt you have, my boy! I dare say, like me, you've a good many things on your mind, just now—not to be wondered at in a bridegroom elect."

Lance lost no time in preamble.

"There'll be no wedding to-day, nor any other day, so far as I am concerned," he said, as he shut the door behind Sir Peter; "I am going away, at once, to Corsica."

"At once! to Corsica!" repeated Sir Peter, utterly unable to credit his senses.

"Yes, I shall start in about half-an-hour's time. I have something to do—there, read this"—here he handed the

newspaper to Sir Peter—"I have just heard, for the first time, that Miss Shore is supposed to be the person who made the attempt at murder there related. I shall make it my business to prove the supposition false."

But Sir Peter's senses were still beclouded. "Miss Shore—attempt at murder—I don't understand," he repeated, blankly.

Lance grew impatient. "If you'll read that paragraph, you will understand—I've no time to go into details; I tell you, simply, I'm off to Corsica at once, to do my utmost to clear the reputation of a young lady who was once a guest in this house."

Sir Peter, recollecting a certain half-hour he had spent with Lance at Liverpool, began to understand. "But, my dear boy, what will Madge say——"

"Madge has said all she has to say on the matter—to me," interrupted Lance, sharply; "and I may as well tell you at once that everything is at an end between Madge and me."

"No, no, no! my dear boy," cried Sir Peter, "no, no, not possible! You don't mean to say—you can't—that there's to be no wedding this morning?"

Lance crossed the room and stood in front of Sir Peter.

"Uncle Peter," he said, "look in my face and see that I mean every word I say; I would put a bullet through my brain sooner than marry Madge Cohen."

There came a rap at the door, and a servant announced that the cart had been brought round.

Lance hailed thankfully an excuse for cutting his farewell short. "I'll write to you from Dover," he said. "I shall most likely have an hour or two to wait there. Shake hands, Uncle Peter, there's nothing for you to break your heart over." This was added a little bitterly, with emphasis on the pronoun.

Uncle Peter held out his hand; once, twice he cleared his throat very loudly, but still words would not come.

Lance's hard, even voice was a curious contrast to the old gentleman's want of self-control. "I would suggest that you should take the blame of the broken engagement on yourself," said the young man; "it will be easy for you to say that you did not consider that I, in my changed position, was a suitable match for Madge, with her wealth—it might save any feeling of wounded pride on her part."

The words "in my changed position" brought back Sir Peter's voice, though but a quaking, tremulous one.

"Lance," he said, huskily, holding the young man's hand in a tight grip, "wherever you go, whatever you do, don't forget what I said to you a little while ago, that if you do not take the place of my eldest son now, you take that of my youngest and best-loved—best-loved, do you hear, Lance?"

"Thank you, Uncle Peter. At present the future is a blank to me; but I shall always be glad to remember your farewell words."

"And, Lance," the old gentleman went on, still holding Lance's hand in his, "you'll draw your supplies as usual; you won't let this—this make any difference?"

Lance's reply was short, and all but inaudible.

Then he wrenched his hand away and was gone.

And Sir Peter, after gazing blankly at the closed door for a moment or two, sat down and cried like a child over his broken toys.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THAT was to be a day of departures. Sir Peter had scarcely time to dry his eyes and reflect on what a harassing day's work he would have to get through, before Mr. Stubbs, equipped for travelling, presented himself.

If Sir Peter had not been so occupied with his own subjects of thought, he would have noticed the anxious look on the man's face, the nervous twitching of the corners of his mouth.

"I've come to say good-bye, Sir Peter. I suppose I had better start at once," he said, looking this way, that way, all ways; but never once at Sir Peter.

"Eh! What! You going, too, Stubbs?" ejaculated Sir Peter, trying all in a moment to collect his thoughts and arrange some settled plan for meeting the day's difficulties.

The warmth of Sir Peter's greeting reassured Mr. Stubbs. Things had happened then as he had surmised they might—Mr. Clive had been so occupied with his own affairs that he had forgotten to give Sir Peter the warning he had threatened respecting the rascality of the man he employed to open his letters.

"I think the sooner I start the better, if you've no objection, Sir Peter," he

replied. "You see, I enter upon my duties at Redesdale, in ten days' time. You were good enough to tell me I might take a ten days' holiday before I got to work there——"

"Yes, yes; I remember, my good friend. Take a holiday, and welcome, but——"

Here he broke off, and began what, compared with his usual quick tramp backwards and forwards, was a veritable funeral march from end to end of the room.

"I will make it my business, before anything else," Mr. Stubbs went on, "to enquire fully into the antecedents of the gentleman who has been recommended as my successor here, and, meantime, there is the lad the Vicar spoke of."

"Yes, yes, I know; but I was thinking whether I could do without you to-day. I've a very great deal to see to and arrange."

Sir Peter paused abruptly in his walk. Now, how far should he take Mr. Stubbs into his confidence on this very delicate matter?

"Do you refer to the wedding arrangements?" asked Mr. Stubbs, scanning furtively Sir Peter's anxious features.

"No, no. I fear—a—h'm—I greatly fear, Stubbs, the wedding will have to be put off—for a time, that is."

"Put off, sir!" This was said with a great show of surprise. "May I ask if anything unforeseen has occurred?"

Sir Peter thought for a moment. The only way he could see out of his difficulties that day was by the juvenile course of fibbing. He must fib prodigiously all day long, he said to himself, so he might as well begin at once.

"No, no; nothing unforeseen has happened. I'm sorry to say I've noticed for some time past that Mrs. Cohen's health has been failing, and by my express advice—my advice, do you see, Mr. Stubbs!—the wedding will be deferred till she pulls round a little."

"I see, Sir Peter. And Mr. Clive has started off, I suppose, for Carstairs, to get further medical advice?" asked Mr. Stubbs, still furtively regarding Sir Peter.

"Exactly, exactly," ejaculated Sir Peter. "Splendid idea, that," he thought to himself, "I'll enlarge upon it." "At least," he went on, "I advised that course; but Mr. Clive said: 'No, there's not a man in Carstairs I'd trust in a case like this; I shall go straight to London, and consult a man there who makes fainting fits a specialty.'"

And then the old gentleman sighed and thought to himself:

"Dear me, I wonder if I shall forget all that, and say something quite different before the day's out!"

Mr. Stubbs was all sympathy.

"I fear it will be a harassing time for you, Sir Peter; I would willingly stay on a day or two longer, but I've some pressing private affairs of my own——"

"Ah, yes, that boy of yours; I remember you told me all about him, and I promised you a cheque, didn't I, in addition to your pay?"

"I should be very grateful for it, Sir Peter; I'm fitting him out now for the Colonies, and as I told you, I should like to give him a little capital to start with."

"Ah, yes; I remember. Come into the study a minute, you shall have your cheque at once; and don't forget, if any one asks you about the wedding being put off, it's all my doing, on account of Mrs. Cohen's health, and Mr. Clive has gone to Carstairs—no, to London, I mean—to consult a leading doctor about her."

So Mr. Stubbs departed with a handsome cheque in addition to his handsome quarterly salary. And if any one had taken the trouble to watch his movements on his arrival at Carstairs, they might have seen that instead of taking a ticket direct for London as he had told Sir Peter he intended to do, he made Liverpool his destination.

Sir Peter's fibs grew in number and variety as the day went on. Lady Judith unintentionally gave an impetus to them.

About seven o'clock she rustled downstairs in an extra allowance of skirt and floating lace lappets, expecting to find arrangements for the wedding in a satisfactory state of progress. The hints which her maid had let fall during the process of dressing had been uttered so timorously that they had not arrested her attention.

Sir Peter met her at the foot of the stairs, feeling that the sooner she was put into possession of the leading facts of the matter the better.

"Madge is not down—she is no better," he shouted into her ears. "Wedding must be put off—I've sent for the Vicar."

Lady Judith was all startled attention in a moment.

"This comes of doing things in a hurry——" she began.

Sir Peter knew that a sermon would follow on this text, but did not feel in the mood to provide an audience.

"Lance has gone to London to consult doctors—bring back one with him," he shouted again.

"Lance gone—where? Bring back whom?" questioned the lady, only catching half his sentence.

"Stubbs has gone off, too—to London," Sir Peter went on, anxious to put her in possession of all the facts necessary for her to know in as short a space of time as possible.

"What, Stubbs and Lance are gone off together?"

"No, not together, one after the other."

"What, Lance has gone off after Stubbs! Another protégé has disappeared! They do you credit, Sir Peter, I must say, these protégés of yours! First one, then another! They make themselves at home in the house, and get all they can out of you, and then they disappear and commit suicide, or do something else disgraceful. And as for Lance going in pursuit of the man, I do think——"

"No, no, no," shouted Sir Peter, "Stubbs is right enough—Lance—too." Then he stood on tip-toe, and with a stentorian voice, added—"Gone—after—doctors."

And it was not until Lady Judith had commenced an oration on the folly of two men starting in quest of one doctor, that he realised the fact that his story had already slightly deviated from its original form.

Later on in the day, when he began seriously to consider the state of affairs—the reality of the estrangement between Lance and Madge, and the difficulties which might lie in the way of putting things once more on an amicable footing between them—it occurred to him that an even greater modification of his original statement was necessary.

The Vicar, who was to have performed the wedding ceremony, was looked upon as the fountain-head of gossip in the neighbourhood; to him, therefore, it would be necessary to tell a story which the county would be expected to credit, as a true statement of affairs.

So when the worthy clergyman, in response to a hurried note from Sir Peter, presented himself at the Castle, the story which he was asked to give credence to, was that Sir Peter had taken advantage of the weak state of Mrs. Cohen's health to defer a marriage, which, since the change in Mr. Clive's position, was scarcely so desirable a match for her as it had at one time seemed.

"Heaven help me!" sighed the old gentleman, buttoning up his coat and going for a weary little trot by himself in the park. "How I'm to remember all these different stories, and stick to the right one to the right person, is more than I know!"

Before, however, that day came to an end, Sir Peter had ceased to trouble about the number and variety of his fibs; in fact, had no heart left in him for fibs of any sort.

About noon a message was brought to him from Madge that she wished to see him at once and alone. Sir Peter went up to her room to find her seated in the same high-backed chair into which she had fallen in her endeavour to get a last glimpse of Lance. There her maid had found her on resuming her attendance at seven o'clock in the morning, and, seated thus, she had endured a disturbing quarter of an hour of Lady Judith's society. Neither the maid nor Lady Judith, however, had read in Madge's face the story of her utterly broken physical health; to both she had protested a little feebly, it might be, that she felt better and would be quite herself before the day was over. Sir Peter was not a sharp-sighted man, and as a rule nothing was easier than to persuade him into taking an optimistic view of the gloomiest situation. On this occasion, however, his first look into Madge's face put all optimistic views to flight, and sent him to her side with a pained, startled cry on his lips:

"My child, my child, what is it—what has pulled you down in this way?"

Madge was still in the long, white gown she had worn overnight. Her hair strayed in loose disorder about her white face. Her head leaned wearily on one hand, the other rested on the arm of the chair.

"Hasn't Broughton been to see you, my child? He must be sent for at once!" pursued Sir Peter, making for the bell there and then to give orders for the immediate attendance of the doctor.

Madge's voice arrested him. It sounded weak, and far away—so far away, indeed, that he could almost have fancied that she was speaking to him from the other side of a wall.

"Not now, not yet. Will you sit down a moment? I have something to say to you—to confess to you," she added, correctingly.

"I know all, my child; Lance has told me," said Sir Peter, hurriedly, thinking that he knew to what she referred.

Then as he looked down into her haggard face, with something written on it which he had never seen there before, he uttered his first and only reproach against Lance.

"Why is not Lance here?" he cried. "It's disgraceful that with you in this state he should start off on a wild fancy of his own!"

Madge sighed. "Lance was right to go; if he had not gone I must—"

She broke off for a moment. Then she took Sir Peter's hand in hers. "Will you sit down and listen to me?" she said, faintly. "It isn't the story I told Lance—it won't take long to tell."

Sir Peter, with a scared look on his face, sat down. And Madge, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, and in a monotone like that of a child repeating a weary lesson, told the story of how she had tampered with the old gentleman's correspondence, and had kept back the tidings of Gervase Crichtett's only boy.

Straightforwardly and simply she told the tale. On Mr. Stubbs's share in the matter she touched but lightly—she had no wish to claim palliation for her offence by magnifying his share in it.

"He would have done anything I told him to do for money," she said, simply, in reply to Sir Peter's astonished exclamation, "Stubbs did that!"

Her last word left her without voice, wherein to plead for forgiveness. And Sir Peter had no voice wherewith to utter it. But all the same she knew that it lay in his heart for her. And he knew that she knew it was there, without any telling on his part.

OLD HAMMERSMITH AND CHISWICK.

APPROACHING Hammersmith from Fulham, among a strange medley of market-gardens, new streets, workshops, and factories, an old-fashioned house may be noticed on the left-hand side of the road, which bears the inscription, Brandenburg House. This is not indeed the original Brandenburg, but it seems to have been constructed on the site of the offices of the old house, and behind it is still a part of the grounds, beyond which can be seen the factory, with its tall chimneys, which fronts to the river, and occupies the foundations of old Brandenburg House. It was a famous house in its time, with terraces and gardens upon the river shore, not far below the present Hammersmith

Bridge. The house was originally built by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a farmer of the revenue and Guinea trader, the son of Ellis Crispe, of Hammersmith, and the first native of the hamlet who achieved any distinction. He built the Castle of Cormantine on the Guinea coast, and also erected a handsome monument, which still exists in the parish church, to the memory of his unhappy master, King Charles the First, at the foot of which is enshrined the heart of the worthy and faithful knight. The house at Hammersmith was afterwards sold to Prince Rupert, and occupied by one Mistress Hughes. It was afterwards occupied by Bubb Doddington (Lord Melcombe), and then it was bought by the Margravine of Anspach, a daughter of the Earl of Berkeley, who shared to the full the wild, stirring blood of her race. As Lady Craven—she was married at seventeen to the Peer of that ilk—she holds a distinguished place in the scandalous chronicles of the period, and as Margravine she was never received at Court, or acknowledged by the powers that were.

Still the Margravine held her ground as a leader of society, and in her time Hammersmith was perhaps gayer and more festive than it ever was before, or is likely to be again. There were fêtes on the river, water-frolics, and regattas of the gayest. The lady herself was an excellent actress, and assembled a distinguished amateur theatrical company about her. On days when she entertained, the Broadway was crowded with the carriages and equipages of the nobility and gentry.

The Margravine passed away and was succeeded by Queen Caroline, who, as the uncrowned Queen of George the Fourth, held her Court here. Then also there were bustling times at Hammersmith—not much gaiety of heart, but plenty of hearty political anger and malice. Sometimes the river would be crowded with a flotilla of sympathizers coming up with the flood from Westminster, to congratulate and cheer Her Majesty upon the favourable result of the great trial. And all the lions of the opposition would be driving along the Broadway, Harry Brougham, henceforth famous, the most conspicuous figure among them. Then, too, Theodore Hook wings her with his barbed rhymes :

What saw you at Brandenburg, heigh, ma'am, ho,
ma'am,

What saw you at Brandenburg ho ?

We saw a great dame, with a face red as flame,

And a character spotless as snow, snow,

A character spotless as snow !

Soon, however, came the last dismal scene of all, when, from Brandenburg House, in a cold and drenching rain, the poor Queen's funeral equipage started upon its progress amid scenes of the wildest riot and confusion.

Just opposite Brandenburg House stands an old house done in red stucco, which is peeling off everywhere, while a board peering above the high garden wall announces that the site is on sale for building purposes. This is Sussex House, once the residence of the Duke of Sussex—one of the steadiest and most respectable of the sons of George the Third—a homely, good-natured Prince, who enjoyed nothing better than a long clay pipe at some neighbouring tavern, and a gossip with the boatmen along the shore. After the Duke's time, the house became a lunatic asylum, and now its extensive grounds will ere long be parcelled out in building lots.

Another noteworthy house stands among a row of modern houses facing the church to the eastward. This is Bradmore House, which formed a part of old Butterwick House, built in the reign of Elizabeth, by Edmund Sheffield, Lord Mulgrave, an ancestor of the Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who gave its title to Buckingham Palace. This part was cut off and partly rebuilt by Sir Elijah Impey, the father of that famous—or as some would have it, Macaulay among the rest, that infamous—Elijah, who was Warren Hastings's faithful friend and instrument.

Where the Bath Road enters the parish of Hammersmith—a point well marked by the railway and Addison Road Station and the adjacent "Olympia"—there existed one of the earliest established nursery grounds in the metropolis. It was known as Lee's Vineyard Nursery, and was formerly planted with vines, and produced native Burgundy till the middle of the last century. The Vineyard Nursery became famous for the introduction and acclimatization of foreign plants. It claims the introduction of the fuchsia and of the first China rose. Glass-houses and hot-houses still bear the old name and designation; but the old vineyard is mostly built over, and gardens and nurseries further afield have taken its place.

A little further along the road, Brook Green opens out, where there was once a noted fair, which existed till the year 1823. Just within the Green stands a Roman Catholic settlement of the most complete

character, with church and homes for the poor, and schools, quite mediæval in arrangement and appearance. And a little way on, formerly stood one of the oldest nunneries in England, which had preserved its existence, in some form or other, through the perils of the Reformation, and which became also a famous school for the daughters of the Roman Catholic aristocracy. The old house disappeared within the last few years to make room for the buildings of a seminary for priests.

Old Brook Green has been saved from the builders, and now is a public recreation ground, surrounded by terraces of modern villas of Queen Anne type, with a few of the old original kind still remaining.

Another old Green still survives—that of Shepherd's Bush—once the resort of highwaymen, where a gibbet stood for their encouragement. And the Goldhawk Road, which passes thereby, is not without interest, as it follows the track of the old Roman road to Chichester and the West. Indeed, when the Goldhawk Road was made—for it existed previously only as a country lane, leading to the Manor of Coldhawe, and to commons and open fields, where Bedford Park is now placed—a Roman causeway was discovered some feet below the existing surface; while the name of Stanford Brook, where the ancient road crossed a small stream by a paved ford, still bears witness to the existence of the Roman highway.

Along this road were scattered many public greens and commons. Starch Green, which now only survives in name, and in the form of an ornamental pond by the roadside; Gagglegoose Green, now entirely vanished from the scene; and Paddingwick Green, also built over, where once stood the ancient Manor House of Pallingswick. Pallingswick Manor once belonged to Alice Perrera, the favourite of Edward the Third, in the last sad, inglorious days of the old monarch; and, according to tradition, the old Manor House was once a Royal hunting seat resorted to by the Black Prince. More modern possessors of the Manor transferred their residence to Ravenscourt, where there is a small but handsomely timbered park of some thirty acres, which has recently been acquired by the district authorities and devoted to the purposes of a public park; while the house, described by Faulkner as "a capital mansion built after Mansart's style," but which is of a very ordinary

description, is intended for the Hammer-smith Public Library.

For what else is left of Old Hammer-smith we must hie back to the river; noting on the way that the old church, with its red-brick tower and quaint campanile, has been replaced by a handsome Gothic building. But hereabouts everything has changed, or is in process of change. The old brick houses with red-tiled roofs, or with those high-pitched roofs of slate, which once gave Hammersmith rather a foreign aspect; these have now been replaced with tall, modern shops and "emporiums." The tramcars starting for Kew Bridge; the innumerable and rival omnibuses; the rival stations which announce their shortest and best routes to the City; make a bustle and turmoil about Hammersmith Broadway that can hardly have been equalled in the days of the lively Margravine, or of the vehement Queen Caroline.

It is quieter by the river, where the new bridge has not exactly the lightsome, graceful aspect of the old, but still is very well as a suspension bridge, and looks strong enough anyhow. Boating men still linger about Biffen's, and the autumn sunshine has brought out a few racing fours, that dash up and down the glittering river; and there is always the sculler, who, regardless of wind or weather, slides to and fro on his frail craft like some mechanical wooden figure. Then there are the old-fashioned houses with the roomy balconies, which look a little silent and deserted, as if the hospitable race who once tenanted them, had died out and left no successors. An open door gives a glimpse of a quiet little Friends' meeting-house with a sunny garden about it, which suggests that Hammersmith was formerly a favoured residence of the people called Quakers.

The continuity of the riverside walk is now broken by the creek—a tidal stream running up among narrow lanes and overhanging houses, inhabited mostly by people who know the ways of a barge upon the tidal waters. But the persevering pedestrian will find a foot-bridge, and a narrow paved walk which leads to the "Doves."

The "Doves" remains as of old, a quaint, waterside tavern, with its landing stage to the river, pretty much as when poet Thomson resorted to its quiet sanded parlour, and studied the winter aspect of the river, and jotted down verses for his "Seasons." And taking boat hence one

autumnal day for his home at Kew, honest Thomson caught that chill which brought him to his grave.

At the "Doves" begins the Upper Mall with its fine old elms, which were planted, they say, by Catherine, the Queen of Charles the Second, who lived during her widowhood on the Upper Mall, till she went home to Portugal to end her days. The river-terrace still retains an aspect of old-fashioned dignity, till its course is finished by the intrusive oil mills, which occupy the foreshore for some distance. Then comes Hammersmith Terrace, which brings us to Chiswick and its Mall, with the eyot in front of it, bordered with willows, and the quiet back-water, which is sometimes only back-mud. Some famous old houses are still left—Walpole House for one—of the squareness that came in with the Dutch King, but distinguished, too, with fine fluted wooden columns supporting a corner, and making an admirable porch. Here they say, ended her days, the notorious Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, the most splendid and dissolute of all King Charles the Second's sultanas. Among the houses which have disappeared, and have been replaced by modern villas, is the old "College House," formerly an infirmary for Westminster School, where Dr. Busby, the eminent head master, with his birch and his young friends, took refuge during the great plague, and which was afterwards the locale of the famous Chiswick Press.

A more modern resident in the Mall has given his name to a new road, the Weltje Road, a name which excites a gentle curiosity as to how it got there. Weltje was "chef de cuisine" at Carlton House, an excellent fellow by all accounts, who in his retirement at Chiswick, gave capital dinners, and was much respected by the literati and wits of his period.

At the point of the eyot is Chiswick Ferry, and the back-water has long been a favourite "lay-by" for barges, and on Sundays quite a flotilla of these craft may be seen at anchor there, or quietly resting on the muddy bank.

With Chiswick churchyard the river walk comes abruptly to an end, and our way would bring us into Chiswick village; but we can turn off by Chiswick Lane, which has its own associations, and is, moreover, a pleasant shaded lane, where the birds twitter pleasantly, and spreading elms overarch the footway. A little way up the lane to the left is Mawson House, with a terrace of handsome Queen Anne

houses, in one of which Alexander Pope and his father probably lived for a time, before the poet settled at Twickenham. Here lodged, too—somewhere in the lane, that is, and near a grocer's shop—Jean Jacques Rousseau, who, had he been in the humour, might have given a picture of Chiswick that would have charmed the world. Rousseau, we are told, came to lodge in the lane, to be near his friend, Dr. William Rose, who had a large school in the same locality, a man eminent in his day, and if his epitaph in Chiswick churchyard is to be believed, of almost superhuman virtues and acquirements. Anyhow, the great lexicographer thought highly of him, and would often exhaust his friend's teapot—but never the patience of good Mrs. Rose.

A fine large house, of the days of the first George, near the top of the lane, is called the Manor House, and recalls the fact that the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul's is the lord of the Manors of Chiswick, which are two in number, and are characterised as the Dean and Prebendary Manors respectively. This house in Chiswick Lane represents the Prebendary Manor—a bill on a neighbouring wall announces a sale of copyhold tenements under the Prebendary Manor, so that the lordship is still a going concern. The Dean's Manor is represented by Sutton Court, at the other end of the parish.

A tramcar will carry us to the extreme limits of Chiswick by Kew Bridge. One or two old taverns, standing back from the road, recall the old post and coaching road to Bath. There is the "Roebuck," an ancient-looking house; the "Old Windmill," with a curious old sun-dial over the door, and the motto: "So flies life away." There is the "Pack Horse and Talbot," too, of ancient fame, though now rebuilt; but what brings about the conjunction in the sign is not evident at first sight, till the polite historian explains it for us—"The talbot, a trusty species of dog so called, accompanied the horses, and stopped to watch the goods while the travellers were refreshing themselves at the inns on the roads." The mention of these old wayside taverns reminds us that we have forgotten another survival of old times, the old "Red Cow," next to the new red buildings of St. Paul's School, which is quite a picture of an old tavern with its bow windows and red curtains, and has been time out of mind a house of call for those going to or coming from Covent

Garden Market. And here every forenoon you may see a line of carts drawn up, piled high with empty baskets, while the drowsy waggoners, who have been all night on the road, refresh themselves and water their horses. A rude tablet on the wall above the horse-trough bore, not long ago, the following inscription :

All you who water horses here,
Must pay a penny or drink some beer.

What carman would hesitate with such a choice before him ?

Kew Bridge is in sight at last with its high-crowned arches, and Brentford with its gasometers and water towers. Now our way is not in their direction at all, but down by the river-bank where a number of barges are lying half aground, and a narrow, plashy road leads in the direction of Strand on the Green. Not many of the thousands who come to Kew think of visiting Strand on the Green, but there is a mighty pleasant walk there along a causeway by the river. Quaint cottages and enviable little houses with high steps are terraced on the way ; old boats, old barges, and old mooring posts fall placidly into decay ; there are barge-building yards and malt-houses, and funny little courts leading one knows not where. And from the foot-path the river assumes an aspect new and noble, with a grand sky overhead, a soft, shining, cloudy sky, with broad reflections on the water, boats and barges sending glittering ripples among the dark shadows.

Here are little taverns, too, jolly and snug, where boatmen and bargees feel themselves at home ; and among them all — coming as a surprise to those who had no faith in the existence of such a body-politic as a living organism — the 'depôt' and headquarters of the Thames Conservancy heave in sight. Here are funny little bills exhibited in funny little windows — notices about locks and weirs, cautions to mariners, and other announcements, which look as if they came out of some collection of ancient broadsheets. Close by, the modern world reasserts itself in an electric storage installation, and in the adjoining yard an electric launch is on the stocks, with double screws, and no inside to speak of, which is destined to electrify the Thames by-and-by.

All is so pleasant that one is sorry when the Causeway comes to an end, and a broad, new road presents itself, and the villas of New Chiswick. Now we are at Grove End, a fine modern mansion, on

sale at present, and hereabouts is Grove Park, laid out in new roads, bordered by grandiose new villas. The old Grove House is perhaps somewhere still existing, but shorn of its fine park, and about house and park history has little to say, although that little is pleasant enough.

Grove House, according to Faulkner, belonged, in the last century, to the Right Honourable Henry Morrice, an eccentric lover of animals, who turned the place into a kind of asylum for horses and dogs. His horses, of which he had a large stud, were not expected to work, but were turned out into the park to enjoy themselves, and were provided with an attendant boy to flap the flies off — certainly a humane provision in the days when horses' tails were docked, and the poor animals were defenceless against insect pests. When he died, A.D. 1790, Mr. Morrice bequeathed the house and grounds to a female friend, on condition that the horses and dogs on the establishment should be carefully fed and attended to, and enjoy their accustomed quarters, while an old servant was to be lodged there as long as he lived. By the year 1819 all the animals were dead, and the old servant had been gathered to his fathers, and the legatee sold the place, and reaped the reward of her patience in the handsome purchase-money.

Everything is wonderfully still and quiet in this secluded quarter. Here a new road is laid out, but the side-walks are covered with grass, and, turning towards the river, the scene that meets the eye is of a purely sylvan character. Hardly a roof is to be seen, but everywhere woods and meadows ; and the hills that bound the horizon are darkened with belts of forest trees. We might be a thousand miles away from London, although actually we may hear Saint Paul's clock strike the hour. The wooded hills are those of Richmond Park, and the woodland scene is no optical delusion, but a stretch of real, wild, forest-land. There are fine clumps of Spanish chestnuts further on, and a cart-road leads to a charming spot, with a pool secluded in a shady grove where a swan, like that upon Saint Mary's loch, "floats double, swan and shadow." This is close by the Grove Park boat-house, which now belongs to the vivacious and energetic "Polytechnic," and the cart-road leads past the club-house to the river-bank, where a steam-crane is at work landing spoil, or ballast, in the way of earth from a huge barge ; while a short tram-line

carries off the loaded trucks to discharge their loads elsewhere. There is Mortlake Church on the other side of the river, and the Ship, and the wide foreshore, backed by the low horizon of green common, broken by houses and trees. On this side is the spot known as Barker's Rails; the winning post of the University Boat Race.

All beyond is indefinite, plashy banks, market gardens, mud, osier beds, and slimy creeks; a part of the world unreachable, undiscoverable. There is nothing for it but to turn back and explore the overland route. And that brings us past Chiswick Station, which is like a station in the backwoods, and into Burlington Lane.

It is a long lane that has no turning; but Burlington Lane has many turnings, and yet it is plaguery long. Yet it is pleasant this autumn day on the sunny side of a mellow brick wall overhung with chestnut trees, while on the other side are meadows and plantations. It is noon, and the boys released from school are whooping along the lane, or shying stones and sticks into the trees to bring down the horse chestnuts, so that what with falling nuts and stones, and fragments of timber, the situation becomes rather perilous. Where the chestnuts fall there is ivy hanging over, about which all the flies and insects of the neighbourhood have gathered. Here and there, through iron gateways, you get a glimpse of the trim lawns and gardens of Chiswick House—even of the house itself, cold and severe, yet not exactly unpleasing; the house of which Lord Hervey said, "that it was too small to live in, and too large to hang to one's watch." But that was before the wings on either side were added. The house was built by the architectural Earl of Burlington, whom Pope addresses:

You, too, proceed! make falling arts your care,
Erect new wonders and the old repair,
Jones and Palladio to themselves restore,
And be whate'er Vitruvius was before.

The task of restoring Jones to himself, is an allusion to the gateway designed by Inigo Jones, for an entrance to Beaufort House, Chelsea—the site of Sir Thomas More's old house—which, when the house was pulled down, was bought by Lord Burlington, and re-erected in his own grounds. As Pope makes the gate repeat its history:

I was brought from Chelsea last year,
Batter'd with wind and weather;
Inigo Jones put me together,
Sir Hans Sloane
Let me alone,
Burlington brought me hither.

An old house which stood upon the same site was the residence of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, the hero of the scandalous affair with Lady Essex, which was the talk of the town and the gown in the days of James the First. Whatever the Earl's youthful errors or crimes may have been, the latest act of his life with which we are acquainted, shows him in the light of a kind and devoted father, sacrificing himself for his daughter's welfare.

The Earl's only daughter had formed an ardent and reciprocated affection for Lord Russell, the son of the Duke of Bedford. The Earl was but poor; and my Lord of Bedford loved money a little too much. He must have twelve thousand pounds with his son's wife, or there should be no match. The dowry seemed unattainable, and the marriage was broken off. But, seeing his daughter sad and miserable, the father "chose rather to undo himself than make his daughter unhappy." He raised twelve thousand pounds by selling everything—all his plate, jewels, and household stuff; sold, even, the very house over his head; and, having secured his daughter's happiness, spent the remainder of his days in indigence and obscurity. The eldest son of this idolised daughter was the Lord Russell who suffered on the scaffold for his supposed share in the Rye House Plot. And in virtue of some genealogical tangle, which we have not space to unravel, it seems that Chiswick House has actually come back to the right heirs of the unhappy Earl and his daughter. Chiswick House is noticeable, too, as the deathplace of Fox and Canning—each a visitor at the house when death threw his fatal dart.

But all these reflections do not shorten Burlington Lane, which runs on interminable, as it seems, till it ends at last where a path between high brick walls brings us directly into the churchyard. It is still a place for the dead, for the generosity of the House of Cavendish has added acre after acre to the original land, and thus here are tombs of yesterday, freshly garlanded with flowers, as well as the formal monuments of worthies whose name and fame are buried, too, in Time's great graveyard. "De Louthembourg, R.A.," greets us from a square ugly monument; Charles Holland, of Drury Lane Theatre, a friend of Garrick's, is represented by a handsome tomb; and many of more or less note repose around, among whom are Mary, Countess of Fauconberg, daughter of Oliver Cromwell, who lived at

Sutton Court, in this parish; Miles Corbet, the regicide; and Barbara Villiers, already mentioned in connection with Chiswick Mall. Here is an old tomb belonging to members of the Towneley family of Lancashire, with the inscription R.I.P.; and it is said that other Roman Catholic families have vaults in Chiswick churchyard.

Passing under the old tower, erected at charge and cost of William Bordall, vicar, who died 1435—and now all that remains of the old church, which has been superseded by a recent Gothic edifice—we come to the south side of the church, where stands William Hogarth's monument, crowned by an urn from which issues a gilded flame. It is as pleasant a nook as can be imagined, with a glimpse of the river flowing by, with white sails gleaming here and there, but shut out from the silent highway by old quaint roofs which rise over the mellow brick wall, lined with old monuments.

After visiting the painter's tomb, it is a point of duty to visit Hogarth's house, which lies close at hand. It is up Hogarth's Lane, a rather miry lane, bordered by workmen's dwellings. The garden gate is wide open, and there is the plain, old-fashioned house, three-cornered in shape, with its front to the wild, tangled, yet prolific garden, with its glowing autumn blooms and riotous scarlet-runners. The chief feature of the house is a great projecting bow from the first-floor, supported by an iron column. Here is decadence and decay, and yet all is in keeping, a broken window here and there, everything worn and rubbed—for the house now seems to be let off in tenements. Hogarth, himself, might find a subject here; a cheerful and portly dame cutting a nosegay from the straggling flowers, a litter of pigs rooting about and scampering along the garden walks—it might be the very litter of pigs that occasions the catastrophe in the "election" series—workmen tramping in for dinner; and overhead are the leaden vases which David gave to his friend, William. Yes, they still stand over the gateway, those same vases, and, indeed, the whole place might be just as the painter left it, allowing for a few years of miscellaneous wear and tear.

The village of Chiswick, too, still retains its ancient charm, and shows its "Burlington Arms"—a timber-framed house of the seventeenth century; and Chiswick Square, which retains the very aroma of the courtly days of good Queen Anne.

But the hour has struck. Thorneycroft's men are hurrying back to the torpedo works, and there is no more question about Chiswick, except how to get away from it. "It makes no odds which road you go, any one will lead you into the high road," says a polite workman; and as far as distance is concerned, he is right; but it is a chance whether you fall into a terribly long street of small workmen's houses, or some nice country lane. Anyhow it is far enough from the haunts of omnibuses and trams, and you arrive at the causes of the seclusion of Chiswick, when you realise how difficult it is to get there, or, being there, to get away.

SECOND SIGHT.

(A FACT.)

"NAV, do not sail to-day, my lads," he said,
The tall old fisherman with hoary hair,
Standing upon the beach where lay the boat
With her flag floating on the sunny air;
While at the rocky headlands guarding Staithes,
The flowing tide broke with a hollow roar.
And the three fishers, tossing nets aboard,
Paused for a moment, listening on the shore.

"I've had a vision, lads. Thou know'st my race,
Father, and grandfather, and backward still,
Have had the cruel gift of second sight,
And known of coming doom against their will.
I had the vision, just before the dawn;
I saw, where Huntcliff towers grim and grey,
I saw you men all struggling in the foam,
I saw you drowning: do not sail to-day!"

"O, ay, I know the glass is firm eno',
And sky and sea calm as a bairn asleep;
And not a warning posted on the cross,
And not a sign of danger on the deep.
Yet, changeful as a woman in her moods,
Is our North Sea, I've heard my father say.
But that is neither here nor there, my lads,
I had the vision, do not sail to-day!"

"Mebby we'd better humour him," said one,
Whose twelve year boy was clinging to his hand;
But his mate turned upon him with a laugh,
That woke a mellow echo down the strand:
"Humour him! with the fish as rank as aught,
And neither food nor fire up there!" he said,
And pointed to his cottage on the cliff,
And shook, in merry scorn, his curly head.

A moment yet the father lingered there,
"See, here's a penny, Bill, bide thou at home;"
But the boy pushed the kindly bribe aside,
And clamoured wilfully that he "must come."
And so, they leapt aboard, and pushed her off;
But, as the coble danced across the bay,
They heard the old man, left upon the sand,
Shout sadly to them, "Do not sail to-day."

Anxious the women, who had shivering heard
Old Peter's warning, watched the sunny waves;
Telling, as slow the sad hours wore by,
Old tales of crews long laid in ocean graves.
Anxious they saw the black squalls sweep across
The great blue waters and the purple down;
Till midnight closed upon the deepening dread,
And ne'er a coble beached below the town.

Next day, upon the sands 'neath Hunteliff Head,

Lay the dead father, with his stiffened arm
Round the dead boy, as if in doom and death
He still was fain to keep him safe from harm ;
And with her helm unshipped, her timbers stove,
The coble lay amid the boulders there,
But the sea kept in her mysterious depths
Young Jack with his bold eyes and curly hair.

Men guessed her rudder struck on sunken rock,
Just as a squall had ta'en her sail aback,
And shook their heads, and muttered o'er the glass,
"He allis wer too venturesome, o'er the glass."
But the old Seer listened to all unmoved,
"When death must come, small heed to reck the
way.
I had the vision sent me at the dawn,
Before, despite the bode, they sailed that day."

AMONG THE LAVENDER.

IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"I TOLD you so," said my friend, Jack Carlyon, looking across at me with that peculiarly aggravating expression of countenance that always accompanies the utterance of the above sentence.

I was out of sorts, and easily irritated.

"If you did, it doesn't make it any the better, or the pleasanter," I answered. "I could better have afforded to take a spell of the entire and complete rest this fool prates about at any other time than just now."

"I never knew a fellow that didn't say that when he'd got his back into a job, and had to give it up for a bit—don't you know?" said Jack, curling up one corner of his tawny moustache with his strong, lithe fingers, and looking the personification of perfect health and manly strength; while I—

Well, well, it was all very well for me to call Dr. Marchmont a fool. It let the steam off, somehow, but a long array of sleepless nights, backed up by an army of lesser symptoms, which my own medical knowledge told me spelt the words "overworked," convinced me that his kindly and urgent counsel was true, and that few men in London stood in greater need of a spell of rest and recruiting than Stephen Allardyce—meaning myself.

When you get to "overworked," the next station on the journey is "broken-down." I did not wish to attain to this last. I resolved to leave London; bury myself among green fields, apple-orchards, and haystacks; and give myself up entirely to the conjugation of the verb, "to lazy." Not a manuscript will I look at, much less write; not a proof will I correct. All my intellectual faculties shall lie fallow for this needful space of rest. My thinking powers

are my stock-in-trade; I must needs husband them.

The problem how best to attain to this perfection of rural happiness and idleness faced me pitilessly.

Country lodgings? Bah! Bad cookery, ill-ventilated rooms, long-legged spiders on the bread-and-butter. Perish the thought. A country hotel? Worse still. Yokels keeping festival on Saturday nights; a mingled smell of tepid beer and stable-yard pervading everything. The very thought was irritating, and I opened my morning paper with an unamiable jerk.

Ill-temper ought not, one would think, to be rewarded. Mine was.

An advertisement stared me in the face; a message that might almost seem to have been sent straight from heaven.

"Address: M. R., Orchard Farm, near Wortlebury. A single gentleman can have the use of two airy rooms and attendance. Terms moderate. Good fishing."

Now I love fishing. I look upon it as a delicious phase of idleness.

Half my days swinging in a hammock underneath the chequered shadow of the apple-boughs, with no companion save pipe or cigarette as the mood dictates, the other half lounging on a river's brink, crushing the forget-me-nots and the golden king-cups, and watching my rod—not eagerly, only lazily—for the bite which may come or not, as it pleases. A month of such a life as this, and I should become vulgarly robust; I should sleep like one of the Seven Sleepers, and relish the plainest food like a ploughboy. But then, the plain food must be well cooked and cleanly served. Therein lies the difference between my possibilities and the ploughboy's.

I was, however, of a mind to think the food would be well dressed, and cleanly—nay, perhaps, daintily served. For I wrote to M. R., and M. R. replied; and her letter was the letter of a gentlewoman.

Orchard Farm! How delightfully suggestive a name! Doubtless, apple-trees there grow in a juxtaposition exactly fitted for the needs of that hammock in which I am to swing beneath earth and sky, I thought to myself; doubtless the grass is deliciously green; the apples nestling on the boughs deliciously pink on one plump cheek; and the thrushes laugh softly, as, with eager beak, they test the juices of the ripening plum. This last idea is perhaps hardly correct from the farmer's point of view, and

might offend M. R.'s thrifty soul; but I love the sound of the thrush's gurgling laugh, so let it stand, even at the sacrifice of a plum or two.

"Don't you get scribbling now," said Jack Carlyon, as he took leave of me on the Paddington platform. "You've overdone it, you know; and I tell you what it is, you'll break down, you know, if you don't look out."

Like a bird that sings the same few notes over and over again, Jack has piped the same tune to me persistently for some while back. It is a most unpleasant thing to be told the same thing over and over again. It is ever so much worse when the thing is true. I almost hated Jack as the train crawled out of the station, and then set its mind to going in earnest and puffed away into the open country.

And, to say the truth, this drifting away was welcome enough to me. In spite of all my asseverations to Jack Carlyon, I was conscious of many symptoms that, being interpreted, meant "worn out." I knew that a life without proof-sheets was, for a time, a necessity; and yet, like every true slave of the pen, I hug my chain, and love to linger lovingly in the company of my own creations.

Yet, must I change the rustle of "first proofs" and "revises" for the rustle of woodland whispers above my head. I must lay the busy pen aside, and let it speak no more for awhile.

It is a far cry from bustling Paddington to the sheltered nook in the Midlands where Orchard Farm is to be found; and, what with delays in catching trains on side lines, and such-like tiresome incidents of travel, dusk had almost grown to night before I reached my temporary home. The sky had become overcast, and a fine drizzle was falling as I alighted from a ramshackle kind of vehicle which the driver called a gig—but which struck me as bearing considerably more resemblance to a worn-out tax-cart—at the gate of Orchard Farm.

I could see the misty outlines of close-growing trees; and amid them shone the gleam of a light here and there, while the patch of radiance cast by an uncurtained lattice lay almost across my pathway.

Through the faint mist of rain came sweet scents innumerable, sweetbriar, roses, jasmine all giving out their sweet breath unstintingly, and over all, and dominating all, the old familiar perfume of "sweet lavender." I say "familiar," because—so

subtle is the association of a perfume—it took me back at once to the memory of my boyhood in my "mind's eye." I saw the little white-curtained room that welcomed me home from school as each holiday came round; the little room where my mother's touch seemed to linger everywhere, most of all in the scent of the lavender that came from tiny muslin bags, in which the purple spears were imprisoned.

Thus the lavender set me thinking of a long dead past; but all this was after a hearty and thoroughly countrified supper, at which a neat-handed, round-faced girl waited upon me, and with a quaint little "dip" of a curtsy, asked me "when I would be pleased to take my breakfast," and "the mistress said, would I have a bowl of milk, warm from the cow, sent up at seven, like the last gentleman who was at the farm?"

There was a certain ready sympathy in the girl's look and tone that convinced me that Orchard Farm was a sort of perpetual sanatorium; and that broken-down creatures of various kinds were in the habit of finding an asylum there, and being resuscitated with bowls of new milk and other country comforts. I even felt intuitively that a person in a state of rude health would hardly be acceptable to the inhabitants of this Midland homestead, where all sweet perfumes mingled so deliciously, and where the question how the lodger might be "getting on," was doubtless an interesting part of the day's routine.

The sense of deep restfulness was on me like a cool hand laid caressingly upon a fevered brow. Those long, weary hours of wakefulness which had beset me for many a week past—hours, each one worse and more weary than the last—seemed as a dream that is past.

The fine rain had ceased to fall; soft fleecy clouds moved gently across the sky, and a concord of sweet sounds rose from the deep bosom of the woods.

The nightingales were mad beneath the moon.
And with strange ecstasy of gurgling song,
Made night all jubilant.

"Now," thought I to myself, as I struck a match, and lighted my pipe, "did I ever hear nightingales before?"

Perhaps. But surely I had never been in so receptive a humour—never so attuned to the harmony of their exquisite clamour.

Seated at the open window, peacefully smoking, contentedly musing, I became conscious of the fact that the woodland

choristers sang to an accompaniment—a low, monotonous, deep note.

"It is the river," thought I, delightedly. "I must ask M. R. to-morrow about the fishing."

London, with all its whirr and stir; my editor's sanctum; the stairs that led thereto, by no means a Jacob's ladder; long, interminable slips of proofs; impatient printer's devils beating the devil's tattoo upon my door; all these things faded away like so many dissolving views. In a couple of hours I had become a complete rustic; my highest ambition was to catch fish in the river that was singing somewhere there among the woods and fields, bring them home in a creel, and get my rosy-faced Phillis to broil them for my tea. An humble aspiration, truly, but one which to any tired and overwrought brain, seems to hold the gift of rest and healing.

To "turn in" at half-past ten, instead of sitting up in company with the creations of one's own brain till far into the small hours, was a novelty, and seemed like a tempting of Providence in the matter of sleep. But no! Haunted by the perfume of sweet lavender, and looking dreamily forward to the bowl of milk, warm from the cow, I quickly fell asleep, my last conscious thought running thus: "Now 'the mistress' must be M. R." So I fell into the poppy valley of a dreamless night—a luxury, to me, new indeed.

CHAPTER II.

It is said that cats track the young and unsuspecting thrush by the sweetness of its song—fancy dining, with an appetite, on so much murdered music!—and with like subtlety did I stalk the river that lay far away among the trees. Led by the low crooning of its sweet, monotonous chant, I took my way over the fields in the first fresh hour of the morning. I was as a "giant refreshed." I seemed to have grown young in a night—a night of deep, unbroken slumber such as had not visited my eyes for many a long and weary week. "Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care." Oh! master-mind that "so read human nature like a book, and told its story to a listening world;" for surely no other expression of which language is capable could so express the renewal of the drooping energies, the restoration of the flaccid nerves, as those two happily chosen words, "knit up." Stepping briskly over the dew-laden, flower-pied grass, towards

where, in the deep heart of the wood, the river called to me with crooning voice, a sylvan Lorelei—thus ran my thoughts. The day was still a very young day, and the level sun-rays seemed just to tip the grass and flowers, and pierce through the holes of the thick-serried trees, and touch the ripples of the river to a smile.

How delicious the plunge beneath that sun-lit water; how like a river-god one felt, and then the pleasant return after the bath was done! The sense of invigoration in every vein, as swinging my towel in my hand, and with hat set well back on my head, in a fashion that would have led New Bond Street to look upon me as an escaped lunatic, I betook myself once more towards Orchard Farm.

I was fated to see two idylls—both equally beautiful in their way—on that return journey of mine. First, just at the turn of the lane, against a background formed by a bank all ablaze with golden buttercups, two starlings engaged in furious conflict. I stood still to watch the battle. What shrill cries of rage, what quick darting of beaks, what mad whirl of wings! And all the time the glorious prisms of the two swelling throats gleaming, and flashing, and glancing in the sunlight with every tint and glowing colour—now richest purple, now shining gold, now a wondrous, metallic green! Truly, a conflict of rainbows.

A few paces further brought me in view of another idyll, and this time a picture never to be effaced from my memory.

Many a year has now gone by since my summer trip to Orchard Farm, but every line, every shade of that picture is as clear in my mind at this moment as when first my eyes lighted upon it.

A man young, good to look upon, slender in form, and with a strange, eager look upon his face, sat upon a low bench, near which grew, tall and straight, a perfect forest of lavender bushes, softly purpled with a thousand spear-like blossoms. In this eager face, turned upwards towards me, yet utterly unobservant of me, as I felt instinctively, what I noticed most were the eyes, dark, bright, beautiful—but blind. It was easy to see that by their lack of all expression—indeed, the attitude of the man's whole figure told the same piteous tale. The thought struck me like a blow. Younger, by some years, than myself, sitting there in the balmy sunshine, with the fairest of nature's pictures stretched out before him, and

yet seeing nothing. Scenting the wild flowers' sweet air; feeling the warmth of the rays that touched the world and bade it live, and blossom, and pulsate; but living in a void of perpetual darkness. Standing there, bareheaded to the summer light, my hat swinging in my hand, my whole being strengthened and refreshed by the plunge into the sun-bright river, my very soul gladdened by the beauty of earth and sky around me, this man's isolation seemed a thing to shudder at—as though in the midst of exquisite verdure and flower-decked meadows, one should stumble upon a corpse.

Yet in the moment in which these thoughts, lightning-swift, darted through my mind, I realised also that that darkened life had its sun and light—the sun of a perfect love; the light of an exquisite sympathy. For, standing beside the blind man—leaning a little towards him, as if swayed unconsciously by an impulse of tenderness, one hand toying with the spears of lavender that sprang back elastic from her touch, the other resting on the shoulder of his old brown velvet shooting-coat—was a woman, tall, slender, yet some way past the freshness of youth; sad-eyed, sad-faced, indeed, in strange enough contrast to the cheerful sweetness of her voice. All the lines of her figure were modelled with a perfect grace that must, I thought, make every movement like music. Her hair, rippling crisply above her thoughtful brow, was touched with silver in broad lights, like the light that edged the ripples of the river where the tree shadows were broken overhead. And there were lines in her face that told of pain and watchfulness in the past—at least, I fancied so—taking everything in at a glance, as it were, and dazed with that strange, unaccountable feeling of having gone through exactly the same thing before, which most of us have experienced at one time or other, and of which no acceptable explanation has ever been offered by mortal man.

Just as I stepped up the slow incline of the grass-grown road, which led to the garden-gate, the man turned slightly towards his companion, laying his hand upon her arm.

"Margaret," he said, "show it to me. I can feel that it is beautiful."

I was close at the gate, but a charming gesture stopped me—a slight, imperious movement of the fair, shapely hand, a look from the gentle eyes, that seemed to take me into her confidence at once.

"He must be humoured. Stay a moment," that was what the look said.

I stood still, bareheaded. I was careful not to let the latch click.

She had two listeners instead of one—that was all.

There is nothing particularly novel in the expression, "word-painting." Every slave of the pen hears it often enough—often hears it used derisively. Nevertheless, word-painting is an art. It aims at bringing before the "mind's eye" in vivid and realistic colours that which the actual eye cannot see; and never had I realised to what perfection the art might be carried, until I stood before the gate of Orchard Farm in the early summer sunshine and listened to M. R.—for I was sure of her identity from the first—painting the morning landscape in its brightness and its beauty.

Nor did the story lose in the telling by the voice in which it was told. Sweet, low, yet full, were the accents that came to me across the lavender blossoms; all that Shakespeare himself could have wished for in woman. The man's dark, sightless orbs were meanwhile turned upon the speaker, so that, relieved against the grey of her simple gown, I could note the finely cut profile; the clustering, crested hair; the sweeping moustache beneath which, somehow, one recognised the sweetness and pathos of the mouth.

If this was my landlord, then I knew that I stood in the presence of an equal. If the woman by his side was M. R., then I knew that I had rightly divined her to be a gentlewoman—in every best sense and meaning of which that significant old-fashioned word is capable.

"Malcolm," she said, "this is our new lodger—Mr. Allardyce."

He rose from his place and stood there facing me in the sunshine—a strange, pathetic figure, blighted and blasted in the very noon-tide and hey-day of his manhood.

His hand, long, fine, pallid with the enforced inaction to which his affliction bound him, was stretched out towards me, and I, acting on an impulse as irresistible as prompt, met and grasped it with mine.

"We are glad to see you," he said. "You have a lovely day for your first amongst us."

"We are glad to see you." The words struck me strangely.

"She is there, 'the very eyes of him,'"

I thought. "Through her, he sees the world."

As I turned to his companion and shook hands with her in turn, I met her sad, sweet, grateful look, which in a moment struck a chord of sympathy between us; a chord that never in the future knew a note of discord. Now that I was nearer to "Margaret"—I knew her by no more definite name so far—I saw that she was a much older woman than I had at first sight supposed, but had preserved the essence of youthfulness by some subtle power within herself. Later on I learnt that this power was the intensity of love with which she had merged her own personality in that of another—the husband to whom she was light, life, everything. We three moved on towards the house, where through the open window my breakfast showed temptingly; M. R. toying with a bundle of lavender spears that she had gathered and set in her waist-belt. Under her touch they gave out more generously their pungent perfume; and so, for ever and ever, this holiday jaunt of mine came to be thought of, and remembered by me as "Among the Lavender."

"Considering my blindness, I can distinguish where people are pretty well," said he of the old shooting-coat. "You see I found out your whereabouts by the sound of your steps, even on the grass."

This outspoken reference to his condition surprised me. I, whose work in life is to write fluently, and therefore ought to be, to some extent, at all events, ready of speech, was dumb!

The whole thing seemed so sad, and had come upon me so unexpectedly.

"Mr. Ruthven rather prides himself upon his achievements, you see," said M. R., whom I now knew for Mrs. Ruthven, and she smiled; but I have seen tears less sad. I think she saw my trouble, and, recognising that it was for her husband's sake, accepted it as a pleasant gift. At least, that was what her eyes seemed to flash to mine across those sightless ones. But what she said was this:

"You will like to know about the fishing, will you not?"

I assented; and then with a grave bow, she led her blind husband into a room on the other side of the passage to mine.

Seated at my solitary breakfast-table, I was more ready to ponder on what I had heard and seen, than to eat.

There was so much pathos to me in that

old shooting-coat! It was a shooting-coat. No man who loves his gun can mistake a garment of that kind. So it had not been so very long since that this man Ruthven—some years younger than myself, as I have said, even now—had been hale and strong, and able to follow manly sports and pastimes. Perhaps he loved the touch of the old brown-ribbed velveteen, because it called to his mind those days of light and liberty.

On his hand I had noticed a ring, a plainly set deep red cornelian, and a strange fancy took me—born, no doubt, of my story-weaving trade—that it was like a drop of his very heart's blood, shed like a tear distilled by bitterest pain. I am sure the rosy-faced maid who brought in my rasher and toast thought I was a very bad case indeed, and should need whole gallons of milk "warm from the cow," before I began to "look up," like the other interesting lodgers at Orchard Farm had done!

Later in the day I found that in the quaint, old-world garden which appertained to Mr. and Mrs. Ruthven's abode, were two apple-trees, and betwixt their gnarled boles, a hammock, swaying gently in the gentle breeze. Extended in this sylvan nest, I watched my cigarette smoke steal up among the branches; counted the apples just beginning to grow rosy on one round cheek; listened to the hum of the bees in the tall hollyhocks hard by; struggled to discipline my thoughts, so that they should not go straying after "making copy" out of my surroundings—which, however, it is to be seen now they did—and finally sent myself off to sleep with my own castle-building.

The sudden laugh and chuckle of a thrush in a cherry-tree, just behind my head, woke me, and for a moment I was puzzled to know my own whereabouts, and why, on awakening from slumber, I had such a very prominent view of my own crimson socks and low shoes, and why I felt as if I had been trying to stand on my head in my sleep.

Orchard Farm, a white hand with a blood-stone ring, the ripple of the river—all these things crowded into my mind, jostling one another. Next came the thought: "How loud the bees hum in the country!" But surely it was one gigantic bee I heard monotonously crooning, or a whole hive, or a human voice, "soft and low," reading aloud.

I was up and out of my eerie in a moment, and with but small politeness, it must be

admitted, had made my way to a wide, low open window, or rather casement, set back on its hasp, so that prying roses peeped into the room beyond.

And what was there was truly well worth the seeing. Malcolm Ruthven—I cannot speak of him by any more formal name, he has now been held so long in my memory as simply Malcolm Ruthven—sat, or rather lay back in a low, lounging chair, his hands folded above his shapely head, the blood-red ring showing against the white interlaced fingers. Close beside him sat his wife. The concentrated light from the casement glittered on the whitening braids of her hair. I had not thought it was so grey before. Her dark, pathetic brows were slightly knit as she read; read, as she had “word-painted” the birth of the day for the eyes that could not see; read as one is seldom privileged to hear any one read. The great, low window was open widely. I could not lurk unseen. I saw the blind man stir uneasily; my step already had betrayed me. I grew bold, impudent, brazen-faced.

I seated myself on the broad stone ledge of the casement.

“Mrs. Ruthven, may I listen too?”

She looked up and smiled through the sheen of tears that brightened her eyes.

“Margaret will not mind having two listeners instead of one,” said her husband, speaking for her.

So she read, while he and I listened, the story of the “old, old fashion, death”—the story of the death of Paul Dombey.

But the scent of the lavender was everywhere, and the sweet bird-voices twittered in the leafy cover; and these, with the blue, cloudless dome above, and Heaven’s blest sunshine over all, spoke, even to my world-hardened heart, of “that older fashion yet of immortality!”

A CELEBRITY OF THE PALAIS ROYAL.

At the southern extremity of the Galerie d’Orléans, immediately facing the inner court of the Palais Royal, is a shop before which the Parisian loungee, if an adept in the noble science of gastronomy, is apt to pause and inspect the contents of the well-stocked windows with reverential admiration. There, according to the season, are displayed the earliest “primeurs” of every description, tastefully and symmetrically

arranged to attract the passer-by, and diffusing through the open door an aroma so deliciously seductive, that even the most rigid anchorite could hardly fail to succumb to the temptation. The finest truffled turkeys, the plumpest ortolans, the most delicately flavoured hams from Westphalia and Bayonne, Périgord and Strasburg pies, bundles of gigantic asparagus, peaches from Montreuil and “chasselas” from Fontainebleau, every conceivable dainty prized by the epicure is there in lavish profusion, the quality of each separate item being guaranteed by the name of the purveyor, the world-renowned Chevet.

It is not, however, with the present establishment, which is still presided over by members of the same apparently inexhaustible family, that we have to do; but with its original founder, a man of singular perseverance and energy, some curious and little known details of whose career, dating as far back as the close of the last century, may not be considered uninteresting.

A year or two before the outbreak of the revolution of 1789, there lived at Bagnolet, a village near St. Denis, a gardener or rather florist named Chevet, whose particular specialty was the cultivation of roses, a branch of horticultural science which was brought by him to a high state of perfection. Among many other varieties, he succeeded in first introducing to the notice of floral amateurs the “rose du roi,” a specimen of which, thanks to the patronage of the Princess de Lamballe, he obtained permission to offer to Marie Antoinette at Versailles. He soon became the recognised florist of the Court, one of his happiest discoveries being a tiny rose of such delicate odour as to be worn exclusively by Madame de Lamballe, on whose nervous system strong perfumes had a singular irritating effect, and from whom the flower received the name it still bears—“La Chevette.”

In the enjoyment of this uncontested monopoly, the horticulturist of Bagnolet took little heed of the growing symptoms of popular discontent, and pursued the even tenour of his way as unconscious of the impending danger as were his patronesses themselves. From this dream of security, however, he was rudely awakened by the expedition to Versailles and the massacre of the “gardes du corps” on the fatal tenth of August, 1792, which events were followed by the compulsory installation of the royal family at the Tuileries.

Then came the tidings of the flight to Varennes and its disastrous result, and finally the Temple, where, in spite of the watchfulness of the gaolers, a stray rose, the poor gardener's tribute of respectful sympathy, occasionally found its way into the hands of the Queen. But not for long; denounced on suspicion of secretly communicating with the prisoners, Chevet was arrested and brought before the Commissary of the "Section," who fortunately was in a lenient humour.

"Thy name?" he began.

"Chevet."

"Rose-grower at Bagnolet?"

"The same, citizen Commissary."

"Inventor of a rose called 'la chevette,' and cultivated expressly for aristocrats?"

"For any one who chooses to purchase it," replied the accused, trembling in every limb.

"In other words," sternly remarked the Commissary, "for those who live in luxury while the poor are starving. So heinous an offence deserves a short shrift and the guillotine; but I will spare thy life on one condition. Listen. The people want no roses; they want food; and it is thy duty, as a good patriot, to supply them with it. Go home, root up thy roses, and plant potatoes in their place; and mark me, if in twenty-four hours, a single rose-tree is left standing in thy garden, thy head shall answer for it. Go!"

Greatly relieved at being let off so easily, but not a little dismayed while reflecting on the precariousness of his future means of subsistence, Chevet returned to Bagnolet, and, with a heavy heart, began the work of devastation which had been so arbitrarily imposed on him. Before the twenty-four hours had expired, the once blooming parterre had become a waste, strewed with the relics of his favourite plants, soon to be replaced by the nutritious, but comparatively unprofitable esculent, originally introduced into France by the philanthropic Parmentier.

The ex-rose grower, however, was active and energetic, and by no means inclined to indulge in fruitless lamentations. In due course of time his potato field, supplemented by a variety of other vegetables, was so productive that he hired a stall in the vicinity of the Palais Royal, where he personally dispensed the supplies which arrived every morning from his kitchen garden. One of the neighbouring shopkeepers, happening to be a flour merchant, Chevet conceived the idea of utilising his culinary

instincts, and adding to the profits of his business, by the confection of certain delicately-flavoured and succulent patties, which—such dainties being rarely either seen or heard of in those troublous times—speedily procured him a host of customers, and commanded a ready sale.

Unfortunately, the success of this new specialty excited the jealousy of his fellow-tradesmen; and one of these having secretly informed against him as "encouraging the spread of luxury and extravagance," he was again arrested, and brought before the same Commissary, who had previously examined him.

"Decidedly, thou art incorrigible," said that functionary, with a menacing frown.

"How so, citizen Commissary?" faltered Chevet, who had not the least idea of what he was accused.

"Have I not already told thee that in the eyes of every good citizen all superfluities are criminal? Roses for aristocrats and luxurious tid-bits for gourmands are alike an insult to the necessities of the poor, who want bread and nothing else. I warn thee for the last time, another offence against the Republic, and le père Sanson will tell thee the rest!"

Once more reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence, Chevet, who had a large family dependent on his exertions, almost despaired of improving his position, and it needed all his courage to enable him to support this unexpected reverse of fortune. But better days were at hand. The downfall of Robespierre, and the consequent termination of the Reign of Terror, suddenly changed the aspect of affairs. The Parisians, relieved from the tyranny which had so long oppressed them, with one accord eagerly welcomed the advent of a new era, and soon forgot their past tribulations in the delirious excitement of uncontrolled liberty. Money, which had been jealously hoarded during the Terror, now circulated freely; pleasure, under the auspices of Joséphine Beauharnais and the fascinating Madame Tallien, resumed its sway; and the reign of the "muscadins" began. Chevet was not the last to profit by the change. No longer apprehensive of any interference on the part of the authorities, he devoted himself heart and soul to a patient study of the culinary art, and having succeeded in disposing advantageously of his little property at Bagnolet, opened a small shop not far removed from the site of the present emporium in the

Palais Royal. There he gradually acquired the reputation of an intelligent and capable "chef;" and, being patronised by such noted epicures as Cambacérés, d'Aigrefeuille, and Brillat Savarin, became a recognised authority in gastronomic matters; and before his death, which took place some years later at a good old age, he had the satisfaction of founding the establishment which still bears his name, and which has been presided over by a long line of descendants for almost a century. One of these, a worthy inheritor of the ancestral talent, and the chief representative of the family, towards the commencement of the Third Empire, had been educated at the college of Sainte-Barbe, the old pupils of which institution were in the habit of meeting each other once a year at dinner in memory of their scholastic days. Chevet was a regular attendant at this annual banquet, and on one occasion arrived with a singularly shaped bottle under his arm, which he deposited very carefully on a side-table.

"What have you there?" enquired the President of the Society.

"Wait till dessert, and you will see," replied Chevet, with a mysterious air. "A little surprise which, I think, will not be disagreeable to any one here."

During the repast, the "chef" succeeded in baffling the curiosity of his colleagues by a persistent silence; but at its close he rose from his chair, and handling the bottle as delicately as if it had been a new-born infant, placed it on the table before him, and reverently uncorked it.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "before you taste its contents, I will tell you how this bottle came into my possession, at the risk of betraying a secret which, I am afraid, is not very creditable to me. You may, perhaps, remember that after the death a few years ago of the Marquis d'Aligre, the richest and most miserly nobleman in France, all his effects, including his wines, were sold by auction. Well, I was aware that, among other extraordinary varieties, his cellars contained some two or three dozen of the finest Tokay, a present from a Hungarian magnate, which would necessarily figure in the sale. This nectar I resolved, if possible, to secure for myself as an invaluable adjunct to certain grand dinners which I was occasionally called upon to supply, and I laid my plans accordingly.

"When the day appointed for the sale arrived, as I was known to be a fairish

judge of wine, I had no difficulty in obtaining a seat near the auctioneer, and awaited the announcement of 'Lot 72,' with not a little anxiety. The fabulous prices realised by the Château Lafitte, Clos Vougeot, and other important vintages, and the presence of more than one redoubtable connoisseur, made me tremble for the success of my project, and I inwardly shivered as the possibility of failure suggested itself to me.

"At length 'Lot 72,' consisting of thirty-four bottles of Tokay, was put up by the auctioneer, and a sample produced, the first glass of which I managed to secure. Lifting it to my lips and taking a sip of the contents, I made a horrible grimace, and, setting down the glass in well-feigned disgust, declared that the so-called Tokay was not wine, but vinegar. Fortunately for me, after so decided an expression of opinion, no one ventured to question its accuracy, or intimated the slightest wish to follow my example, so that the entire lot was eventually knocked down at a mere nominal price to a confederate of my own. I must confess that I had some scruples of conscience when the precious cargo was safe under lock and key in my cellar; but, reflecting that the Marquis's heirs were entitled to divide no less than twenty millions of francs between them, I considered they were not very much to be pitied, and began to regard my offence as comparatively venial.

"This," added Chevet, pointing to the bottle, "is one of the last dozen, and when you have tasted the ambrosial liquid it contains, I think you will own that, however irregular my mode of proceeding may have been, the temptation was irresistible!"

On this head the verdict was unanimous, and his colleagues of Sainte-Barbe, with one accord, admitted the existence of "extenuating circumstances;" only suggesting that in order to give them an opportunity of confirming their favourable judgement, it would be advisable, on the next anniversary, to produce another bottle of Monsieur d'Aligre's Tokay.

The same Chevet counted among his constant patrons more than one Imperial official, possessing no "cordon bleu" of his own, and therefore obliged to depend on the establishment of the Palais Royal for the state dinners which, in virtue of his position, he was occasionally under the necessity of giving.

At one of these a ludicrous incident oc-

curred, the cause of which will be explained hereafter. The table was laid for twenty-six persons, all of whom were present, and the soup was served. By some apparent miscalculation, however, when eighteen of the guests had been helped—the last two or three very sparingly—the supply ceased altogether, and the remainder were forced to console themselves with the regulation glass of Madeira. Then came a magnificent turbot, to which those who had had no soup were helped first; but long before it had made the round of the table, not a morsel was left on the dish, and nearly a third of the party were as hungry as when they sat down. The same unsatisfactory process continued during the whole of the banquet—every fresh course was impatiently awaited, and with a similar result; and finally, when the dessert was handed round, one of the most influential personages considered himself fortunate in securing a toothpick.

Naturally enough, this Barmecide entertainment was by no means charitably commented on, the entire blame, of course, falling to the share of the Amphitryon, who, poor man, was even more perplexed and annoyed by it than any of his guests. His wife, however, a lady of some personal attractions, and desirous of displaying them to the best advantage, was the real culprit, the deficit in the supplies, as it afterwards appeared on enquiry, being wholly attributable to what she doubtless considered a perfectly justifiable stroke of feminine diplomacy. Her pin-money not sufficing for her requirements, she had conceived the ingenious idea of supplementing it by the appropriation of a tolerably large percentage on the sum allowed by her husband for the expenses of the evening; and, in order to avoid taking any member of the household into her confidence, went herself to Chevet, and directed a dinner to be prepared, not for the twenty-six persons invited, but only for fourteen.

"It will be rather hard," she thought, "on gourmands like Monsieur So and So; but, after all, what does it signify? My dressmaker's bill is of more importance than a ministerial *corvée*!"

When Chevet heard what had happened, he was inconsolable.

"Another such mishap," he exclaimed, with a tragic emphasis worthy of Vatel, "and my name is dishonoured! Her Excellency may provide herself elsewhere in future; I work for her no more!"

And he kept his word.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a dull and stormy night, when the pale young moon could only occasionally struggle forth from the clouds heaped around and over her, to cast a faint watery light on a stormy sea and a wind-swept coast. The "Belle Armande" was ready to sail. Her crew—who had been idling about Orkney for the last two months, joining in the fishing occasionally by way of work, and saying gallant things in broken English to shy or giggling peasant girls by way of amusement—had collected once more at Stromness, prepared to start at day-break. Gaspard Harache had decided to return to Havre in the vessel he had helped to repair, and meant to go on board at midnight. The Captain wondered why the young ship-builder could not come aboard at a more reasonable hour, and pass the night on the vessel; also why the boat which was to bring him from the shore was to wait for him at a lonely point on the left side of the bay, instead of at the pier belonging to the Masons' Arms, the hotel where he had lodged; but he complied with Gaspard's wishes, and, perhaps, made a shrewder guess at the reason of them than he cared to show.

The fitful moonlight fell on the stones of Stennis, bringing now one and now another into momentary prominence, while the rest of the circle stood robed in the darkness of the night as in a black mantle. Now a sudden gleam fell on the great altar stone in the centre, revealing two figures standing with clasped hands before it. Gaspard's dark eyes were gleaming, and, perhaps, there was more excitement shown in his close, nervous grasp of her hand than in Thora's trembling. She was afraid, indeed; but her fear held no regret for the peaceful life she was leaving, no doubt as to the happiness of the future, only anxiety lest her flight should be discovered before her escape was secure.

"I swear before Odin and the gods of my fathers that I take Gaspard Harache for my husband, and will love and obey him as is a wife's duty," said the girl.

"I swear before Odin and the gods of my fathers that I take Thora Sweynson for my wife, and will love and cherish her as is a husband's duty," returned Gaspard,

and, his mind reverting unconsciously to the habit of bygone days, when the customs of his creed had more hold on him than now, he lifted his hand and made the sign of the cross. Thora caught his arm. "You must not do that," she said, "or Odin will not bless our troth-plight. He does not love the cross."

"You believe in Odin, then, Thora?"

"Of course I do. He is not so powerful as he used to be; but he is still strong, and he fights against Christ. When God will not help them people pray to Odin, and he aids them from hatred to the White Christ. Do not you believe in him, Gaspard?"

"Ma chérie, I believe in whatever gods you worship," replied Gaspard, as he led her away; but in his heart he said: "If I believed anything I should say that we had called on the devil to bless our marriage."

Over the rough, heathery ground they went—stumbling sometimes in the darkness, uncertain whither their steps led them, doubting if they would ever reach the high-road—Thora thinking at every sound that she was pursued, Gaspard beginning to feel something of a bridegroom's triumph. Not till they were on board the "Belle Armande" did Thora feel herself safe; but when the anchor was raised and the ship sailed out of Stromness Bay in the grey, gusty morning, she knew that her longing was to be satisfied—she was on her way to France.

Every mile that they sailed to the southward was a delight to Thora—it took her farther from Orkney. She was in high spirits, picturing the old minister's grief when he found her gone, and laughing as she thought of the fruitless search he would undertake, and the anger he would feel when he discovered the truth. Her merriment jarred a little—ever so little—on Gaspard, who could not help feeling that his conduct had been less than honourable towards the old man who, against his better judgement, had favoured his suit so long as it was feasible, and whose final refusal had been so sympathetically uttered and had been founded on such good grounds; and he wondered a little that Thora felt no regret at giving pain to one who had shown her a kindness to which she had no claim. Besides, the interview with his mother, which every hour made more imminent—when he should beseech her, by her love for him, to receive Thora as his wife—was depressing Gaspard, and

made him take unkindly to mirth of any sort.

With any one else he would have been irritable; but, even when her words pleased him least, one glance at Thora's face—at the blue eyes, grown darker and brighter with happiness, at the golden hair which the wind had disarranged into tiny ringlets round her brow, at the delicate features and dainty colouring—was enough to make him forget all vexations for the moment, and to fill him with a passionate pride that this loveliness was his for ever.

"I would that there could be no darkness," he murmured, "that I might for ever gaze upon your beauty. Shall I ever be able to gaze long enough at your face to satisfy myself?"

Yes, Gaspard, you will; and before many months are past. There never yet was face or form so lovely that, if the soul within was not worthy of its casket, could chain a man's fancy for a lifetime!

At last the French coast came in sight; and early one bright day the "Belle Armande" entered the harbour of le Havre. Thora was all excitement and curiosity. The numerous ships; the busy quay; the voices chattering in a vivacious, unknown tongue—there were a hundred things to attract her on each side, and she called Gaspard's attention to one and another, till at last she noticed how he was growing momentarily more and more gloomy.

"What is the matter, Gaspard?" she asked.

"I am thinking of my mother," he replied.

"What does it matter about your mother?" she exclaimed, laughing rather shrilly. "She may be angry for a time, but she must give in soon if she wishes to see anything of her son. You are mine, now, not hers; and, unless she is civil to me, she will not have much opportunity of being kind to you. Why should you mind offending her?"

"My child, if it were not that you do not remember a mother's love, you would understand how bitter a pain it is to grieve one's mother," answered Gaspard, gravely. "Moreover, you do not understand all; she has more power than you think."

He left Thora at an hotel while he went home. His arrival was unexpected, for he had not written to his family since receiving his mother's letter refusing consent to his marriage; but all the more did his return seem a thing to rejoice over, and Madame Harache, with Barbe and Lucie, clung to

him, weeping with gladness at seeing him again, and mingling scraps of home news with questions about his experiences of foreign parts. Sweet as all this affection was to the young man, his heart grew more and more sad as he responded to it, knowing, as he did, that his marriage with Thora Sweynson would anger his mother, and might result in alienating his sisters from him. He felt that he must steel himself against it at once, for already he was conscious that home-ties were assuming a dominance over him that was a disloyalty to Thora.

"Ma mère," he said, breaking in upon the happy chatter, "it will give me much pleasure to tell you and my sisters of all my adventures afterwards; but at present there is a subject which I wish to discuss with you."

The grave tone, the formal words, put Madame Harache on the alert at once. Her face grew hard and stern as she bade Barbe and Lucie, who were bewildered at their brother's request, go into another room.

"Well, my son, what is it you have to say?" she asked, when they were alone.

"I wish to speak to you of the young lady whom I told you I wished to marry—Thora Sweynson."

"I have already given my answer to the very absurd request which you addressed to me. There is no more to be said on the subject. I trust that you now see the wisdom of my decision."

"I do not see it."

"That is a pity; but you will do so soon."

"I think not. I hope not; for her happiness must depend on the continuance of my love."

"Indeed! You flatter yourself, I think," said Madame Harache, ironically. "A girl is ready to love any man who loves her; perhaps the young person you speak of has already found a successor to you."

Gaspard took no notice of the interruption. "For my sake," he went on, "she has left her home, her friends, her country. She has come to a land where she knows no one, where she can speak only a few words of the language, and where her future welfare depends entirely on you."

"I do not understand you, Gaspard," answered his mother, coldly, turning her head away from the pleading look in his earnest eyes. "If what you tell me be true, I am greatly shocked at your conduct.

One does not expect young men to be angels, that is understood; but I did not think you would have persuaded an ignorant, and possibly hitherto innocent girl, to leave her home with you. I am grieved, disappointed in you. One should always respect innocence, even in a barbarian; but I do not see how anything I can do or say can affect her fate. Of her own free will she has chosen degradation; and she must abide by her choice. It is sad; but it is inevitable."

"Mother, do not talk of degradation in connection with her. She is as innocent and honourable as yourself; she is conscious of no shame in her love for me; she is as deserving of respect as my sisters."

"It is possible," Madame Harache admitted in her cold, ironic voice. "One reads of such characters in novels. Perhaps it is possible that a woman whose life seems to be one long infamy, may be an angel in the disguise of a devil. The novelists may be right; but I do not understand such people. I understand only the laws of society, which ordain that a woman who lives with a man to whom she is not married, cannot be received by respectable people."

Gaspard had been patient hitherto, hoping to win his point more by pleading than by anger; but the cool, business-like way in which Madame Harache settled Thora's future position roused him to protest.

"Do not speak of Thora as if she were one of those women," he cried; "do not dare to suggest that she has committed a sin. She is my wife. I love and honour her with all my heart."

His mother showed no sign of anger at his words. She smiled, but her smile was not pleasant to see. "You are vehement, and inaccurate, mon fils," she answered, quietly. "You say that this young girl is your wife. According to the laws of what country are you married to her—France or England?"

"According to the custom of her own islands."

"Indeed. Is that custom—I perceive that you do not say law—recognised as legal in any other country? Are its obligations binding on a French subject?"

"That does not matter; I hold them to be binding upon me."

"It matters a great deal; the legality of your marriage depends on it. But I need ask no more questions. I know, and so do you, that any form of marriage you may

have gone through is worth nothing without my consent, you being a Frenchman and subject to the laws of your country. That consent you will never gain. This woman, therefore, is not your wife, and my answer to your request is that I cannot take any notice of the existence of your mistress."

Gaspard started to his feet.

"Mother, you cannot mean me to take this as your answer!" he exclaimed. "Have you no pity on a young girl, innocent and trusting, sinless in intention as any bride who ever went to the altar! Will you take advantage of a cruel and unjust law to bring down upon her the penalties of a sin she has not committed? You are a woman yourself, and know that to a woman reputation is more than life. Will you then be guilty of a crime more heinous than murder? Absolute power is in your hands; use it to do justice, not to wrong an innocent woman. Accept Thora as my wife; believe me, no other than she shall ever bear that title. For the sake of the womanhood you share with her you cannot refuse my prayer."

"For your sake, because I love you and desire your welfare, I can and do refuse it," she replied. "You have a boy's passion for a pretty face, and you forget that marriage is for a lifetime, and that beauty will not provide the comfort of your whole life. I remember these things, and save you from the consequences of your folly. A year hence, when you are tired of your belle sauvage, you will thank me for saving your whole career from a folly that would have ruined it."

"I will never thank you for letting dishonour rest on the head of the woman I love."

Madame Harache only laughed, and made no direct answer.

"Youth is so certain, age so distrustful of everything—especially of the assurances of youth," she said, more to herself than to him.

Gaspard waited, thinking she would speak to him again; hoping, against all

reason, that she would yield at last. But Madame Harache sat silent and calm, as if only the most trivial matters had been discussed and she had been rather bored by them. Only, she did not look at her son, but turned her chair so that she could keep her eyes fixed on the window, as if something she saw in the street was what interested her most.

The pause had become almost unendurable to both, even to Madame Harache, although she gave no sign of the nervous strain she was undergoing, when Gaspard spoke.

"Madame," he said, striving vainly to keep his voice calm, "I have heard from you words which, from any woman, would have grieved me; when my mother utters them I cannot but feel ashamed that her blood is in my veins. Henceforth I consider myself free from the duty of a son, and devote myself entirely to my wife. Adieu."

He waited a few moments longer; but as Madame Harache neither spoke nor moved, at last he left the room. She started then, and, rising from her seat, she took a step or two as if to call him back. But she restrained herself. "Let him go to-day," she said to herself. "If I were to call him back now, I might yield to his foolish prayer. Some day he will return of his own accord, and thank me for what I have done."

NOTICE.

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE other half of a great love is a great humility. Great love knows nothing of self-seeking, self-justification, nor of that miserable plea which little love is so apt to set up, "half my transgression must lie at your door."

Madge's love for Lance, measured by her humility, must have been great indeed. No word of self-justification, from first to last, ever escaped her lips. Not once did she set up, as she very well might have done, the plea "I did it for Lance." In good truth she felt she had done so badly for the man she loved, that the less she said about it the better. Even what she had purposed she had failed to perform, either through too little courage, or too much conscience. She had put out her hand, as it were, to stop the wheels of fate—with this only result, that her fingers had been crushed in her weak endeavour.

For a day or two she kept her room, dispensing, however, with the doctor's attendance and seeing not a soul but her maid. When she once more joined the family circle she looked literally the ghost of her old bright self. She had never learned the art of the economy of the emotions, and sooner or later her sensitive, passionate nature seemed bound to wear out the slight frame that held it. Sir Peter stood looking at her aghast as she sat under multitudinous wraps shivering beside a huge fire. Her voice, too, as she answered his greeting, thrilled him as the touch of a dead hand might; it was cold,

tuneless, far-away, the sort of voice that one lying at the gates of death, and only saved by a miracle from passing through them, might be supposed to bring back to life with him.

Sir Peter fussed a good deal over her that day, suggested all sorts of plans for bringing back the roses to her cheeks, ran over a list of German Bads and Swiss Spas as desirable places for her to winter in. Madge listened to him quietly.

"I have made up my mind where to go," she answered, "it will be to Seville—I hope to get away next week."

Sir Peter was all astonishment; his questions came in a string.

Madge put them on one side, unanswered. It would have been difficult to make him see, in the fact of there being at Seville a convent ruled by an Abbess with whom Madge had some slight acquaintance, a sufficient reason for her choice of that city as a place of abode. Yet such was the case. In that convent Madge saw a refuge from the terrors of her conscience, which conjured out of every dark corner the face or the form of the woman she believed she had driven to her death. Atonement for this was denied her; but penance still lay in her power, and penance she eagerly grasped at, even though it might involve the necessity of the abandonment of the faith of her childhood.

This Spanish convent was one of the strictest of its order, and Madge knew well enough what rigorous discipline would be included in a life of penitence within its walls. But what matter, if it did hurry her a little faster out of the world than she felt herself going already? Her purpose was fixed, never again in this life to meet the look of Lance's wrathful eyes. The greatest kindness she could confer on

him, and on all her friends, now, it seemed to her, would be, without any fuss of leaving, to creep quietly out of life. And if, as she made her way towards the dark valley, she could lose the sense of that pursuing shape which filled her days with terror and rendered her nights so many waking nightmares, she would feel that Heaven had bestowed a blessing upon her such as she had no right to demand.

Madge did something else besides expedite her departure for Spain—she sent for a lawyer from Carstairs and gave to him full instructions for the making of a will which assigned to Lance the whole of the property she had a right to leave away from the Cohen family.

Sir Peter had to be let into the secret of this will, in order that his consent to act as executor to it might be obtained.

He fussed a good deal over the affair, there seemed a gloom and a mystery about Madge's doings just then, which acted like a douche of cold water on the bright little fire of hope, which he was perpetually trying to stir into a flame. It was not easy for him to discard his lifelong habit of looking at the cheerful side of things; at the same time, he was bound to admit that there seemed little enough just then upon which to build his cheerfulness.

Wet, wintry weather set in; and the old gentleman felt that little by little his cheerfulness was, as it were, slipping through his fingers.

"If I could but smoke, it would be something to do," he sighed, looking out drearily from successive windows at the dismal landscape of mountains, half-hidden in mist, leaden sky pouring down rain in sheets, woods already half-stripped of their foliage.

He furtively repeated his juvenile efforts to master the mysteries of tobacco; was compelled to abandon them for reasons which had obtained in his youthful days; and was driven to find other outlets for his energies.

He went about the house ordering big fires to be made wherever there chanced to be a vacant fireplace; sent for a man from Carstairs, and another from Edinburgh, to supply him with plans for increasing the heating apparatus of the corridors and larger rooms. Lady Judith, debarred from her outdoor pastoral amusements, added not a little to his discomfiture by generally superintending his occupations. She complained loudly of the extra

warmth he was putting into the house, armed herself with a huge fire-screen in lieu of a fan, and informed everybody on every possible opportunity that she "suffered so from the heat."

The letter received from Lance, written in a railway-carriage on his way to Marseilles, did not mend matters. Madge's name was not so much as mentioned in it; in fact, it seemed written for the whole and sole purpose of saying that he had forgotten to say what a rascal Stubbs was, and that he hoped Sir Peter would get rid of him as soon as possible; the man he was certain had been playing a double game, and he would "stake his life"—these were Lance's words—"that there was no foundation, in fact, for the evil suspicion he had chosen to fasten upon a young lady who was an utter stranger to him."

Lance in this letter said not a word as to his plans, so Sir Peter naturally concluded that they remained unaltered. A second letter, however, which arrived two days after—when they imagined him to be tossing about on the Mediterranean—showed that these plans had been completely reversed. It was a hasty line, written in pencil, during the railway journey back from Marseilles. In it Lance explained the reason for this return journey. The conviction of Stubbs's rascality had been gradually gaining ground in his mind, he said, and now had taken such hold of him, that, before setting off for Corsica, he thought it wiser to run over to Liverpool and thoroughly test the man's statements as to what had taken place there. He would himself see and question the local authorities, whose names Stubbs had used so freely; and he could now only wonder over his own and Sir Peter's simplicity in not having adopted such a course before.

It was possible that Stubbs's elaborate accounts of his interview with the municipal and cemetery authorities at Liverpool might be equally unworthy of belief; no one had been at pains to verify them.

As for the empty purse; the envelope with the name, Jane Shore, upon it; and the handkerchief, any one might produce the two first and assign them to any one he pleased; and the last, the handkerchief, could be easily obtainable by a man who would hunt through waste-paper baskets, and listen at keyholes.

If in any way, he added, he found his

suspicious of Stubbs verified, he would at once place the matter in the hands of the police. He supposed Sir Peter would have no objection to his doing this. In conclusion, he gave an address to which letters might be sent, and begged Sir Peter to consider his communication as strictly confidential, "for," he added, "if the rascal gets an idea that he is suspected, no doubt he will be off at once."

Sir Peter felt his head go round. The man he had trusted with his private correspondence, his cash-book, his cheque-book, to turn out a rascal! In his heart, the old gentleman did not object to a spice of roguery in his protégés—it added, so to speak, a piquancy to the exercise of his benevolence. This that Lance charged Stubbs with, however, was downright villainy, which, instead of adding piquancy to his benevolence, took the flavour out of it altogether.

It seemed past belief, yet it was not easy to shake off the impression which Lance's strongly-expressed opinions had made upon him. It was altogether bewildering. The worst part was having to keep the whole thing a secret. He would do his best; but still, if it should ooze out that his faith in his late secretary had had a severe shock—well, he dared say no very great harm would be done after all.

He could not resist the temptation of hinting to Madge that possibly it might be as well to reconsider the appointment of Stubbs to the land-stewardship at Redesdale.

Madge turned away wearily from the subject.

"The lawyers will see after that," she said. "Let him go. I don't want even to think of him."

In good truth to her—with the thoughts she had in her heart at that moment—Stubbs and his rascality seemed to be of colossal insignificance.

It may reasonably be doubted whether Sir Peter's power of keeping a secret would have stood the strain put upon it had not a second letter arrived which, for the moment, threw Lance's communication into the shade.

It was received two days before the day which Madge had fixed for her departure to the South. She had spent the morning with Sir Peter at his writing-table, going through various matters connected with her Durham property, in the management of which Sir Peter had promised to be her representative during her absence.

"Of course, my dear, I'll do my best in your affairs," he said, "but my hands, as you know, are very full just now!"

They were literally very full at the moment with the unopened letters which the morning's post had brought him.

To emphasize his statement, he began breaking seals and opening envelopes very fast, keeping up a light flow of talk as he did so.

"Better open this first," he soliloquised, fingering a black-edged envelope; "dare say it's from a widow with six or seven children, whom she wants to place out in life or get into schools."

Madge, looking down on the envelope which he threw on the table, recognised the handwriting of the Rev. Joshua Parker.

"Eh! What's this?" cried Sir Peter, dropping his letter and turning a startled, white face towards Madge. "Read it, my dear, read it—I don't seem able to take it in."

Madge picked up the letter and read a few short lines from the Rev. Joshua Parker, enclosing, with many regrets, a letter which the Australian mail had just brought to him. It was from the Wesleyan minister who had succeeded him in his charge at Rutland Bay, and after a brief preamble on the duty of resignation to the will of Heaven, told the sad news of the death of Gervase Critchett, of colonial fever, within a month of the departure of the Rev. Joshua Parker from the colony. Full details, the writer stated, would be sent by the next mail.

Sir Peter rubbed his forehead. "I'm all in a maze," he said; "I get a nephew one mail, I lose him the next! I can't realise it, eh, Madge."

Madge said nothing. She realised it sharply enough, and with it realised something else also, that all her careful thought for Lance, her plotting and subterfuges, had been after all but so much winnowing of the wind and ploughing of the ocean.

CONFESSIONS OF AN EXTENSION LECTURER.

"WOULD you like to extend?" said Jones of Saint Boniface, as he rushed into my rooms one morning while I was consuming my frugal breakfast, and wondering why Snawkey, who had only scraped into a Third, managed to get twenty pupils, while I, with all the blushing honours of a First, only mustered three and a half—the

half being a "Tosher," or, in the words of the University Statutes, a non-collegiate student, who could only afford to come for half-hours, and pay half-fees. To Jones' enigmatical question I promptly replied that there were at least three things I should like to extend—my purse, my coaching connection, and my credit with the tailor, and begged him to explain himself further. Whereupon, he took upon himself to explore my half-empty cigar-box, and having thoughtfully selected a weed and cautiously lit it, to expound the full meaning of the novel and mysterious phrase he had employed. He began by pointing out that in the economy of the University I had really no place. I had, it is true, got a First in the Schools; but he went on to say, quite unnecessarily, I thought, that there was precious little chance of my ever getting a fellowship, and that the golden age of coaching was past and gone. "In fact," he contended, "the supply of men of your calibre is at present vastly in excess of the demand. Of course, you may take a mastership, or drift up to town; but Oxford has no place for you. It was not very rich in the old days when there were no married fellows; but now, as far as I can see, promotion will be as slow here as it was in the army after Waterloo. We have no such thing as compulsory retirement, half the colleges are suffering from agricultural depression, and obliged to cut down their fellowships, and the rest have been compelled by the Commissioners to endow professorships in all manner of out-of-the-way subjects. Unless a man is a specialist, I don't see that he's much chance in Oxford nowadays."

I ventured to point out that I had heard all this a hundred times before, that I failed to see what it had to do with "extending," and that it was all very well for Jones, who had secured his fellowship just ten days before the latest of University Commissions commenced its operations, and therefore had fixity of tenure for life, to inveigh against the present state of things.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "you are always so impulsive. I merely wished to prove the preamble, as we say in congregation; and having done that, I now proceed to the Statute. The preamble would run thus: 'Whereas it is evident that there are in Oxford a large number of deserving young men—such as Perkins of Brazenface—who have no work to do,

the University exacts as follows! ' and then follow the words of the Statute A, to which I beg all attention.

"1. That work and pay must be found for these deserving young men, and especially for Perkins of Brazenface, outside the limits of the University.

"2. That the time has come for the ancient and time-honoured seats of learning to extend the benefits of Higher Connection and University Culture to those who are unable to reside within their precincts! ' In other words," as he explained, "if the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain."

I was puzzled.

"Well," said Jones, taking pity on my perplexity, "the long and short of the matter is, that it has been decided to appoint lecturers to give courses of lectures in big towns—and, in fact, anywhere where they want lectures, and can get classes together—to hold examinations, and to give certificates, or degrees, or something to those who pass. I've only just heard of it, but I thought it might suit you, and you might send in your name and offer to lecture on something or other."

"It's awfully good of you, old man," I replied; "but, good Heavens! you don't mean to tell me that there are any human beings in England, in this so-called nineteenth century, who will voluntarily attend lectures, and pay for the privilege."

"I do most emphatically say so," he rejoined. "Why, man, you are arguing from the experience of four years' compulsory college lectures; but remember that these happy individuals have never been obliged to attend a single lecture in their lives, and that they are hungering and thirsting after Oxford culture. I don't mean to say," he added, with a shudder, "that even they would stand such things as Fergie on the Articles, or Cheadle on Logic. But give them something popular, attractive, and high-sounding, and depend upon it they'll come in their thousands. This is the sort of thing they want," he continued, waxing eloquent, with his theme and his quotations: 'The great Word-Painters of England!' 'Man and his Environment!' 'The Master-builders of the Constitution!' 'The Evolution of the Drama!' 'The Message of the Ages!' Why, the thing will be a gigantic success if it's only properly worked. Avoid commonplace; startle them; give them all the latest ideas in the newest words, and it's bound to draw. Yes, the thing can be

done, and Perkins of Brazenface is the man to do it."

Though I by no means shared my friend Jones's enthusiastic anticipations, yet before he left my rooms I had sent in a formal application to the Delegates for a place on the staff of University Extension Lecturers, and therewith a rough draft of suggested courses of lectures. It was with mingled feelings of pleasure and of misgiving that I received, some ten days after, a polite note from the Secretary to the Delegation, informing me that I had been appointed, and that I was to lecture during the next three months at five different places—centres he called them—on five different subjects.

The interval between the receipt of this letter and my first lecture passed all too rapidly. The greater part of my time was spent in the Bodleian and the Taylorian, in looking through any and every book that bore on the subjects I had rashly undertaken, taking this fact from one authority, that theory from another, and phrases and expressions from writers old and new, till I had a perfect mosaic fitted together with cement of my own.

I am not going to say anything about my first courses. Looking back at them after the experience of some years, I am afraid they were failures, though fortunately there were few among the audiences who knew enough to detect my blunders. I fear they must have learnt many strange things, but I had the stamp of the University of Oxford upon me, and every one knew that in these days the old-fashioned ideas must be upset, and that the world expects at least one new theory a week.

Of the novelty of my views I do not think they had a right to complain. I proved that Fielding was greater as a dramatist than as a novelist; I restored Yalden and Pye to their places amongst the great poets of England; I demonstrated that Napoleon was a very inferior General, and that the French Revolution was the work of Madame du Barry. I exploded the theories of Darwin and of Lyell, and constructed an entirely novel science of political economy, which ridiculed free trade and fair trade; ignored Adam Smith, and poured contempt on Ricardo and his theory of rent. "De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace" was my motto, and I doubt whether a popular lecturer could select a better.

The result, at all events, was eminently satisfactory. I found myself

greatly in request. The local papers published my lectures, though I am afraid the zeal of the reporters was usually considerably in excess of their knowledge, and many a fierce controversy raged round some theory which I had wantonly broached. Not but what I was sometimes taken at a disadvantage. The scheme of the Extension Delegates provided that there should be a certain time given after the lecture was over for any of the audience who pleased to ask questions, discuss doubtful points, and, in fact, generally to heckle the lecturer. This was a part of the programme which I must own I did not generally relish; but it was all in the day's work, and had to be got through somehow.

It was in vain that I protested to the Delegates that this cross-examination was beneath the dignity of a University Lecturer; that it tended to lower him to the level of a Parliamentary candidate at a contested election; and that if it was applied to College lectures its practice would be attended by the most lamentable results. I was informed by the secretary that the Delegates were unable to concur in my opinion, as they considered that the questioning of the lecturer was almost the most valuable part of the course. There was nothing for it but to turn the situation by delicate manoeuvres, for though I was perfectly willing to discuss anything with any one for as long as he liked, I was not going to stand up in the Town Hall of Cinderton, or the Assembly Rooms at Spaborough, to be made the mark for scorners' questions. Fortunately I found that in the majority of cases there was little desire to catechise the lecturer, probably his hearers had quite enough of him during the hour's lecture, or they were too diffident to get up in a crowded room and raise their voices loud enough to reach the platform. By another merciful dispensation it soon appeared that the people who did ask questions were generally the most ignorant; and it required very little dexterity to turn the tables on them. The simplest way was to question the questioner, or when this failed, to give an answer as enigmatical and long-winded as could be given by a diplomatic Under-Secretary to a Parliamentary question. Still, I have been in tight corners before now, owing to this most iniquitous custom. It was not exactly pleasant for me when, after a very brilliant lecture on the Peninsular War, old General MacPhussy got up and en-

quired what I meant by "a flank movement to the rear," and whether I imagined that a siege-train had any connection with a locomotive; nor did I consider it kind of Mr. Gringle, F.G.S., to get up and denounce me because in my remarkably popular course on Man and his Environment, I had spoken of the mammoth as "one of the most portentous life-forms of that primordial period when neolithic man was building the chasm between the ages of bronze and of iron." I am sure it sounds all right, and has more than once evoked cheers; and it was hardly likely I was going to alter one of my favourite phrases because it did not fit in with Mr. Gringle's geologic hypotheses. Knowing that he was decidedly unpopular at Bovintor, where the incident occurred, I ventured to tell him as much in pretty straightforward terms, and though he filled some columns of the local paper with diatribes against my portentous and pretentious ignorance, I quite thought I got the better of him. The way in which he revenged himself was really too mean to be related in detail; suffice to say that at the request of the Delegates, who said they had been in communication with the Professor of Geology, my course on "Man and his Environment" was withdrawn from the list of lectures that I was prepared to give.

I have had other passages of arms; but in most of them I think, without vanity, I may claim to have come off victorious. I have been tackled by Anglo-Israelites, Christian Socialists, Baconians, vegetarians, by gentlemen who believed that the earth was flat, and ladies who were convinced that Napoleon was the Beast. I have been regarded as a rank Tory, as a red-hot Radical, as a dangerous Neologian, and as a Jesuit in disguise; but I do not feel I am outraging my innate modesty when I say that the horny-handed sons of toil almost invariably regarded me as "'t' chaap wi' the biggest lot o' long words a ever 'eard," while the fair sex were wont to designate me "a gifted being."

I have suffered much, very much, from chairmen, as what public man has not? Indeed, I have often thought of starting a "Chairman-Abolition Society," with myself as secretary, and I believe it would be a great success. We should get the support of every Member of Parliament to begin with, and I know of not a few Boards, and Committees, and Societies, where the abolition of the chairman would be re-

garded with unqualified pleasure. The custom that prevailed in most places where I lectured was to have a different chairman for each lecture. We usually began with the Mayor; then followed the Vicar or some Cathedral dignitary; then—for we were strictly unsectarian—the Rev. Father O'Kelly or the Rev. Uriah Rugge; while for the rest of the course we had to be content with an Alderman, or a local doctor or lawyer. Each and all of these worthies thought it necessary to indulge in a speech on introducing the lecturer, in which the benefits conferred by the University on the town, and the town on the University, were dwelt upon; the unhappy lecturer was metaphorically, sometimes literally as well, patted on the back; his youth was not infrequently made the subject of an ill-timed jest; and he was congratulated on having the privilege of addressing such an audience.

I have had chairmen who have given an hour's lecture themselves before I was allowed to say a word. It was at a lecture of mine on "Health and Wealth," that Alderman Cargile thought fit to treat the élite of Slumberton to a minute and detailed account of the new drainage works. I have lost innumerable trains owing to the practice which prevailed at certain centres of solemnly moving and seconding a vote of thanks to the chairman and lecturer, at the close of each lecture.

Stokeville is a bright spot in this dreary wilderness of chairmen. I was informed that the chair would be taken at the first lecture by the Worshipful the Mayor, and I resigned myself to the usual infliction. But I did that worthy and worshipful man a gross injustice, for he turned out to be one of the most sensible chairmen I ever met with.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "you have come to hear a Oxford schollerd, and you don't want to hear me. All I asks is, don't you move a vote of thanks to me at the end, as I wants to be off as soon as this gentleman has finished his say."

The audience, I am rejoiced to add, showed their appreciation of the Mayor's conduct by voting him perpetual chairman, and the thanks we gave him at the conclusion of the course were as honest as they were cordial.

Of the hospitality that was everywhere extended to me, I have the most grateful recollection. There was quite a contest in many places as to who should have the privilege of entertaining me, and I was

really afraid more than once that I should be torn in pieces by angry claimants. I made many warm friends during my peregrinations, and received hints from at least two fathers of families that I might do worse than settle down in their particular town, and that they did not fancy I need look very far to find a suitable wife. This was rather embarrassing, but not so much so as the receipt one morning of a lengthy epistle, in what would I believe be correctly described as a fine Italian hand, from one of my audience at Great Blowford. As the letter was marked, "Strictly Private and Confidential," I do not feel justified in disclosing its contents. It is enough to say that the concoction of a reply, in which I firmly but kindly declined the proposal, caused me far more trouble than the preparation of a course of lectures.

Perhaps I ought to attribute my popularity, in some degree, to a very simple stratagem. It was part of the scheme of the Delegates that the "students attending the lectures should be encouraged to write answers to questions bearing on the lectures;" and the lecturers were instructed to set questions at the end of each lecture; to receive the answers; look over them, and make such notes or remarks upon them as they might think fit. At first I honestly endeavoured to grapple with these weekly batches of papers, but experience soon taught me the impossibility of the task. I was lecturing every day. I travelled on the average a hundred and twenty miles daily, and no human being could, in addition to this, be expected to look over three hundred and fifty papers a week. The shortest way was to compile a vocabulary of flattering and complimentary phrases, and inscribe these on the various papers sent in. The result I found to be equally satisfactory to lecturer and pupils; it was, indeed, twice blessed, for it saved me immeasurable trouble, and caused universal gratification. For Miss Jane Simpson to read that her paper was "highly meritorious, showing originality of thought and remarkable power of expression," was surely far more pleasing than if I had gone through her answers with the most scrupulous care, correcting all her blunders in spelling and grammar, and under-scoring all her mistakes. I feel sure that young Frank Mills invoked blessings on my head when he was able to show his delighted parent, Mr. Jacob Mills, town councillor and hatter of Southminster, his paper of an-

swers, on the "Epoch-makers of Europe," endorsed: "Most satisfactory. Gives proof of diligent study and considerable mental powers."

I can honestly say that I never met with the least complaint after I adopted this admirable system, and can strongly recommend it to my successors in the Extension field.

The worst feature to my mind about this peripatetic lecturing was the long railway journeys it entailed, and the tedious delays at stations. I venture to say that the time I spent at railway junctions would have sufficed to have mastered the elements of the most difficult of foreign languages. They are emphatically places where nothing can be done. You may, if the weather be fine, take a walk in the town or village; but, as a rule, railway companies seem to have chosen about the most uninteresting spots in the kingdom for their junctions. There is generally nothing to see but rows and rows of brick-built cottages, and you are continually haunted by the fear of getting back to the station too late for the train, or of finding that your luggage, with the precious manuscript of your lecture, has been taken possession of by some enterprising fellow-traveller.

There are many people, too, who might object to the uncertainty that the Extension Lecturer feels with regard to the hours of his meals. I have had what I was forced to consider my dinner, at all hours from half-past twelve to half-past ten, and on occasions, I have had to go without dinner altogether. I have had my lot cast among abhorers of what they are pleased to term intoxicating liquors; I have been the guest of vegetarians; and one memorable Ash Wednesday I had the privilege of sharing the fast of the Rev. Allan Jonsone, of Saint Gregory's, Fussington.

I cannot help thinking that I must have sometimes given the impression that I was too ethereal a being to require ordinary sustenance, and the idea that I was positively dying for a pipe and a whisky-and-potass did not seem possible, I am sure, to many of my hosts. It would have been fatal to have dispelled the illusion, and I have had to go many a time hungry, pipeless, and drinkless to bed.

I have had my misadventures, which seemed terribly serious at the time, but which are now not displeasing to remember. I can recall my disgust at finding myself whirled in an express train, at

about sixty miles, past Little Pottington, where an eager crowd waited in vain for the lecturer's arrival. I can see myself arriving at Pottleborough, and seeking in vain for the local secretary, Mr. Clumber, to whom I had been referred; my wonder at hearing that there was no such person known in all the town; and my chagrin at finding that I had mistaken Pottleborough for Pottlebury, a town some thirty-five miles distant. I have no agreeable recollection of Dulham, where I lectured in the Assembly Room at the King's Head, out of which a public billiard-room opened, and while in the middle of declaiming the most pathetic passage from Adonais, my breathless audience was convulsed into fits of laughter by hearing, "Blue on red, player, green!" in stentorian tones from the neighbouring room.

But the most remarkable experience I ever met with was at Ditchington. I had arranged to lecture there on the "High Priests of Nature"—biographical sketches of Buffon, Cuvier, Darwin, etc.—and my course was to be given in the Corn Exchange, on six consecutive Fridays, at 8 P.M. By some unaccountable accident, I started for that centre of the kid-glove trade on Thursday, under the full impression that that was the day on which I was to lecture. I arrived at the station at 7.45 P.M., and was agreeably surprised to find quite a little crowd assembled to welcome me.

"Mr. Perkins, I presume?" said a woolly-looking gentleman, holding out his hand.

I replied in the affirmative, and was promptly introduced to Mr. Alderman Hooker, Mr. Councillor Glubb, Mr. Widdie, Mr. James Widdie, and "the agent, Mr. Starch." The title of this last gentleman puzzled me, and I believe I made some mild joke about an "agent in advance," which seemed to be hardly understood by the worthy Ditchingtonians.

"I think we had better go straight to the Exchange," said Mr. Alderman Hooker. "Our folks don't like to be kept waiting, and it is a good step from here."

I replied that I was entirely at his disposal, and was quickly driving through the miry streets in the Alderman's bay-roush, as he insisted on calling it. On my way I was somewhat astonished at the interest evidenced in my advent, and the cheers that ever and anon greeted me, not altogether, I regretted to observe, unmingled with groans. I called my companion's attention

to this, but he replied with a chuckle that it was "only natural under the circumstances," and I put it down to the lack of excitement at Ditchington, which led the inhabitants to regard the coming of an Extension Lecturer as quite an event, and appropriated the cheers to myself, and the groans to the Alderman, who I imagined must be personally unpopular. By way of saying something, I enquired if the Mayor would be in the chair. Mr. Hooker stared, and at length burst out into a stentorian laugh:

"Ha! ha! ha! That's a good 'un. Why the Mayor's Tom Bromley; old John Bromley's brother. He take the chair! Oh, Lor'! But never mind, Mr. Perkins, never mind; Steer will show you the map of the country, and you'll soon know who's who. Though it's a wonder," he added, thoughtfully, "as they didn't tell you something about that at the office."

Who old John Bromley was, and why his brother Tom should not take the chair at my lecture, I could not imagine, so for the rest of the journey I drew out the worthy Alderman on the town and trade of Ditchington with considerable success. I learnt of course that it was the hub of the universe, as indeed, according to their own inhabitants, were most places where I lectured, and I was advised to allude to the importance to England of the great kid-glove industry, and the pressing necessity of putting a duty on French and Swedish gloves. This is just the sort of thing I always take care to do. A few judicious words of flattery at once puts the audience on good terms with the lecturer—and with themselves, which is perhaps even more desirable.

The Corn Exchange was reached at last, and I observed a large and not very friendly-looking crowd gathered round the main entrance.

"These are a lot of Bromley's chaps," said the Alderman, glancing rather nervously out of the window; "but never mind, we'll get in by the side door in Cross Street, and of course admission is only by ticket."

We got into the building without much difficulty, and found the Exchange crammed to its utmost capacity almost entirely, I was surprised to see, with men, as at most of my lectures the fair sex were in a decided majority. Our entrance was the signal for a perfect ovation, which I thought it only right to acknowledge by repeated bows. The Alderman took the chair and made a

somewhat lengthy speech, which I was too busy arranging my notes and turning up passages for quotation in my books to pay much heed to. I have some dim recollection of hearing myself described as "one of the most distinguished ornaments of the legal profession," which I thought rather strong, as I had not yet eaten sufficient dinners to be called to the Bar; but I took it in good part, and felt very well satisfied with myself when the Alderman at length sat down, and I rose, amid renewed cheers from the audience, to begin my lecture.

I commenced, as usual, with very flattering references to the town and its trade, and from the way in which my opening remarks were received, I gathered that I had succeeded in making that good impression on my audience which, as I have already said, was always my first object. I then proceeded to the lecture proper, and dwelt, in deeply poetic terms, on the mighty forces of Nature and the secrets which she had kept hid from man for countless ages, but which the giants of science had succeeded, in part at least, in wresting from her.

I was just coming to what I always considered a highly effective passage—in which I contrasted the knowledge possessed by the Board School urchin of today with the ignorance of the philosopher of a few centuries ago—when an unexpected incident occurred, which for ever prevented the Ditchingtonians from making the acquaintance of the high priests of Nature. A telegraph boy walked solemnly up the hall and deposited a yellow envelope in the Alderman's hands, remarking, as he did so, in a stage whisper, that perhaps he had better wait to see if there was an answer. The interruption, I was grieved to see, was not altogether unwelcome to my audience, who had received my remarks for the last ten minutes—in fact, ever since I ceased speaking about Ditchington and the glove-trade—with apathetic surprise, if there is such a thing. At all events, they gaped, and yawned, and stared as if they could not make out what on earth I was talking about. My astonishment, however, was unbounded when the chairman, suddenly leaping to his feet, screamed out:

"Why, this is nothing but a sell. Oh, you himpostor, you!" all the while shaking his fist in my face, and only, I verily believe, being restrained from making a violent assault on me by Glubb

and Spencer holding him back by his coat-tails.

"Order, order!" shouted some of the audience, while others very inappropriately called out, "Chair, chair;" and a third party demanded "Read, read."

"Yes, I will read," cried the Alderman, as soon as he had partially regained his composure, "and tell me what you think of this. And you, too, you," glaring at me. "To Alderman Hooker, Corn Exchange, Ditchington. Met with a slight accident this afternoon on leaving the Law Courts. Doctor will not hear of my travelling. Very sorry to disappoint my friends. Please make full apologies. Perkins."

The scene that followed was indescribable, and I believe I was as astonished as any one. Every one seemed shouting at once, "Turn him out." "No, let him go on." "He's an impostor." "A Tory spy." "Hear what he's got to say." Meanwhile the Committee-men on the platform were vainly endeavouring to restore order, and Alderman Hooker was vociferating at the top of his voice, and brandishing the telegram in his hand. I tried in vain to make myself heard, and to explain that I was Perkins, Oxford University Extension Lecturer; that I was not an impostor; and that I had not met with an accident in the Law Courts or anywhere else.

"Confound it all, sir," said Mr. Councillor Glubb, "do you mean to say as you are Perkins, Q.C.—the gent as was to be sent down by the Reform Club to be our candidate against Bromley?"

The murder was out. I could only attempt apologies which I regret to say were not received in very good part by the audience, which I found consisted of the Ditchington United Liberal and Radical Nine Hundred, and make the best of my way to the Red Lion, amid a howling mob, only protected from very unpleasant attentions by a bodyguard of "Bromley's chaps," who were delighted at their opponents' discomfiture.

I fled from Ditchington next morning by the very first train, and have never set foot in the metropolis of the glove-trade since. I received a most angry letter from my distinguished namesake some three months later, in which he attributed his defeat by a majority of seven hundred and sixty to my unpardonable blunder. I did not deem it necessary to reply; but I doubt whether so irascible an individual would have been a fitting member of the House of Commons.

I have now ceased to "extend" and

enjoy a position of greater freedom and less responsibility as Professor of General Literature in University College, Smokechester, of which my friend Jones is Principal, and where, we are improving the public mind at a prodigious rate.

SNAILS AND THEIR HOUSES.

THE snail,

Whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain,
And there, all smother'd up, in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to creep forth again,

is undoubtedly a well-known, but also, we fear, a somewhat unpopular character. The general opinion concerning him cannot be regarded as a very favourable one, inasmuch as he is looked upon as mischievous and destructive, and hence it is that when fallen in with he is either promptly "scrunched" beneath the heel, or, if the discoverer be not a gardener and have a heart more tender than common, pitched across the wall into the enclosure of one's neighbour. At first sight, therefore, it may seem somewhat of a forlorn hope to attempt to arouse interest in

Ye little snails, with slippery tails,
Who noiselessly travel across the gravel;

yet on the other hand it may be urged, in his behalf, that the snail comes of an ancient race; is by no means lacking in Vere de Vere-like repose; and is of peaceful and industrious—some people may think too industrious—habits; besides which we are assured by Monsieur Moquier Tandon, that, despite his apparent apathy, he is by no means lacking in intelligence, but exemplifies the truth of the aphorism that still waters run deep; while Oken goes further, and speaks of "circumspection and foresight, as appearing to characterise the thoughts of the bivalves, mollusca, and snails."

Apart from considerations such as these, snails have some claim upon our attention in that there is not probably a square foot of land, whether cultivated or uncultivated, which is not inhabited by mollusca of some kind, from the big apple snail, "*Helix pomatia*," which sometimes attains the magnitude of one's closed fist, down to the tiny varieties which can only be readily collected by brushing the wet grass with the gauze net of the entomologist. And in addition to all this, there are several kinds which are regarded by many as especially dainty morsels; of these "*Helix pomatia*" might

be regarded as the edible snail "par excellence." He is often found in great abundance in excavating the sites of Roman stations. At Lymne in Kent, Mr. Wright has seen apple snails dug up in masses as large as an ordinary bucket, and completely bedded together; and in France also, their empty shells have been found in great numbers among the ruins of Roman villas. It is well-known that the Romans were very partial to snails as an article of food, and that they fed them, in places called "cochlearia," on bran sodden with wine, until they grew to so enormous a size, that their shells could contain eighty pieces of money of the common currency; and we even read of those fattened with such success that they could hold ten quarts. Forty sixpences have been put, with ease, into the shell of the largest British snail, "*Helix pomatia*;" but the story that he was introduced into England by the Romans is erroneous; nor is it probable that he can date his arrival in Britain earlier than the middle of the sixteenth century, when he is said to have been imported as food, or medicine, for a lady who was suffering from consumption. There is no manner of doubt that a diet of apple snails is useful in this disease. An instance is cited some short while before the outbreak of the Crimean War, where a patient who subsequently served therein, was entirely cured by the mucilaginous juice of the "huge, fleshy, and delicious snails," as Evelyn calls them, found near Box Hill, in Surrey, and administered without his knowledge in every conceivable form.

In January, 1758, we find Mrs. Delany writing with reference to a young lady who suffered from a cough at night, recommending two or three snails boiled in her barley-water, as likely to be of service to her. "Taken in time," she adds, "they have done wonderful cures. They give no manner of taste; but she must know nothing of it, and they must be fresh done every two or three days, otherwise they grow too thick."

Pliny also recommends them, beaten up raw and taken in warm water, as a remedy for a cough. As a medicine, snails have been prescribed for other diseases beside consumption. Thus, in a quaint old book entitled, "A Rich Storehouse or Treasury for the Diseased," by Master Ralph Bower, we find: "Snails, which bee in shells, beat together with bay-salt and mallows, and laid to the bottomes of your feet and to

the wrists of your hands, before the fit cometh, appeaseth the ague."

They were prescribed also as a plaster for corns, so efficacious as to take them "cleane away within seven days' space;" and in Ireland, a water distilled from snail shells in canary wine, in the month of May, was deemed a great restorative, as well as suitable for external application as a cosmetic well calculated to impart whiteness and freshness to the complexion.

Though Ben Jonson and Evelyn have extolled snails as a succulent dish, and in later days, Frank Buckland has recommended them to be eaten either boiled in milk, or raw after soaking for an hour in salt and water, Englishmen disposed to partake of "*Helix pomatia*" are nevertheless few in number.

"Snails," writes Muffet—"Health's Improvement," p. 190—are little esteemed of us in England; but in Barbarie, Spaine, and Italy, they are eaten as a most dainty, wholesome, nourishing, and restoring meat."

Our more epicurean neighbours are in no wise sharers of our prejudices respecting the gastronomic properties of snails. It need, therefore, excite no surprise to find in Francatelli's "*Cook's Guide*," a receipt for preparing a mucilaginous broth, whose efficacy is much extolled, compounded of chicken, calves' feet, and garden snails bruised in a mortar, to which balm, borage, and Iceland moss are added.

There is a story told of a shipwrecked French crew completely clearing some seaside gardens in Devon of their snails, and few French restaurants of the present day are without a bowl of "*H. pomatia*" temptingly displayed in the windows.

Addison, in his travels, mentions having seen a snail-garden, or "*escargotière*," at the Capucins in Friburg, where was a square place boarded in and filled with a vast quantity of large snails, the floor being strewn about half a foot deep with several kinds of plants for them to nestle amongst in winter. When Lent arrived, the magazines were opened, and a "*ragoût*" made of the snails. Such snaileries have been in use for a length of time in various parts of Europe. Sometimes they consist of a cask covered with a net, into which the snails are put and kept until they are sufficiently fattened. In Lorraine, a corner of the garden surrounded by fine trellis work to prevent their escaping, is frequently assigned to them, and vegetables of various kinds are placed within for their sustenance.

In the neighbourhood of Dijon, where as much as three hundred pounds per annum has been made from snails, the vine growers keep them in dry cellars, or else digging a trench in the vine slopes, place at the bottom some leaves, and then their snails, which are then covered with more leaves, and a few spades full of earth. More than ten millions of snails are said to be sent away from the "*escargotières*" of Ulm, to different gardens to fatten, and when ready for table, forwarded to various convents in Austria for consumption during Lent.

Vine snails are forwarded, at the rate of five francs per hundred, from Troyes to Paris, where the value of these mollusks annually consumed is estimated to exceed half a million francs; they are not, however, considered in season until the first frost, about the end of October or early November, when they are closed with their white epiphragm.

Snails form no inconsiderable item in the bill of fare of gipsies; but when first gathered it is necessary to starve them for a few days, inasmuch as they feed upon poisonous plants such as the poppy and deadly nightshade, besides being much addicted to many injurious kinds of fungi. Sir George Head—"Tour in Modern Rome," p. 298—tells us that though all the time he lived in Rome, he never saw snails brought to table, they were sold in the open street in the same manner as were frogs. "They were purchased almost exclusively by the poorer classes, and in appearance resembled the common English garden snail; they afforded a curious spectacle in marking the extraordinary contrast between the natural slowness of the animal and the very uncommon nimbleness that appears among a multitude, when a quantity equal to the contents of a bushel basket or so are thus collected together. For myriads of tiny black eyes, no bigger than small pins' heads, are continually appearing and disappearing, popping in and out in the twinkling of an eye, and the whole surface of snails above is lifted up and let down again by the motion of those beneath, while the proprietor is obliged to exert his utmost vigilance and dexterity in order to restrain their incessant efforts to crawl over the edge of the basket and escape."

Not only, however, are the "*Helicidæ*" nutritious to the human species, but birds also are great consumers, crushing their shells and extricating their juicy bodies; and it is to the thousands of snails which

are eaten by the sheep that pasture on the downs, where, after a shower of rain, such myriads of snails appear, that the flavour of Southdown mutton owes much of its great celebrity.

A hundred years ago, Borlase, writing of Cornish mutton, declared that "the sweetest is that of the small sheep which feed on the commons where the sands are scarce, covered with green sod, and the grass is exceedingly short. From these sands come forth snails of the turbinated kind, which spread themselves over the plains and yield a most fattening nourishment to the sheep." Montague observes that "snails so abound on the short grass above Whitsand Bay, that it is impossible that animals should browse without devouring a prodigious quantity of them, especially by night, when they ascend the stunted blades."

Nothing is more remarkable than the vitality of some species of snails. Pond-snails have been frequently found alive in logs of mahogany from Honduras, and specimens belonging to the collection of a gentleman in Dublin, after having been dried for a period of fifteen years, nevertheless revived when placed in water. We are told that workmen employed in the construction of the Erie Canal, in the State of New York, found several hundred live mollusks at a depth of forty feet. Professor Morse records that he has seen certain species frozen in solid blocks of ice, which have afterwards regained their activity. Madeira snails, imprisoned closely in pill-boxes for two years and a half, have nevertheless survived; and a desert-snail from Egypt fixed to a tablet in the British Museum, twenty-fifth March, 1846, being immersed in tepid water, marvellously but completely recovered after an interval of four years. The vitality of snails' eggs likewise passes belief. Even if desiccated in a furnace until reduced to a minuteness barely visible, they will always regain their original bulk when damped, and the young will be brought forth as successfully as though the eggs had never been interfered with. Nor has cold any injurious effect upon them, for they may be frozen into ice for any length of time, and yet, when the ice has melted, will be found to be wholly uninjured.

As winter comes on, the snail becomes sensible of the approach of resistless lassitude, scoops a hole in the ground, lines and covers the chamber with a kind of mortar made of dead leaves and slime, and, retiring within this cell, pro-

ceeds to make itself still more snug by closing the mouth of its shell with a diaphragm which gradually hardens, but is minutely perforated opposite the respiratory orifice. As the animal withdraws further into his shell, other slime plates are made, which act on the principle of double windows, enclosing a layer of air between each pair, and so effectually protecting him from the cold. With the return of the spring, when the woods are melodious with the songs of birds intent on the perpetuation of their species, the snail reappears, and sets about making a nest-like hole in the ground, wherein its eggs, a cluster of from thirty to fifty—in form resembling the berries of mistletoe—are by-and-by laid. They are hatched in perhaps twenty days, when the young one emerge in a lovely bubble-like shell, and acquire full growth in about twelve months.

The snail's commonest mode of progression is crawling, the under side of its body forming a broad, muscular foot, by the expansion and contraction of which the animal is enabled to glide; and it is this creeping motion on the window-pane, to which the creature is held tightly by atmospheric pressure, which, when heard in the stillness of the night watches, sometimes disturbs so mysteriously the slumbers of the occupant of a room.

Snails are for the most part vegetarians, and our rows of peas and beds of strawberries often suffer severely in consequence, though as long as the weather is dry, a border of sawdust or ashes is an adequate protection, inasmuch as in their endeavours to pass over it, they become so entangled in the particles adhering to their slimy bodies, that they exhaust themselves in vain efforts to get free. But Mr. Jeffreys would have us know that it is really in default of something better provided for him that the snail has acquired so injurious a reputation as the foe of garden-stuff, and assures us that a pet specimen always "preferred roast mutton to lettuce leaves." Lister, too, asserts that snails will eat not only such homely fare as bread and cheese, but likewise flesh of all kinds, particularly fish and salted meat. M. Moquier Tandon tells us further that "les mollusques ont des ruses et des industries, des guerres acharnées et des amours bizarres." The snail is, in fact, a very model lover. He will spend hours at a time out of his brief span of seven or eight years' existence in paying attentions the most assiduous to

the object of his affections; and Mr. Jeffreys informs us further that snails are provided with Cupid's darts, in that they are possessed of tiny crystalline javelins which, after certain preliminary coquettings, they discharge at one another. These singular proofs of affection have been occasionally observed sticking in the bodies of snails after such conflicts. They are contained in a pouch, and vary in number. In some species each individual has but one such missile, in others two, and a few varieties have none at all. And yet when love-making is not in question, the snail is by no means sociable, although M. Tandon has observed in one branch of the family, snails engaged in mutually polishing a neighbour's shell with the foot, the last part of the body, by-the-way, to be withdrawn into the shell, and which secretes a fluid which lubricates its path, and which, when spun into a mucous thread, enables certain species to poise themselves in mid-air. While water-snails have but one pair, land-snails are supplied with two pairs of tentacles, or horns, at the extremity, and sometimes at the base of the longer pair of which, the eyes of the animals are placed, while the shorter pair are only feelers. The mouth is provided with a crescent-shaped jaw and minute palate-teeth, which present some curious varieties of structure.

It is in the possession of a shell that the main difference between the snail and the slug lies; but, as a connecting link between the two, there is an intermediate family—the "Testacellæ"—who carry on their tails an ear-shaped shell, somewhat resembling a finger-nail. "Testacella" possesses essential characteristics of his own, and is indeed a very tiger among mollusks, his teeth being arranged in fifty rows. He is a ground slug of strictly carnivorous habits, penetrating the soil to a depth of two or three feet, and preying voraciously upon earthworms. Wrapped in a gelatinous white mantle, which stows away beneath the shell, but is capable of extension over the whole body, "Testacella" lies "with his martial cloak around him," awaiting the advent of his prey, which he pursues with equal cunning and ferocity through the labyrinth of its subterranean galleries. Stealthily, and with an air of most supreme indifference, he approaches the side of his intended victim; but suddenly turning, as the wretched worm wriggles right and left, he lifts his head, dilates his mouth, and with sharp shark-formed teeth fastens upon his prey, whose

struggles are all in vain, and serve but to hasten its passage into the stomach of a voracious enemy.

In times mediæval the shell of "the hero who carries his house on his back," as Hesiod calls the snail, acquired high rank among the numerous amulets which were supposed to ward off from the body evil influences, and impart health and vigour. In Scotland and the North of England fortunes are sometimes told by the agency of snails; if, for instance, on leaving your house, you see a black snail, it should be promptly thrown over the left shoulder, when you may go on your way rejoicing; but if, on the other hand, you should fling the creature over the right shoulder, then be assured it is no primrose path which lies before you. In Carmarthenshire lands are said to have been gambled away by means of snail races; the rival steeds being placed at the foot of a post, victory and land were won for its owner by the fortunate mollusk who should first gain the top. In conclusion, may be cited an old English proverb, no less appreciable perhaps in the Victorian era than in the remoter days when it was first contributed to our collection of wit and wisdom:

Good wives to snails should be akin,
Always to keep their homes within.
Yet unlike snails they should not pack
All they are worth upon their back.

AMONG THE LAVENDER.

IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

I WAS never at any hour of my life the very least in love with Margaret Ruthven. Love is assuredly a mighty power in life; but it is not the only mighty influence in life, as some people seem to think; not the only emotion of the human heart that is the motive-power in many a drama, full to the brim of pathos, of joy and pain, and afterwards of sweet remembrance. Had I never known Malcolm and Margaret Ruthven, I should never have become the man I have grown to be since. Those days at Orchard Farm were the making of me. The higher side of my nature widened and developed; the lower, self-loving half of me dwindled. I began to think of my work differently. Neither reputation as a writer, nor yet gain in pocket, appeared any more as an object worth striving for, except subordinately. I wanted my work to be smitten through and through with deeper

truth, so as to touch and hold the hearts of men.

I had never before enjoyed the close companionship of a really cultured woman. Pretty women, clever women, good women, women who were not good—all these I had encountered in the past, and fallen more or less under the charm of this one or that. But I had never known of what tender, many-sided beauty the mind of a woman is capable—a woman chastened of sorrow, taught of Heaven, supreme in the power of a ready and perfect sympathy.

Margaret Ruthven was all these things and more, and yet so utterly without self-consciousness that one could often trace in her a gentle surprise at the weight of her own words. The way in which the beautiful, sightless face of her husband turned to her, followed her with a blind instinct of her whereabouts, the smile that dawned round his mouth, lighting up his whole being, as it were, at the sound of her footsteps—the ways in which she was eyes to him, hands to him, feet to him—

It all remains with me, lingers about me like the memory of sweet music—like some grand psalm, known by heart, of which the last line should run: "Love stronger than death."

And I always think of Margaret Ruthven as "among the lavender," as if the mingled sweetness and unpretentiousness of the flower made her truest emblem. Even now, years after that visit to the quiet Midland nook beside the river, if I come suddenly upon a grove of blue-grey spear-like blossoms rising from blue-green leaves, I think of Orchard Farm, the fine, still rain falling in the warm summer's night and bringing out the perfume of the flowers beneath its gentle dews; or the stately form of Margaret standing at the gateway, by the great lavender bush, with the grey-blue blossoms at her belt.

It was not an easy task to make those two—husband and wife—speak of themselves. Of Nature, in every aspect; of art; of books—those best companions—on all such topics both were fluent. Mrs. Ruthven would read aloud by the hour. The great minds that have given their great store of thoughts to men kept company with us day by day. But of the individual lives and experience of my host and hostess I learnt little, until, indeed, the last evening of my holiday.

A sadness was over us all; on me, perhaps, it lay the deepest. They always had

each other; I had only companied with them a little while in their fair land of Beulah. I must go out into the turmoil and strife once more. To add to the depression, of which we were evidently all the victims, Malcolm Ruthven was in suffering—had been hardly able to bear a touch of light upon his eyes all day; had so suffered, that even the sound of the beloved voice reading to him would have been too much.

"Take my wife out for an hour's walk down by the river! She sorrows over me too much when I am like this; more than is good for her. Cheer her up for me, there's a good fellow."

By which speech it will be seen that our intimacy had ripened at a fine pace during the three weeks of my holiday, and that we understood each other very thoroughly.

An hour later we set off—pale, tired, anxious Margaret, and her lodger.

Her husband's words had struck me not a little:

"When I am like this. . . ."

He was, then, often like that; often in pain, in weariness; forced to abide in the darkness that could alone heal. With these thoughts in my heart, I paced slowly along in silence by the side of the woman whose simple grey bonnet framed her white patient face, as the calyx frames the flower; and then—I hardly know how, but all at once—as the result, I imagine, of some impulsive hot words of sympathy on my part, we seemed to be all at once plunged "in medias res," and the story of two lives was unfolded before me as a book might open. . . .

"When I first knew him years ago, he was such a beautiful, bright creature, lithe and active, full of life, and hope, and fervour. It seemed to him so easy and so certain to do great things in the world. He was just called to the Bar. Singularly without near relatives; but the very happiest, sunniest, brightest-hearted creature you can well think of. We soon became great friends, and he used to chatter to me of all his hopes, his castle-building, his noble, chivalrous ideas—somewhat Utopian I fear me—of how he should be ever the defender of the weak, the wronged, the oppressed. I was so much the elder, that it seemed natural and quite possible to be—friends, and nothing more—"

So far, Margaret got in her history, when I broke in:

"And then—he fell in love with you!"

She shook her head.

"No, that expression won't fit—it is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden. Say 'he grew to love me,' that suits the case better. He did not mean it; I am sure——" then after a pause, "neither did I."

"He could not help it." I spoke with a conviction that defied contradiction.

So she let me have my way.

A faint flush like the delicate pink that lines the sea-shell rose to her cheeks, seeming to smooth out the lines of care and thought, and to give her back the gift of youth for the moment.

"I suppose not; neither could I; but, for all that when he told me—when he asked me to be his wife, I said, it could not be."

"You trampled on your own heart—and his?"

"Yes," she said, quietly. "Three times over—and then—he went." Then came a heavy, long-drawn sigh.

I expect that had been a bad time to live through.

"I told him that the difference was too great; that time would bring it out. That for him to marry me would be a mistake."

"He did not believe you."

"No, not at the time; but he might have come to do so. I was right to decide as I did."

"Perhaps you were."

I had to make this admission because she was so true herself you could not even equivocate to her; but I made it unwillingly.

"But then, you see, things changed. Mr. Allardyce, you have been so good to us; you have grown so dear to both of us; you seem so like an old, old friend that I should like to tell you the rest; but it is so hard to tell."

I kept silence; I knew that, just then, any words would hurt her more than none.

"Some time after, when he and I seemed to have drifted quite apart, I met a man who knew him, and he told me—what you have seen."

"That Ruthven was blind?"

"Yes, that no one quite understood the case—they don't now, you know—he had these terrible attacks of pain, and gradually his sight went; first, it grew misty, then more dim, then dark. It was terrible to me to hear it. It seemed too piteous to be borne. But none of us can do other than lie down under the inevit-

able—fighting is no use. I thought over it all, prayed, wrestled with myself, and then—I—went to him."

Once more the warm colour rose to the very ripples of her hair. Deeper this time was that rosy flood of beautiful shame than before. We were both silent a while. The river, glinting in the evening sunshine, was smooth as glass in the still air; the tall spears of the purple loosestrife, mirrored in the water, scarcely stirred—the current was so still. Now and then a bandy-coot alid out from the osiers, and darted across to the reeds on the opposite bank, or a red-brown water-rat set sail from his hole on one bank, to that of a friend on the other. A thrush laughed in the trees, and a nimble little cole-tit ran twittering up the bole of a willow.

How fair, how beautiful it all was—in such strange contrast to the blighted, broken life of the man whose story I had just heard! It was my companion who broke the long silence:

"So, after all, ours was what we call here an 'Ann Hathaway courtship.' You see, in the Midlands, where every flower and old custom seems culled from Shakespeare's pages—which is another way of saying that his hand gathered and set them there—every one is familiar with his life and sayings, so I may say that, like him, my theory and my practice are at variance. He said the woman should 'take an elder than herself;' yet married Ann Hathaway. I said the same—yet married Malcolm after all. Well, well,"—this with a passing sweet smile—"though my hair is turning so white, to him it is always the same. It feels the same to his hand now, as the first time he ever smoothed it down—it will always seem the same; and, indeed, he will not believe me when I tell him it is lined so thick with grey."

We wandered long by the river, and through the wood, talking of all things in heaven and earth, so that when we reached the farm the gloaming had fallen like a veil over everything, and a faint mist, snow-white, stretched out the course of the river.

There at the gate stood Malcolm.

"I heard your footsteps ever so far off," he said smiling. "I am like the bats—fond of the gloaming, you see," he added, turning to me with a soft laugh, "it suits my eyes."

Then we all three went in together;

but he took my arm this once, because I was going in the morning. So the long, white hand, with its blood-red ring, lay against my sleeve, and somehow, on my long journey next day the meaning of it haunted me.

After all we are very like straws or fallen leaves on a river—drifted here and there by the wind and stream of circumstances.

I wrote to my good friends at Orchard Farm; they, or rather Margaret, wrote to me. The influence of her pure, sweet nature left me not—showing itself in deeper earnestness of life, in higher aim of life. We even planned—in writing—another holiday for me “among the lavender,” when the summer should come again.

And then family affairs of my own took me abroad. I travelled far, and from place to place. My name and fame as a writer were growing everywhere. I had a warm welcome; and so came spring and grew to summer, and summer ripened to autumn, and paled again to winter, and still I was a wanderer. But with summer, like the swallows, I came back to England—to the hum, and stir, and dear delightful sense of life that only London gives one.

My sister was at my rooms to greet me, and had all things fair and sweet set out to welcome me.

“I am so glad you like the lavender, dear,” she said, “I bought it of a poor, tired-looking girl in the street to-day. I bought all she had.”

There it stood, a miniature grove of blue-grey spears, set in a wide china bowl, and its faint, pungent scent filled all the room.

“Why, Stevie,” said my sister, suddenly, “how strange you look! After all, perhaps you don’t like the smell of lavender?”

I did not answer.

I was sitting before a pile of letters, proofs—what not!—all waiting to be opened; and there, among the rest, I saw a small, square parcel like a box, directed to me in a dear, familiar hand. It had been registered, and the date on the stamp was that of three months back. I cut the string. My fingers trembled. The perfume of the lavender had taken my thoughts back to Orchard Farm; and now, what was this little packet that perchance smelt of lavender too?

I opened it—almost dropped it—uttered an exclamation under my breath—felt

as though some cold hand touched my heart.

Before me lay a ring with one blood-red stone; beneath it, a scrap of paper; written there, these words:

“I send you this in memory of him—
M. R.”

Not another word.

The next evening, just at sundown, I reached Orchard Farm.

The lavender was all a-bloom by the gate, the casement set wide, as it was wont to be.

But my heart felt like lead in my bosom, for a strange dog barked wildly at me as I lifted the latch, and a gruff voice asked me what I wanted, while a dreadful-looking old crone came hobbling to the door in answer to my knock.

Which of us has not known the agony of visiting some dear-loved spot, to find all its surroundings changed to discord?

Bad as I had imagined things might be, the reality exceeded my worst forebodings.

“What may be your business?” said the hag, whose rusty bonnet sat on end on her shaggy head.

“Has Mrs. Ruthven left the Farm?” I said, in as steady a voice as I could command. “Her husband—died” (how the words seemed to choke me); “but—can you tell me where she—what has—”

Here my eloquence came to an end.

“Oh yes,” chimed in the old woman, in a querulous voice, “her good gentleman died. I helped to clean up after the funeral. He was sick a long while, and they had a doctor from Lunnun. But it weren’t no good, bless you! He just went off and knowed nobody for days and days, and she a-standing by him, dumb like, strokin’ of his ’and.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “but after that—what of her—what of his wife?”

“Oh—she was never much to reckon on—she wasn’t. She looked like a ghost, as the sayin’ is, ever after he was took; and she just died.”

“Died!”

I really think I must have shouted that one word—so strangely the old crone looked at me.

“Ay—all of a suddint; settin’ by the chair as he’d used to be in. Died—why of course she died; just six weeks after ’im. Didn’t they send for me to streak her out, and didn’t I see her in her coffin? She looked like a pieter in wax, for all the blessed world; and she’s buried along

o' him—as you may see for yoursel' if you go down——”

But I heard no more.

I dropped a sovereign into the shrivelled hand of the amazed old creature, and hurried out of the sound of her voice.

But not before I had hastily gathered a spray or two of lavender to lay upon the grave where Margaret and her husband slept.

They had passed away out of my life; but the radiance they had made for me would endure—ay, and has endured.

Sad at heart, lonely for those “gone before,” I could yet be glad and infinitely thankful at heart for the dear memory of that holiday among the lavender. Years have passed, and I am thankful for it still.

OLD CUSTOMS AT THE GILD-HALLS.

THIS may not be an unfavourable moment to call to mind some of the ancient and in many cases obsolete customs of the Guild Hall, and of the “Twelve great Companies” connected with it.

A strong arm as well as a thoughtful brain was requisite among the citizens of these Companies when in their infancy. The accounts given of the conflicts for precedence between the Merchant Tailors and the Skinners in particular, vie in interest with that celebrated “street-row” in Edinburgh, so graphically described in “The Abbot.” Both were established in the coronation year of Edward the Third, so the dispute could not be settled by point of date; and though the tailors might claim that through them the world at large was clothed, their rivals could point to the ermine on the robe of the Monarch and the Judge, the fur-cloak of the Peer and the scholar as being supplied by them; not foreseeing the day when the produce of their industry would be little used, save as wrappings for the chilly among the gentler sex.

Sir John Hawkwood, “the first General of modern times,” was, as we read, a tailor by profession, but he “turned his needle into a sword, and beat his thimble into a shield,” and used both with such success that he was later knighted by Edward the Third. The unseemly strife, before alluded to, was terminated by “peace-preserving Boddington,” Lord Mayor, during the reign of Richard the Third, who ordained

that the two great Companies should enjoy priority of place in turn, which custom is still observed.

A kindred Company, that of the Clothworkers, turned the superfluous energies of the citizens into a more becoming channel. We find Sir John Robertson, Mayor, under Charles the Second, again encouraging the pageants suppressed during the Commonwealth, and promoting the “true English and manlike exercise of wrestling, archery, sword, and dagger.”

This Company had the honour of counting a crowned head among its members.

“Wilt thou make me free of the Clothworkers?” asked James the First, after dining in the great hall in Mincing Lane.

“Ay, and think myself a happy man to see this day,” replied the proud Mayor.

That roystering Monarch, his grandson, was feasted with more zeal than decorum by Sir Robert Viner, a subsequent Mayor, as Addison tells, and grew so exhilarated with loyalty, devotion, and good wine, that the King thought it best to leave the hall quietly without the final draught from the loving-cup. He was, however, seized upon by Viner, who cried out: “Sir, you shall stay yet for another bottle,” on which the merry Monarch looking graciously at him complied, quoting with his accustomed humour: “He that is drunk is as great as a King.”

The Loving-cup was a great feature at these City banquets. Pepys, in the time referred to, gave a goblet to serve for this purpose to the Clothworkers, of whom he was Master, and this is still carefully preserved among them. Camden, the antiquary, presented another to the Painters-Stainers. Sir Martin Bowes bequeathed one of gold, honoured by the touch of Elizabeth at her coronation, to the Goldsmiths. The Barbers-Surgeons possess two, which are Royal gifts—one from the hand of Charles the Second, garlanded with appropriate acorns and oak-leaves; another from bluff King Hal, fringed with a merry chime of golden bells.

The practice was for the cup of spiced wine to be handed round at the conclusion of the feast. Poison, that skeleton of so many banquets, was effectually guarded against by the host and his Wardens first taking a draught. Each must hold the bowl in his right hand, while in the other is the napkin with which he will presently touch the tip of the bowl. The loving-cup ought, by rights, to be provided with a cover,

which the person who is next to drink the pledge should hold, meanwhile, in his "dagger hand" to show that he has no evil designs on the life of his friend.

This precaution is supposed to date from the time of the murder of the young Saxon King, Edward the Martyr. He, while drinking the stirrup-cup at the gates of the Castle of Corfe, was stabbed by order of his step-mother, Elfrida, whose many crimes make a dark page in early English history.

We read that Ethelfoeda the Fair, mother of the murdered boy, was daughter to Ordwar, an Alderman of London, while the guilty Elfrida was, before her marriage with King Edgar, wife to Euhelwald, the "glorious Alderman of the East Angles." At that time the honourable title applied to those who stood next in dignity to the King.

Another custom grown obsolete since days more dainty have set in, was for the Fool, an important member of the Mayor's household, to leap fully dressed into a gigantic bowl of custard. In reference to this, rare Ben Jonson tells us that the said Fool: "Takes his alwain leap into a custard, and makes my Lady Mayoress and her sisters laugh all their hoods over their shoulders."

As chief butler to the Sovereign, a post which he has held since the time of Richard the Third, the Mayor receives at the coronation a golden goblet and cover. A silver cradle used to be presented to the wife of the dignitary at the same time; but this is discontinued. The Mayor, no less generous, was wont to present to each of his guests at a certain annual feast, a piece of plate known as "the noble spoon." This was later replaced by a ladle made of horn.

A massive piece of plate, The Salt, formed at the City feasts, as in others, the line of division between inferior guests and those the hosts delighted to honour. Small-minded spite was at times indulged by bidding one take a lower place who might rightly have aspired to a higher one, on which swords, quick to resent a slight, would be drawn, and blood would flow. The Company of the Salters, with their motto: "Sal sapit omnia," was chartered by Edward the Third. A "silver-guylte salte" was a frequent gift to the warden of a guild, and a mournful, Egyptian-feast element was introduced at the board by the words which accompanied the offering: "Thou be mercifull unto his soul."

In Froissart's spirited account of the

progress of Henry the Fourth through the City, escorted by the Companies, we are told that in Chepe were seven fountains running with red and white wine. Wonder at this lavishness is lessened when we learn that the "Marchant fruiterers of Gascoyne" supplied wine from Bordeaux at fourpence the gallon, while that from the Rhine might be had for sixpence.

To neither of these liquors would the glowing title of "Sun of the Night," given to the juice of the grape by the eloquent Danish poet, appear to be suited; but they must have seemed luscious beverages to the palate of the apprentice accustomed to that made from the fruit of his own island. In the present day we have heard of a nobleman who, not content with the generous growth of slate in his domains, attempted to re-introduce there the culture of the grape which had been profitable on the same spot five hundred years before. But as the modern chronicles said, it was found to require three men to drink a cup of his lordship's wine; one presented his unwilling throat, a second stood near to hold his struggling form when repentance set in, and a third handed him a munch of bread that he might afterwards eat away the acrid taste.

The Vintners preserve, among other ancient privileges, the right to keep swans upon the Thames. Once a year the Royal swan-herd performs his voyage up the river, when the birds are marked with two nicks in the form of a V, the initial letter of the company. The sign of the "Swan with Two Necks"—that is, nicks—common over public-houses in some parts of the country, is a corruption of the phrase referring to this practice. A procession in state-barges, vying in splendour with that for the Wedding of the Adriatic, was once an annual festivity, and "Cobs," and "Plus," to the number of five hundred were often marked, while the swan-herd looked on with a plume of the snowy feathers in his cap. Now that the swan no longer forms the chief item of the City feasts, the number has been allowed to diminish, and from the dawn to the even of his life, they leave the "stately sailing swan" to "give out his snowy plumage to the gale, and arching proud his neck, with oary feet, bear forward fierce and guard his osier isle, protective of his young."

The Dean and Canons of Norwich, likewise, have a right to keep the Royal bird at the expense of their city. According to them, when cooked with fruity port and

other condiments, the cygnet is not a dish to be despised, though they might not say with Chaucer's *bon vivant*: "A fat swan loved he best of any roast."

"The Ostrich buoyant on the wing," is the favoured bird of another of the City Companies, that of the Ironmongers. Him they place with the salamander on their arms, from the old belief that he had power to digest iron. Quarles is fond of alluding to the feats of the desert racer, and Lovelace addresses him as follows:

Ostrich! thou feathered fool and easy prey,
That larger sails to thy broad vessel need'st,
Snakes through thy gutter-neck hiss all the day,
Then on thy iron mess at supper feed'st.

Which would be useful information to the young naturalist, only that the ostrich is no fool, and was never known to thrust his head in any sands, save those of travellers' tales; that he is a prey so easy that it takes only three of the best mounted Arabs of the desert to hope to catch him, and they resign themselves to failure the day before the hunt takes place; while Rider Haggard in "Jess" has told us how good a natural weapon is the bird's stout, swift leg, and how well it recompenses him for the want of larger sails.

The Cordwainers, with whom are associated the Cobblers, contributed their item to the formation of the typical English Sunday, when they prayed Richard the Second to ordain that, "Every cordwainer that shod any man or woman on the Sunday might be called on to paye the somme of thirty shillings."

We find the name Shakespeare as that of some party interested, on one of the earliest of the charters of the Cordwainers, who had been first incorporated in 1410, a hundred and fifty years before the birth of the poet.

The Bricklayers preserve in their cists the copy of a deed by which they had a right to claim one farthing per thousand on bricks made within a certain distance from the City. Up to considerably less than three hundred years ago, the Lord Mayor, Wardens, and Aldermen, "made their mark" upon all such documents, their hands being still too unused to the pen to permit of their writing their names.

The Artillery Company of the City of London—representatives of the ancient Train-bands, and formerly known as the Archers of Finsbury—once played an important part in all state pageants. An old print from a painting representing the

procession of Edward the Sixth to the Tower, in the possession of Lord Montague, and preserved at Cowdray, gives them an important place; and in that of Queen Anne, to St. Paul's, the Bands line the streets from Temple Bar to the Cathedral. They were called out for the protection of the Bank of England in 1780, when we read that the heavy, leaden inkstands of the clerks were melted into rifle-bullets. Clarendon, an unimpeachable authority on this subject, tells us of their stout resistance to Rupert the Red, who "himself led up the choice horse to charge them, but could make no impression upon their stand of pikes."

The Civic Volunteers are first mentioned as the Guild of St. George, in the reign of Edward the First. In the year of the Spanish Invasion, whose tercentenary we are celebrating this year, their numbers were greatly increased, and, had the necessity been forced upon them, we should have heard of them at Tilbury, where they were stationed. In these ultra-constitutional days it is of interest to call to mind that the Artillery Company is under the direct control of the Sovereign, and not that of the Parliament. The Prince Consort was their Colonel, for some years before his death. It may also be mentioned that the Corporation of London was specially exempted—not, however, without considerable opposition—from the Parliamentary reforms of 1833, though the Reform Bill of the preceding year gave them the right of sending four new members to the House. Sir Robert Peel's Police Force, established in 1829, have considerably lessened the sphere of usefulness of the variously-named Train-bands. A curious allusion to olden times is to be seen in the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, the proud possessor of Bow Bells. Here the family of Edward the Third used to be seated to watch the Civic processions. The modern building, erected by Wren after the Great Fire, has a small balcony placed over the west door in commemoration of this practice.

From this window Queen Anne witnessed the pageants in honour of the coronation. Beneath it passed the procession represented by Hogarth in his "Industry and Idleness," and so coveted was the honour of beholding these, that the landlords and residents in the houses of Chepe had only a right to look on from their own casements if a clause to this effect had been specially inserted in the lease.

Old Bow Church, which dated from the Conquest, contained a memorial to Sir John Coventry, Lord Mayor in 1425. The epitaph thereon is given by Wever in his "Funeral Monuments," published 1631. Some score of years before we read that "The Lord Mayor's Shows, long left off, were now again revived by order of the King," and they have continued since, with few interruptions, to delight the populace until the present day.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VI.

IT is easy to bid farewell to one's mother and swear to hold oneself absolved from the duties of kinship; easy, at least, in comparison with the task of carrying out the threats implied in these assertions. Gaspard Harache loved Thora Sweynson; but he had the life-long habit of loving his mother and sisters, and it was difficult for him to choose between the two affections. Like most men, he wanted all, and had not courage to decide to which he would adhere—not even to see that a choice must be made. He could not desert Thora, that was out of the question, as a matter equally of love and honour. Yet, the thought of quarrelling with his mother was so bitter, that, by way of consolation, he told himself that it was impossible the alienation could be permanent; and since he would not yield to her wishes, he made himself believe that, in the end, she must give in to his.

Meanwhile, of course, he must keep up a firm front, and seem far more immovable than he felt. He established himself with Thora in a lodging not far from Monsieur Meudon's dockyard, and made up his mind to have no communication with his family for a week or two. If they would not accept him with his wife he would have nothing to do with them, and he was so determined in his resolve that he even avoided going through the street where his mother lived, when accident or business brought him near it. But he thought that his course of action need not be persisted in for more than a few days—Madame Harache would be forced to capitulate. He knew how bitter the pain of this separation was to him, and, going on a usually safe principle—that parents love their children

better than children love their parents—he guessed that it could not be less for her. And he had right on his side, he knew that; and he would not think so ill of his mother as to think that, after the first bitterness of having her own plans defeated was past, she would continue to treat an innocent girl as if she had been guilty of a sin. Justice and the sacredness of a woman's purity must conquer her at last.

Three days after his return he received a letter from Madame Harache, addressed to him at the dockyard, in which she asked him to come and see her and his sisters that evening. He showed the note to Thora, who, partly out of jealousy, partly out of obstinacy, would have had him refuse the invitation. The girl had no comprehension of the relation she was supposed to bear to Gaspard. The idea of any disgrace attaching to her would have seemed at once horrible and incredible; but she was so ignorant of the world that the explanation he gave—that his other friends could not receive her till his mother did so, seemed to her, though stupid and unfortunate, not impossible. She understood, too, that in some fashion, Gaspard was dependent on his mother for money, and that in this way his marriage with her would injure him unless Madame Harache chose to accept her as a daughter. But she did not suspect for a moment that the Troth of Odin was not a true marriage ceremony, binding on both of them all over the world. Gaspard would have died sooner than have let her know this; he would have felt that he was insulting her if he had tried to explain it to her.

What she knew of Madame Harache, and what she misunderstood regarding her own circumstances, combined to make her hate her husband's mother. Her aim, like Gaspard's, was to bring her to acknowledge her as a daughter; her plan of campaign the same as his, but more determinedly fixed. She wished him to take no notice of his mother's letter.

"Why should you be at her beck and call?" she asked. "If she wants to see you let her come here."

Gaspard sighed; he could not explain why his mother would not cross his threshold. "You do not love my mother, Thora," he remarked, sadly.

"Has she given me the chance of doing so?" Thora retorted; and Gaspard was silenced.

"I think I ought to go to my mother when she asks me," he said, after a pause.

"I do the best I can for you by retaining her affection."

"I don't think so," she answered, and argued her point at some length; but Gaspard would not be convinced. He longed, more than he was consciously aware of, for the old sweetness of family love. It had been his life atmosphere; even Thora could not make up for the loss of it; and, moreover, he thought that his mother must be softening, or she would not have called him to her side.

Madame Harache was guilty of no such weakness. Her object was to win her son back, by degrees, to his old place in the family, to make him feel, as she guessed he soon would, that the "belle sauvage" could not compensate to him for all he must forfeit for her sake.

"My reason for asking you to come this evening," she explained, "was that your sisters were disappointed at seeing so little of you on the day of your return, and want to hear of your travels."

The explanation was given coldly and formally; but having given it, Madame Harache thawed to something like tenderness, and joined with Barbe and Lucie in questions and comments. Gaspard felt himself to be a traveller of no mean renown, and the surprise and delight expressed by his womenkind at his adventures, which were in truth of a very homely and harmless nature, was in itself a subtle flattery. Then the pleasant fluency of talk was more agreeable than he had expected as a change from a conversation "à deux," which his imperfect English and Thora's halting French confined strictly to interchange of love-words and common-places. Even the surroundings, once so familiar as to be unnoticed, the very way in which the coffee was served, made him perceive that the lodging where he now dwelt was very unhomelike—that Thora had not yet made it homelike. Poor Thora! with her Orcadian education, and her three day old acquaintance with France and French habits, it was hardly possible for her to do great things.

The moment Thora came into his thoughts Gaspard became conscious that they involved a certain disloyalty, and rose to go far sooner than he would have liked.

"But you will come back again soon," said Madame Harache, clasping his hand, and looking at him with a tender yearning on her hard face.

"As soon as you like, ma mère; if I may bring my wife with me," he answered,

gravely; "but I do not like to leave her alone."

Madame Harache's face gloomed over, and she let his hand drop. "Do not talk thus before your sisters," she exclaimed. "They are young and innocent girls."

"I have said nothing they should not hear," he answered. "I speak of a girl as innocent, and nearly as young as Barbe. May I not bring her with me to see you?"

"No," answered Madame Harache, coldly and abruptly.

"Then I cannot return," said Gaspard, gravely.

The two young girls who had heard this colloquy without understanding it, and had been wholly at a loss to comprehend the strange circumstances which had attended Gaspard's coming home, looked at each other in bewilderment.

"Why are you so grave, Gaspard?" asked Barbe, too curious to keep silence. "And why do you not live at home as you used to do?"

"That is a thing which our mother will explain to you if she thinks it right you should know, *petite cœur*," replied Gaspard, with a quiet reticence that astonished his mother. She was prepared to hear him burst into some romantic defence of his action that would win his sisters over to his side, and further complicate the family rebellion. It seemed strange to her that he should make no effort to lessen her daughters' allegiance to her, now that the opportunity was offered him; and his calm alarmed her more than his violence could have done; it showed more strength, more power of resistance, than she thought he possessed. One can contradict words; but silence is invincible, and it is a weapon that women dread.

She had as yet kept her trouble to herself, thinking that she would soon conquer Gaspard's determination, and lead him into the path she wanted him to tread. But after he had gone away this evening—perfectly fixed in his resolve not to return unless his wife came with him, though he parted affectionately from Barbe and Lucie, and courteously from herself—she began to long for a confidant and adviser. After the fashion of women, she liked to have a man approve of her actions even when she would have ignored his disapproval; and next day she went to Monsieur Meudon, and told him the whole story of Gaspard's folly and obstinacy.

Monsieur Meudon took it lightly, as a man of the world who had seen such

things before, and did not overrate their strength and permanence.

"C'est la jeunesse!" he said calmly. "One expects a young man to have his follies. Indeed, I am well pleased that he should sow his wild oats before he marries my daughter; he will make the better husband afterwards."

"Alas!" answered Madame Harache, "this seems to be a crop which he is determined to reap as well as to sow."

"Madame," her adviser assured her politely, "I cannot believe that the son of a lady so eminently reasonable as yourself, will long display a folly so unworthy of his parentage. Gaspard is young—young enough to do many things of which he will repent. Well, my daughter also is young. Let us give up all thoughts of the marriage taking place till a year is past. By that time Gaspard will have tired of his fair barbarian, and will be only too glad of the loophole of escape offered him by your refusal to recognise his marriage with her; he will seize the opportunity of breaking his connection with her by marrying a young girl of position and fortune suitable to his own."

"I trust he will!" said Madame Harache, sighing rather hopelessly.

"Meanwhile, so long as his infatuation lasts," Monsieur Meudon went on, "treat him gently, and let him fancy that you are acceding to his wishes. Do not definitely refuse a demand which assuredly you will never definitely grant, lest in anger and impatience he should fulfil his threat of alienating himself entirely from you."

"I fear that he will not give me the opportunity of doing as you advise," answered Gaspard's mother. "He has said that he will not enter my house again unless I permit him to bring that girl with him."

"That is unfortunate; but there are other places. He has not vowed never to enter my house if I ask him to visit me; and a subordinate cannot, without a discourtesy which would be most inadvisable, refuse his employer's invitations. Also, he cannot expect me to receive this young person who, failing your consent, is not his wife. I will arrange that you shall see him, in a fashion that shall seem accidental. For the rest, I merely indicate the course of treatment which you should pursue; you, madame, will fill up the outline with more skill than I lay claim to. It is a matter which requires diplomacy, and diplomacy, as we all know, is a science in which women invariably surpass men."

Madame Harache felt that she must repay the compliment:

"I trust less to my own powers," she said, "than to the attractions of Mademoiselle Sophie. She is so good, so gentle, that I have no doubt Gaspard will soon regard her with an affection which will eradicate a foolish passion for a mere pretty face."

Madame Harache spoke in mere courtesy, believing very little in her own prediction, yet her words were in some degree prophetic.

Gaspard could not refuse to go to his employer's house, and he found his visits there increasingly pleasant. He had always liked Madame Reyer; the touch of originality about her was a refreshing variety from ordinary society, and though he began by taking little notice of Sophie Meudon, he ended by becoming interested in the quiet, plain, little girl, and seeking to be the means of lighting up her face with one of her rare, slow smiles.

Sophie did not say much—did not apparently do much to win his attention. She listened well; it was one of her talents; and Gaspard, like most young men, was fond of talking, especially now that his wanderings in foreign parts gave him a subject that was in some sort his own. Madame Reyer began questioning him about his travels. Sophie, who was busy with some embroidery, went on with her work for a minute or two, then gradually the stitches became slower. She paused to look at Gaspard, with the needle in her hand, and finally the work slipped from off her knee, and she remained listening to the young man. One would have said that she was absorbed in his words; but there was a certain force about the seemingly-passive attitude that compelled Gaspard to notice the absorption. He did so, and while it flattered him, it disturbed his fluency. He talked at random for a second or two, and was beginning to stammer, when Madame Reyer came to the rescue with a useful interruption.

She had observed her niece's little bit of comedy, and its effect on Gaspard, with considerable amusement; but as she was really interested in the young man's talk, the amusement became tempered with irritation, when the pantomime threatened to stop the flow of it.

"Sophie, you have let your embroidery fall," she said abruptly; "it will take you all your life to finish it if you are so idle." Sophie sighed, picked up her work, and began to arrange her bright-hued silks.

She cast an appealing glance at Gaspard as she did so, which made him feel that perhaps Madame Reyer was a shade too severe in her management of her niece; and then as he returned the look, he could not but observe how pretty the girl's plump white hands looked as they disentangled the strands of silk. He tried to go on with what he had been saying, but after a few minutes the former pantomime was repeated, and Sophie was again looking and listening, as if she had forgotten everything in the world but Gaspard Harache and his words.

Again he became confused. This time he stopped of his own accord, with an apology for having talked so much; and asked if Mademoiselle Meudon would not give them some music. Sophie was a bad musician, and she knew it. But now she went to the piano without hesitation, and opening it, began to play. She executed a dozen bars or so of an indifferent piece in an indifferent fashion, then stopped abruptly.

"I cannot play to-night," she said, "I cannot attend to the notes; I am thinking of the places Monsieur Harache has been talking of. Will you not tell us more about these strange countries?" she added, turning to Gaspard.

"I fear I have already talked too much," he protested.

"Oh, no; it is so interesting. I always like to hear about foreign countries. At school the companion I liked best was an English girl; she lived in a town called—comment le dit-on?—Ar—Hartlepool. Perhaps Monsieur Harache has been there?"

Gaspard admitted that his journeyings had not led him to the town in question.

"It seems to be a very strange place, and the life the people lead—ah! que c'est drôle! I never tired of hearing my friend—her name is Elinor Mason—speak of her home; and I have promised to visit her there some day if papa and la tante Cathérine will permit it."

However discomposed Gaspard might be at the moment by the girl's interest in his narrative, it was full of subtle flattery which would not fail to win his interest and good-will. "These to hear did Desdemona seriously incline." How could Othello help loving her for it? Gaspard wondered as he went home why he had hitherto felt so little interest in Sophie Meudon, on the few occasions when they had met. He now found her most charming and amiable; not the sort of woman one loved, indeed—love was for beautiful women like Thora

—but with whom one could have a pleasant, friendly companionship. She was so intelligent, he thought; yet, be it observed, Sophie had not uttered a word that was not utterly commonplace. It was not by speech that she produced her effects.

Gaspard had spent a pleasant evening, and in this case there was no undercurrent of doubt or distrust to mar his satisfaction. Therefore a tired and sullen look on Thora's face, as it met him on reaching home, jarred upon his mood. He gave himself some credit for taking no notice of it, and began to tell her all, or nearly all, that had passed at Monsieur Meudon's. But Thora had been alone all day, as well as all the evening, and felt lonely and depressed, for she had no other companionship than her husband's. It was inevitable that he should go out every day to his work; but that made it the more incumbent on him to spend what time he could with her. It is true that, not being devoid of common sense, she had agreed that it was advisable for him to accept Monsieur Meudon's invitation. Still, he need not have enjoyed himself so much. But she was too proud to complain yet; and, trying to be patient, she seemed only indifferent, which surprised and wounded Gaspard a little.

He was often invited to go to Monsieur Meudon's after this, and as the weeks went on he took more pleasure in his visits to his employer's family. He began to feel the limits of Thora's companionship; and since he had forbidden himself all intercourse with his own people, he was the more grateful for this society, which resembled in some degree the home he had forfeited. At least, this was the explanation he gave himself when he analysed the matter at all. To Thora he merely said that he must keep on good terms with his employer; now that it was not likely that he would receive any help from his mother in his career, Monsieur Meudon's good graces were invaluable. She accepted the statement, though she disliked his frequent absences. But her objection was only the weariness of a lonely woman, not the distrust of a jealous one. She knew that there was a Mademoiselle Meudon; she had asked Gaspard how she looked, and other questions; but it never entered her mind to be jealous of her. She was Gaspard's wife, she never suspected that her claim to the title could be disputed; and she accepted the rights and duties which that name involved with the quiet, passionless fidelity of a

peasant woman who would never have a thought of being unfaithful to her husband though she has utterly ceased to love him, and expects, without ever thinking of the matter, the same unswerving truth from him. They were husband and wife, bound to each other for life; there could be no question of another love for either.

In one sense, she had no cause for jealousy. To the extent of his consciousness, Gaspard was faithful to his wife. Sophie Meudon was not the sort of woman to rouse in him the swift headlong passion he had felt for Thora Sweynson; but she could establish herself as a pleasant necessity in a man's life; and as his wife's temper became, for one reason and another, sullen and fretful, Gaspard found Sophie's society a restful change. Sometimes he could not help comparing the two, and the comparison made him sigh. Perhaps it was an unjust one, for their circumstances were very different. Had Sophie been the unacknowledged wife, standing lonely and friendless in a foreign land, ignored by her husband's kindred, full of unsatisfied longings, and disappointed in impossible hopes, her face might have been less bright, her manner less tenderly attentive. But when it is a question of the woman who conduces most to his comfort—a thing very dear to his heart—a man seldom considers how much or how little circumstances aid her to perform her part. A man's love—not his quickly-born, quickly-spent passion, but his steady-going, for-daily-use affection—is given, like the prize of a handicap race, to the runner who first reaches that winning-post, regardless of the fact that the competitor who comes second may have been placed far behind at the start, and have had a greater task to accomplish. Gaspard did not discuss this point with himself. He only knew that Sophie always welcomed him with a smiling face, and that Thora was exacting and irritable; but he would have said with firm conviction that he loved the one, and looked upon the other only as a friend.

Once Gaspard met his mother at Monsieur Meudon's. She was sitting talking to Madame Reyer in her outdoor garments, that her appearance might have an aspect of chance in the young man's eyes. Before long she rose to go, and when she had said good-bye to the others—bestowing a specially affectionate kiss on Sophie—she turned to Gaspard with a pathetic smile.

"Do I ask too much of you, my son," she said, "if I request you to walk home with me?"

"You confer a favour on me," he answered with a gravity that set the phrase far above mere compliment.

At first, however, they had not much to say to each other. Madame Harache spoke with affection of Sophie Meudon, and Gaspard agreed with her with evident sincerity. But no other subject of conversation arose till they were near Madame Harache's house.

"You do not often pass this way, Gaspard," she said then.

"No, not often."

"Can I never hope that you will again cross the threshold of the house where you were born?"

"You know the conditions on which alone I can do so."

Madame Harache sighed. "You ask such an impossible thing!" she exclaimed.

"Not impossible! I even venture to hope that some day my mother will regain her better self, and grant my wish."

"Cherish no such hope. And yet—would it indeed make you happy if I consented to your wishes?"

"It would," Gaspard replied to the question; but Madame Harache saw that his face did not brighten much.

"Well, who knows!" she answered. "Yet I promise nothing. But I have not yet found courage to register my disapproval of your marriage, since you call it a marriage. It is possible that I may never say the words that make it null. But do not hope too much; it is difficult for me to give up the desire to have Sophie Meudon for my daughter-in-law. She is so sweet; I could love her so much."

So Gaspard returned home feeling hopeful; but his hope was lacking in elation.

NOTICE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I've told you all I can remember of the dear boy—you shall see any subsequent accounts that may come to me from Rutland Bay detailing his illness," said the Rev. Joshua Parker, addressing Sir Peter. "He was always fragile and delicate—that picture, though a little roughly done, is as like him as could be."

The Rev. Joshua Parker had followed his letter to the Castle within twenty-four hours, and now sat narrating to Sir Peter the story of Gervase Critchett's brief life.

The minister's tall, thin figure presented a striking contrast to Sir Peter's short, stout one. He had large features and solemn, grey eyes. There was one point of resemblance between the two men—a bald patch on the top of the head in the region of the organ of benevolence, which suggested the idea that the excessive use of that organ had destroyed the roots of the hair.

Sir Peter took up the roughly-executed photograph once more. It was that of a boy of a Greek type of beauty, with large, dreamy eyes, and an abundance of curly hair.

"Poor Gervase!" he sighed. "The image of his father! He would have brought back my young days to me!" And then he sighed again.

The minister sighed too. "It is a mysterious dispensation of Providence; a grievous blow to you, Sir Peter, no doubt, and to me also. When I passed this way a month ago and looked up at your Castle, high among the Fells, I said to myself, 'I

shall soon be bringing glad tidings to the master of that house, and lo! instead——'" he broke off abruptly. There could be no doubt as to the strength of the bond which had existed between him and the orphan boy.

"You passed this way a month ago?" queried Sir Peter, feeling the necessity of a brief respite from the sad subject. Then, as the recollection of Madge's pitiful confession of a second abstracted letter crossed his mind, he added, hurriedly: "Ah, yes! yes, I remember; it must have been just about the time of my birthday festivities."

"It was just after, Sir Peter. I arrived at Liverpool, on my way to Upton, on the morning of the twenty-second. I remember, during the ensuing week, reading an account of your birthday festivities in a Cumberland paper."

"Ah, you should have been here and taken part in them; we kept things going merrily for nearly a week."

"I should have been at Upton during that week had not my plans been entirely changed by an extraordinary occurrence."

"An extraordinary occurrence!" repeated Sir Peter, all eager curiosity in a moment.

But instead of attempting to satisfy that curiosity, Mr. Parker leaned forward in his chair, fixed his solemn eyes full upon Sir Peter, and said, sententiously:

"Once I was a gardener's boy!"

Sir Peter jumped to his feet with a spring, and laid his hand on the minister's shoulder. "Ah," he said, delightedly, "and some benevolent person rescued you from that position, educated you, and sent you forth to teach and to preach?"

Mr. Parker shook his head. "Not a bit of it; I have only myself to thank for the choice of a calling with which I am thoroughly in harmony."

Sir Peter walked away to the window.

Mr. Parker's next words brought him back at a run. They were:

"Have you ever studied the theory of transplanting, Sir Peter?"

"Transplanting, transplanting!" repeated Sir Peter, "that's one of the many things I have not yet, through pressure of occupation, been able to give a thought to."

As he said this, it flashed into the old gentleman's mind that the "theory of transplanting," as propounded by the Rev. Joshua Parker, might be a thoroughly congenial one; and instantly there rose up before him a vision of backgrounds of shrubs, and foregrounds of flowers, removed from one corner of the Castle grounds to another, and, if they didn't do there, to somewhere else.

"People frequently," the minister continued, "carry out the principles of an art without giving much thought to them. I in my young days not only carried out the principles of the art of transplanting, but thought about them and built a theory on them."

"Ah, an ingenious, thoughtful lad!" said Sir Peter, thinking what a protégé this gardener's boy would have made.

"One of the wisest of our statesmen made a noteworthy remark about the uselessness of 'matter in its wrong place.' I never saw a shrub or flower that needed sunshine pining in the shade, or vice versa, without thinking of it. The thing that in its right place would have been a joy and a beauty, and so have played the part it was meant to play in the scheme of creation, was, in its wrong place, simply so much inert useless matter."

"Ah," murmured Sir Peter, "I'll get you to make the round of my flower-garden while you're here. You might make a few suggestions."

The minister went on.

"After a time my eye, trained to detect matter in its wrong place, wandered from plants to the men and women about me. As with the plants, so I found it with my fellow-creatures; and I came to the conclusion that half the sins and the miseries of the human race arose from the fact of people being planted amid unsuitable surroundings."

"And you tried your hand at transplanting men and women," cried Sir Peter, excitedly, now thoroughly convinced that the subject was a congenial one.

"I did my best, Sir Peter, but that was

little enough. My eye, trained to detect want of harmony between person and place, suggested more work than my feeble hands could accomplish. In fact, to have accomplished one quarter of it, I must have played the part of Providence to the community generally."

"And a very good part to play, too, my dear sir," said Sir Peter, sympathetically.

"But so much beyond my capabilities," replied the minister, "that, after I adopted my sacred calling, I was almost driven to regret the power my eye had acquired of detecting matter in its wrong place. I was perpetually tormented with a desire to set things straight." Sir Peter's face here became aglow. "There were peers of the realm I should like to have transplanted from their grand houses to costermongers' cellars, and there were hewers of wood and drawers of water whom I would have made peers of the realm. It was this sense of the fitness of things that made me say, so soon as I set eyes on Gervase Critchett: 'That boy is out of place among working men.' And on the very evening that I was starting for Upton—what's the matter, my dear sir; do you suffer from cramp?"

"A trifle now and then," said Sir Peter, giving one or two vigorous stamps. "I've been sitting still a good bit this morning—ever since I've been listening to you. How would it be to take a turn outside on the terrace? The wind has lulled a bit. After all, it's only a sou-wester."

Only a sou-wester! But that sou-wester had done its work well during the night, as the stripped trees and battered flower-beds in the garden testified. The damaged sea-wall also below Saint Cuthbert's Church had a tale to tell of the combined fury of wind and wave, and the fishing-boats, drawn up high on the beach, showed that the weather-wise fishermen knew well enough that that fury was as yet but half spent.

Just now, however, as Sir Peter had said, the sou-wester was taking a rest, and the terrace, under a fitful noon-day sun, looked a fairly-tempting promenade.

Mr. Parker made a brief exclamation as to the wind-swept clearness and beauty of the surrounding landscape.

"You were saying an unusual occurrence took place at Liverpool," said Sir Peter, eager as a child to get the finish of what promised to be an interesting story.

"Ah, yes! I was saying that just as I had detected the want of harmony between

Gervase Critchett and his surroundings, so did I, on the night of my arrival at Liverpool, detect the incongruity of another person—this time a young woman—with her surroundings."

"Ah, a young woman!"

"I had been spending the evening with a brother minister, and, as I was going back rather late to my hotel, I met a policeman with a young woman in his charge. Now there are some people who look in their right place on their road to a police-station in charge of the police, and one is delighted to leave them to the surroundings that so admirably become them. But a single glance into this young woman's face showed me that whatever might be her right place, assuredly it was not within the walls of a prison."

"Ah! Good-looking girl, eh?"

"It was not her good looks, but the utter forlornness and hopelessness that at first attracted me. I caught sight of her face beneath a gas-lamp—it was haggard, death-like in its pallor; a quantity of jet-black hair hung about it. She was dressed entirely in long, limp, grey garments. I could have fancied some poor soul, bidden against its will to come forth from the tomb, looking much as she looked."

Sir Peter stopped abruptly in his walk.

"Forlorn-looking, pallid, with jet-black hair," he repeated, thoughtfully. "Dressed all in grey too, and on the night after my birthday."

All Lance's ugly suspicions of Stubbs's double dealing at Liverpool seemed suddenly to have substance given to them.

On some one else's ear beside Sir Peter's the minister's narrative had fallen with startling effect. Madge, wrapped in her furs, was standing in the parapet-balcony where once Miss Shore had knelt, addressing her piteous prayer for mercy to the star-lit heavens. Preparations for the journey to Spain were now complete, and on that very afternoon, Madge, accompanied only by her maid, intended to set forth. She was standing now in that balcony of painful memories, looking her farewell to the beautiful landscape tricked by the fitful sunshine into a transient semblance of a summer smile.

"Good-bye, you dear lanes, where Lance and I have had so many canters together! Good-bye, dear stream, where we used to fish and boat through the summer mornings! Good-bye, dear woods; good-bye, dear hills," she was saying to herself.

Spain, it is true, might own to landscapes

far more magnificent than this; but only between the bars of a convent window would she catch glimpses of them, and—this it was that would take the colour and glory out of them all—there would be nothing of Lance in them.

Thus her thoughts ran, when suddenly the minister's story, summed up by Sir Peter, reached her ears, and forthwith the landscape became a blank to her, and her heart seemed to stand still, as she leaned over the parapet above the speakers in intense painful eagerness to catch what was to follow.

Sir Peter was eager for the sequel also. "What was she charged with, tell me—you did not let her go to prison?" he asked.

"I put the first of your questions to a man—a dock labourer, who followed them," answered Mr. Parker. "He told me that she had made a most determined attempt to commit suicide from the deck of a steamer under repair in one of the docks, and that it was only by the merest chance that the attempt had been frustrated. He had remained behind on this steamer till late in the evening, in order to finish some work, and by main force had held the girl back from her attempt to jump over its side into the basin——"

There came a low, startled cry from the balcony at this moment; and, before Sir Peter had time to realise who it was that stood there, Madge was beside him with clasped hands praying for the finish of the story. "She is alive, only tell me that," she prayed, with blanched cheeks and quivering lips.

Mr. Parker looked astonished. "Did you know her—Etelka McIvor?" he asked. "She said that she had not a friend in the world."

"She is alive, only tell me that!" implored Madge.

"Yes, she is alive and in safe keeping. I attended the next day at the police-court when she was charged with the attempt at suicide. No friends came forward to claim her, so I made myself known to the magistrate and volunteered to charge myself with her safe keeping."

Madge leaned against the stone balustrade of the terrace. This sudden reprieve from the sentence of her condemning conscience was almost more than she could bear.

Stubbs's story then, from beginning to end, was a fabrication! The chances were that the man or his confederate had traced the girl to Liverpool, and had there lost

sight of her. With an eye to a comfortable provision for himself in the future, and taking it for granted that Jane Shore would never again make her appearance at Upton, he had then fabricated what seemed to him a fitting end to the tragic story, and one most likely to bring about the fulfilment of Madge's wishes—a necessary condition this in order to the bringing about of the aforesaid comfortable provision for himself.

The insertion of the false statement in the Liverpool newspaper would be a matter of easy accomplishment to him, for the double reason that such sad stories were of daily occurrence in the place, and that his former connection with the Liverpool Press made ways and means ready to his hand.

All this in quick succession passing through Madge's brain, and coming hand in hand with her sudden revulsion of feeling, for the moment deprived her of the power of speech.

It was not so with Sir Peter; his ready exclamations and questions flowed in a stream.

"My dear sir, this is good news—I've not had better for many a day past! Lance will be overjoyed—"

Here he broke off, and looked at Madge.

"But you found a home for her, of course?" he went on, cheerily, after a moment. "Now tell us everything that happened—all you found out about her from beginning to end."

"Yes, I found a home for her. I took her first of all to the wife of the Wesleyan minister whom I knew intimately in Liverpool. A worthy woman she was, with eleven small children, and neither nurse nor maid-servant in the house. Now here there will be plenty of occupation, I thought, for the young lady. If she has a kind heart, and is grateful for her rescue from death, she will set to work with a will to help this poor Christian mother with her many burthens."

Sir Peter fumbled in his pocket, and presently produced from a letter-case an indelible pencil and a telegraph-form, two things, it may be remarked, which went as regularly into his pocket every morning as his purse or pocket-handkerchief.

"If you'll give me the address of that worthy woman, I think I'll send Miss Shore—ah, Miss McIvor, I mean—a few words of—of congratulation on—"

"She is not there now," interrupted Mr. Parker; "and if you'll allow me to make

the suggestion, she is not in the frame of mind at the present moment to appreciate congratulations, however kindly intentioned they may be."

Sir Peter looked disappointed as he put away his pencil; then a bright idea came to him, and he took it out again and began scribbling on his telegraph-form, making a writing-pad of his letter-case.

"Lance will be glad to know," he muttered half to himself.

Madge thought her ears must have played her false.

"Lance is on the Mediterranean!" she exclaimed.

"No, no, my dear; at Liverpool. Ah, you didn't know—there, I've let it out—it doesn't much matter. He altered his mind, I'm glad to say—came back from Marseilles, and is now at Liverpool investigating—ah well, investigating—something!"

Madge needed no further telling. In a flash of thought she pictured Lance at his dreary work at Liverpool—searching grave records perhaps, hearing a hundred sad stories in order to prove one false. She pictured the rush of joy which Sir Peter's telegram would bring to him at his hopeless task.

"Let me send it," she pleaded, laying her hand on the old gentleman's arm. "I should like it to go signed with my name."

It seemed to her that the one who had so nearly wrecked the man's happiness for him, might well be the one to send to him the glad tidings that her endeavours had been futile as well as misguided. Her message was a brief one:

"She is not dead. Come back at once.
MADGE."

FIREWORKS.

EVEN if there were no autumnal fogs in the air, and no signs of coming winter, there would be no danger of forgetting the approach of November. A whole month beforehand there begins a scattered fusillade of squibs and crackers, which increases in volume and intensity as the famous Fifth approaches. And what more evidence do we want of the tenacity with which the boy of the period clings to the favourite festival of those other boys, his predecessors, who have handed down to him the tradition of Guy Fawkes's Day, and of his resolve in turn to transmit these traditions unimpaired to future generations! Not that the love of the bright coruscations

and thundering bangs of our favourite fireworks is confined to boys. Their sisters watch the display, ensconced behind the window curtains, with equal delight, and the elder members of the family are just as much interested as the rest.

With the preliminary detonations of the approaching festival sounding in the ears, the question of "whence come the enormous supplies of fireworks that still hardly keep pace with the demand, and how are they made?" seemed to invite solution; and thus a fine, sunny morning, of what it was happily, in the present instance, a libel to call chill October, found us on the way to pay a visit to the establishment of one of the great masters of the pyrotechnic art.

The pleasant heights of Norwood and Gipsy Hill look down upon us; the Crystal Palace gleams proudly from its commanding eminence; and all about are new streets, new villas, new rows of shops contending for possession of the soil with fields and hedgerows. Had we come this way but yesterday we should have been in the midst of a stream of eager sportsmen bound for Croydon Racecourse; but to-day the tranquillity is profound. The men and youths are all gone to their daily employment; the children are at school; the wives and maids are busy about household matters. There is hardly a soul stirring upon the street, who can be asked to point out the way.

But the factory is close at hand after all—a side street leads up to a continuous wooden paling, too high to be peeped over by the curious; and in the paling there is a wicket-gate defended by sundry warning notices as to penalties incurred by trespassers, and a friendly admonition to "Beware of the Dog." The dog is not a myth, we can hear him bark, and his voice proclaims him a big one.

It will have been evident to the most careless observer—taking into consideration the locality and the nearness of the Crystal Palace—that the works in question can belong to none but the famous pyrotechnists, Messrs. Brock and Co., and a board upon the gateway confirms the fact. There is nothing obtrusive about a firework factory; but we may find that there is "that within that passeth show."

The first preliminary is to be seated by a blazing fire in the counting-house, where a number of clerks are calling over invoices and posting ledgers; and the next step is into the private office of the heads of the firm, where the representative of seven

generations of skilful and successful pyrotechnists sits in his arm-chair with an array of telephone disks before him, and regulates the march of his corps d'armée.

The great works of the year are over, indeed—the fêtes and displays, where figure immense views and set pieces all to be writ in flame, with gigantic wheels, rockets, shells, fire clouds and golden-rain all performing their functions; but the work of preparation is always going on; and now the day of small things has come, and the different branches of the works are actively at work in supplying the demand for the all-important festival of the Fifth.

Another establishment at Haroldswood, near Romford, is exclusively occupied in the manufacture of these minor fireworks, the demand for which goes on continually increasing. The more boys, the more fireworks; and there seems to be no limit to the supply of either.

And now, under the guidance of the courteous manager of the works, we start on our journey of exploration. The big dog, who proves to be a fine St. Bernard, wags his tail in a pacific manner—if not like St. Ninian, "friendly to strangers," he has no antipathy to persons properly introduced. If there are no architectural beauties about the firework manufactory, the aspect of things is nevertheless singular and surprising. Here stretches a prairie as far as the eye can reach, a level meadow, some seventy acres in extent, dotted over with low buildings and sheds, all connected by narrow tracks formed of a single plank, with a tramway meandering here and there; and overhead wires establishing telephonic connection with the different buildings. Each shed is separated by a space of at least twenty yards from any of its neighbours, and the magazines, where the more explosive mixtures are stored, are visible only as grassy hillocks; their contents being stored underground out of the reach of casual conflagrations.

Although a place of busy industry, it is surprising what a stillness reigns over the scene. No voices are heard; no clang and clatter of machinery. There is a gentle hum from the engine-house, but that is only audible in its immediate neighbourhood. And although there are several hundreds of people at work in the various buildings, there are not more than three or four together anywhere. Each little hut carries a board at the entrance setting forth the maximum weight of combustibles allowed within it, and the number of workers who

may be employed there. In the sheds where the more dangerous operations are carried on, only one man, perhaps, is allowed to work. All this isolation may induce taciturnity on the part of the employés, but it does not seem to affect their spirits, for everybody looks rather cheerful and "chirpy" than otherwise.

But to begin with, there are processes which involve not an atom of danger, and where the elaborate precautions, necessary in other parts of the works, can be dispensed with. There is paper, for instance, which, apart from its connection with pens and ink, cannot be considered a dangerous material, and paper in one form or another forms the outer covering of almost every description of firework. And in the paper-room we have every description of material, from the thinnest and toughest, to the heaviest; from tissue-paper to mill-board. Here also are a machine and an operator cutting up ream after ream into the proper sizes; it may be for cases for halfpenny squibs, or for half-a-crown rockets; but, anyhow, there are as many kinds of paper cases as there are of fireworks. The most imposing in appearance of these cases are designed for a firework known as Jack-in-the-box, and are formed of many folds of thick mill-board, and of a capacity to hold a perfect magazine of crackers. Mortars, also, are made of paper; mortars for discharging those shells which burst in the air and frizzle into a thousand jets of flame—not that these paper mortars are used in the grand displays, but iron ones, of which we shall say more anon.

Another building contains the paper-case makers, busy with paste and cores of various sizes in wood and brass; and this business of making and rolling the cases employs a number of female hands—hands which work with such skill and dexterity that squib cases, with their coloured trimmings—so attractive to the eye of youth—spring into existence as it were with a touch.

A rocket must have its stick; but what would it be without its stick? And in the making of rocket-sticks, there is here a considerable industry. Here is the carpenter's shop piled with baulks of timber that have been cut into convenient planks, and a circular saw is at work, cutting these planks into strips of the exact size and weight required. In other days the rocket was attached to its stick with string, and would sometimes burst from its ligatures, and leave its tail behind it; the stick being to the rocket what its tail is to the bird,

and deprived of it the projectile becomes erratic, waltzing round and round and probably clearing the decks of its admirers. Under the present system, a hollow paper case forms part of the rocket, and the end of the stick, having been first placed in a revolving cutter, which rounds it to the exact size, is fitted into the case and secured by a transverse pin which holds everything tight.

Above the carpenter's shop is the lathe-room, where turners are at work turning the centre of wheels, and this part of the establishment looks like a toyshop with hundreds of cart-wheels and curious devices in turnery-ware; but all are for the service of the Fire King, to take their places in some set-piece, where maroons, and gerbs, and tourbillons chase each other in fantastic fiery circles. Then there is the making of pill-boxes, thousands of pill-boxes, to be afterwards filled not with nauseous doctor's stuff, but with the composition of these brilliant coloured fires, which are destined to make our back gardens glow like bowers of Eden in the midst of November gloom.

And now we are under the arched roof of the great storehouse, where are stacked a host of appliances for the grand school of pyrotechny—the great latticed-frames on which are set up the outlines of the fiery pictures, such as are shown weekly during the season at the Crystal Palace, outlines that are traced out in strips of cane, which support the cases of various coloured fires.

And here is the studio of the artist of the establishment, the designer of the great pieces of the battles, sieges, triumphs; of the fire fountains and revolving stars; of the flowers that as they fade blossom again in still more glowing form. A snug room is the artist's, where he is at work with his coadjutor, where the walls are hung with old prints of the great firework displays of old times; such as that given at the Peace of Ryswick, or the still more famous display at the wedding of Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette, which ended in a great panic and loss of life, as Dumas describes it, a true if evil presage of the future of the Royal pair. Then there was a great display in Saint James's Park in the middle of last century, and others of more recent date—the "peace" fireworks of 1856, for instance—are they not to be found reproduced in those big volumes of the "Illustrated" and "Graphic," that adorn the shelves of the studio? And among these will be found

many great displays, given by the firm we are visiting in India, at the Prince of Wales's visit, and again at the proclamation of the Queen as Empress; a fine display at Philadelphia Centennial, in 1876; and many others.

Since 1865, there have been the summer displays at the Crystal Palace; and two of the finest shows of recent times were given by Messrs. Brock at Lisbon, the first on the marriage of the Crown Prince, when the whole Portuguese Fleet was illuminated by the firm, when the Tagus was all ablaze with light, and the shores and skies seemed filled with sparkling fires. The success of this fête led to another order for five thousand pounds worth of fireworks—a large order this—to celebrate the visit of the King of Sweden to Lisbon.

And this brings us to the great mortar which was made for this Lisbon fête, a mortar of steel banded with wrought iron, which carries a shell twenty-five inches in diameter. The mortar is slung upright on wheels, and was driven over London Bridge on its way to the docks, a man standing inside and driving the team. It attracted considerable attention, as might be guessed, as one of the queerest vehicles that ever crossed the bridge. This mortar has never been fired at a public fête in England—the Crystal Palace people are afraid for their glass, for the contents of the enormous shell—it carries, with a charge of three pounds of powder, to a height of some three hundred feet—spreads over nearly an acre of sky space. It was fired experimentally not long ago on Croyden Racecourse in the daytime, and the effect was most curious. The cloud of gerbs whistling about in the air, shut out the light of day

Like some hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

Birds flew hither and thither in terror, and a hare leapt from her form and ran blindly to and fro. But at night! Well, when the big mortar is discharged at night with its twenty-five inch shell, may we be there to see!

Then there is a whole park of artillery of a smaller calibre, stacked about the place. Indeed, we are told that the whole available "siege train" numbers some eleven hundred guns of different calibres—none of them adapted, however, for human slaughter, but destined to enliven mankind with brilliant, harmless "feux de joie!"

Proceeding on our way, we are led

further into the labyrinth of wooden track-ways, leading to the carefully-isolated sheds, where operations classed as dangerous are carried on. The danger is one of degree; for it may be said of most of the firework compositions, that, although highly inflammable, they are not violently explosive. Gunpowder, indeed, is but sparingly used, both for the indispensable bangs, and also for impelling and scattering charges of more choice combustibles. Thus the danger is rather of rapid conflagration than explosion; and from the small quantities of explosives allowed in each workshop, when fires occur, as they will sometimes, their effects are limited to one small area, and they rarely result in serious damage to person or property. Still, mixing fireworks is not exactly like mixing puddings; and the precautions enforced by the Government, as well as those insisted on by the firm, are very detailed and strict.

Here is a hut, where three young women are loading squibs, with a tray of composition before them. They wear a sort of uniform of blue serge, which is really very pretty and becoming. Pockets are not allowed for either sex: they might contain matches and pipes in one case, or scissors and needles in the other. Anything of iron or steel is rigorously tabooed. The wooden pathways are swept clear of grit. The workshops are lined with varnished wood, fastened with copper nails. Dust and cobwebs are strictly banished. The precautions against fire are simple, and yet effective. Outside every hut stand as many fire-buckets as there are workpeople employed within. On the alarm of fire every one seizes his or her bucket and hurries to the scene. The fire is sure to be sharp, but short, and, by the time a hose could be got into play, the necessity for it would have ceased.

Altogether there are some hundred of these little buildings scattered about—like some settlement in the backwoods—all provided with double swing-doors, which are carefully padlocked when the workpeople leave. Here is one where a man works alone, engaged in mixing composition which he rubs with a brush through a sieve of copper wire. Then there are men banging away with wooden mallets on copper ramrods, loading rockets, perhaps, or Roman candles. And here are magazines, with trays of composition just come from the drying-shed, stars for rockets, cut up in little cubes, like sweet-

meats, coloured fires of all kinds, and the materials for the beautiful golden-rain. The fine downpours of golden-rain at the Crystal Palace, by the way, cover a space, we are told, five hundred feet wide, and a hundred feet high.

But as far as numbers go, the making of squibs carries the day. How many huts are occupied by the patient girls in blue we should be afraid to say, but wherever we go they are hard at work, filling, "choking," "dubbing," "bouncing." As fast as these are finished, they are collected, tied in dozens, and stored away in the magazines. As fast as one magazine receives its complement, another is opened. And then there are the service magazines, where the fireworks of all kinds are collected. Here, besides the more familiar sorts, we have "Mines of Serpents," "Italian Streamers," "Chinese Flyers," "Golden Pots," "Jewel Fountains," and "Wheels" of every description arranged according to the requirements of the myriad dealers, who, as the "Fifth" approaches, become more and more clamorous for supplies. Behind these again is the British boy who has been saving up his pocket-money for weeks, perhaps investing it in a firework club, and who in a few weeks' time will contemplate, with a kind of proud regret, the spent and exploded cases as they lie strewn about lawns and garden-paths, about courts and alleys, and over wide ranges of the damp and silent fields.

We wrote British boy; but it would be more correct to say English, for the Scotch scarcely celebrate Guy Fawkes Day at all. They expand a little into fireworks on New Year's Day. But the Scotch boy is not for squibs like his brother over the border. Perhaps he has not so much pocket-money. Perhaps he has an inborn distaste to the "banging" of "saxpences." Nor has the fifth of November celebration taken much root in the colonies. English settlers may burn their powder as usual, but it is more in memory of the old country than of Guy Fawkes. And, indeed, on every side the old memory of the celebration has died away, and is nothing but a jolly youthful fête which anybody might join in. Here is the Guy Fawkes of to-day, as we see him in the bright hand-bills of the firework shops, no longer a fierce conspirator, but a gay and jovial scarecrow, his peaked hat stuck full of rockets and pin wheels, bunches of squibs stick out of his coat-sleeves, and, with his dark lantern and his lighted match, he

sits doubled up alongside a barrel of gun-powder, while the straw of his stuffing oozes out of his dilapidated navy boots.

And now we have seen almost all there is to be seen in the firework factory, except the laboratory, and that is only opened when experiments are actually going on. But, stay; there is another important branch of the business: of a more utilitarian character. This is the manufacture of signal rockets, and other lights for the mercantile marine. The rockets are made of great power, and they are provided with a self-lighting apparatus, which renders the shipmaster independent of any match, or extraneous source of fire. There is also a capital flare for use in fishing-boats, chiefly trawlers, both for signalling and to give warning of their whereabouts to approaching vessels; and this has a safe and ingenious plan of self-lighting, which is the subject of a patent.

Altogether, as the result of our visit, it is pleasant to find that in matters pyrotechnic, England holds her own, and something more than her own; for foreign showmen are often obliged to have resort to our English pyrotechnists when native resources are insufficient for fêtes on a large scale. From India come orders from the great Rajahs; from Australia, from public bodies, and the rich generally; and, indeed, there is a branch of this firm established in Melbourne to supply the demand. And the continent of Europe in general is often a customer for English fireworks. China, indeed, sends us fireworks; but only those absurd little crackers, valued mainly for their cheapness, which come over at the firework season. We have just seen a case of them, packed in quaint boxes like tea-cases. But in every other way the Chinese, in spite of their thousands of years of experience, have nothing to teach us, but everything to learn.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

"MORE skilful in all points of navigation than any that ever was before his time, in his time, or since his death; of a perfect memory, very great observation, eloquent by nature, skilful in artillery, expert and apt to let blood and give physics unto his people according to the climate. He was of low stature, strong limbs, broad-chested, round-headed, brown hair, full-bearded; his eyes large, and round, and clear; well-favoured, fair, and of a cheerful countenance."

Thus Stow described him. "A man fearful to the King of Spain"; a "lyme of the devil," as the Spaniards themselves called him; but to the English, the champion of their country and religion; a man true to his word, merciful to those under him, but brooking no liberties, and hating nothing so much as idleness.

Of the several conflicting accounts of his birthplace, parentage, and early life, we give the most probable and most widely-accepted, without mention of the others. Drake, then, was born, 1540, of a Devonshire family, connected with the Drakes of Ash, whose crest, an eagle displayed, Drake wore in preference to the one conferred on him by the Queen. Robert, his father, was probably brother to one John Drake of Exmouth, a merchant distinguished for his energy and success.

In his preface to "Drake Revived" (1626), Sir Francis Drake, Bart., nephew to the great seaman, tells us that the father was forced, whether on account of religious persecution is doubtful, to fly from Devonshire to Kent, "there to inhabit in the hull of a ship, wherein many of his younger sons were born. He had twelve in all." These sons did not belie their name, but took quite naturally to the water, and most of them died at sea.

At an early age, Drake was apprenticed to the master of a small lugger; and so diligent and dutiful was he that the master, dying childless, left him the bark. But such a petty trade did not long fit a man of his temper; his mercantile and adventurous spirit urged him to occupations and climates where greater and more rapid profits might be got. So, in 1567, he joined the expedition of his kinsman, John Hawkins, the slave-trader—not a creditable vocation to modern minds, albeit then it was an honourable calling enough, and Hawkins earned his well-known crest of a negro's head chained, by following it. This enterprise, seemingly the only occasion on which Drake was concerned in the slave trade, failed, for the Spaniards set upon them at San Juan de Lua, the "Judith," of which Drake had command, and the "Minion," in which Hawkins sailed, being the only ships that escaped. When, in the spring of 1569, he reached England, Drake was straightway sent up to town to report the ill-success of the expedition to Cecil, Lord Burghley, the Secretary, and thus began his introductions to the great, which was a matter of importance to a pushing, business-like adventurer. Drake now swore revenge

on the whole Spanish nation; but first, of course, he must get compensation for his losses; and finding that nothing could be got out of Spain, by the Queen's letters or otherwise, he resolved to help himself. The secret of his success lies in the coolness and caution with which his sudden attacks were thought out, as is well illustrated by his behaviour on this occasion.

For he made a couple of voyages to reconnoitre and to get the requisite knowledge, and, having got this, he thereupon, with good deliberation, resolved on a third voyage with intent to land at Nombre de Dios, and sack the granary of the Spaniards' golden harvest. In May, 1572, the expedition sailed from Plymouth, and, after sundry adventures, the crew landed at their destination, and put the Spanish enemy to flight after a sharp skirmish, in which Drake received a severe and, as will be seen, a most unlucky wound. For when they came to the treasure-house, where was great store of pearls, jewels, and gold, after encouraging his men, who were somewhat backward, and "muttered of the forces of the town," he ordered the door to be broken open, but as he stepped forward to keep back the crush, "his speech, and sight, and strength failed him, and he began to faint." For fear of discouragement to his crew he had kept his wound secret till this fainting betrayed it, and so dismayed the already disheartened men that they forcibly carried their leader down to the boats, and returned to their ships treasureless. Thus did Drake's untimely swoon baffle his hope and intention of emptying "the Treasure of the World." However, for treasure he had come, and treasure he meant to have, or (as he looked on it) lawful compensation from Heaven's enemies. So, after much hardship and loss of life, rendered more bitter to Drake by the death of two brothers, leaving the sick behind and a few sound to tend them, he landed with only eighteen men and, joined by some friendly natives, set off across the isthmus.

It was on this march that he climbed that high tree whence he sighted the two oceans, and so carried away was he by his enthusiasm that he "besought Almighty God of his goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship in that sea." His prayer was granted. Wonderful enthusiasm, and pluck, and energy he must have needed, for hitherto he had failed in his enterprises; great skill, too, in keeping his hold over the spirits of his, naturally

at times, weary and disheartened crew. Twice more luck went against them. On one occasion the untimely drunkenness of a man robbed them of a rich treasure caravan. However, they sacked Venta de Cruz, and after exceeding great toll, with little to show, they returned to their one ship, the "Pasha," for they had scuttled the "Swan" to increase their land force. Another time they intercepted three caravans carrying in all thirty tons of silver, of which they took away what they could, and buried the rest; but before they could get back it had been discovered and retaken. So they returned to the Atlantic coast; but, lo! their boats were missing. A long raft was made, and off they went to hunt up the boats, which, after much risk, they found; and then after bidding a grateful farewell to their native allies, they got back to their ships, and with a fair wind ran from Cape Florida to the Scilly Isles in twenty-three days. They arrived at Plymouth on August the ninth, 1573, during sermon-time, when "the news of Drake's return did so speedily pass over all the church, and surpass their minds with desire and delight to see him, that very few or none remained with the preacher, all hastening to see evidence of Heaven's love and blessing towards our Gracious Queen and country." Notwithstanding the several blows of ill-luck, the expedition was reckoned one of the most successful that had sailed to the Indies.

Drake now joined Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex, in Ireland. It seems that he had but little interest in the work; for, on Essex's death, in the autumn of 1586, he threw it up, and got ready for another voyage. He had now drawn on him the notice of the great, and had even told some of his adventures to Elizabeth, who doubtless urged him to further enterprise by pleasant but guarded speeches, and by exhibiting a hearty interest in his exploits; but she was far too cautious to expressly command him to further undertakings of a like nature. That would have amounted to open declaration of the war that she was trying by all her arts to ward off as long as possible.

In this next expedition he was joined by John Winter, in the "Elizabeth," eighty tons, and by three smaller vessels, the "Swan," the "Marigold," and the "Christopher," while he himself commanded in the famous "Pelican," alias the "Golden Hind," of one hundred tons. It is noteworthy, as a sign of the times, that this

fleet was well stored with provisions for bodily and mental comfort, and with rich furniture and ornaments for show, "whereby the civility and magnificence of his native country might, among all nations whithersoever he came, be the more admired." Drake had all possible luxuries, even to perfumes, and supped and dined off silver to the music of violins. It was the age of extravagant display. Money was quickly got, and as quickly spent. Men then "wore a manor on their backs;" and even Elizabeth, who seems to have been thrifty enough in many things, had some three thousand robes. Alarmists had a happily unrealised fear that such recklessness and luxury would soon undermine our English hardiness, and bring poverty on the nation.

The squadron left Plymouth on December the thirteenth, 1577. With his characteristic caution, Drake had so carefully concealed the destination of the fleet, that the crew thought they were bound for the Mediterranean, while the Spaniards naturally supposed that he would make a second descent on Nombre de Dios. The River Plate, however, was his real aim. It was on this expedition that the unpleasant Doughty episode occurred. Thomas Doughty, who went merely as a volunteer and personal friend, was put in command of a Portuguese ship that they fell in with. In a few days he was accused of appropriating objects of value; but Drake, deeming there was some private grudge under the charge, merely transferred Doughty to the "Pelican." There, however, similar complaints were brought against him; so Drake had to depose him, and sent him to the "Swan" in a private capacity. This treatment rankled in Doughty's mind, and he seems to have tried to stir up mutiny. The details are not known; but the long and short of it was that at Port St. Julian he was found guilty and executed. Drake's enemies seized on this as a handle against him; but the fact that his conduct on this occasion was never publicly questioned tends to prove that the sentence was morally and legally just. The fleet was now reduced to three ships, for the "Swan" and "Christopher" were broken up for firewood as no longer seaworthy. Soon it was to be reduced to one only, for, after clearing the Straits of Magellan, a raging storm came upon them and swept them down south. When it abated, the "Elizabeth" was lost to sight, and no

rendezvous had been fixed; the "Marigold" they had seen swamped, and all hands lost.

Not even now had this Ulysses of the New World and his crew rest. For they landed at the island of Mocha for provision and to stretch their sea-cramped limbs; but the natives fell upon them, killed two and wounded the rest of the company, Drake getting a severe hurt in the face. Of their two doctors, the "Pelican's" doctor was dead, and the other, for aught they knew, might be fathom-deep in the "Marigold," and "none was left but a boy, whose goodwill was more than any skill he had." Happily, Drake had some slight knowledge of surgery, and the men got well. He took no revenge on the natives, for he had no men to lose; moreover, he saw that he and his men had been mistaken for cruel Spaniards, whose were the only white faces these islanders had hitherto seen. Therefore he nursed the greater wrath against the Spanish, and sailed away to Valparaiso, where he helped himself to their belongings.

After this, having tidings of a "certain rich ship," called "Spitfire," he fell upon it, and, "making it spit silver," sailed away with much booty. Then, after beating far up the West Coast, on account of still contrary winds he was forced to give up his cherished hope of the North-West Passage, and launched out into the Pacific. For two months on they went, till they came to the Pellew Isles, which they called the Isles of Thieves; thence, with sundry adventures and discoveries, to Java, sticking by the way on a desperate shoal for twenty hours, and only being blown off by a lucky gust of wind. Then, rounding the Cape, Drake reached England on the twenty-sixth of September, 1580, with a rich freight and the renown of being the first Englishman who had circumnavigated the world.

Enquiry being made into his conduct, the whole ship's company, save another Doughty, bore witness that no barbarity could be laid to his charge. The plundering they admitted, but were in nowise ashamed of. This Doughty was John, the brother of Thomas, and was present at his brother's execution. We hear of him again, in 1583, as being in prison on a charge of negotiating with the King of Spain—who had set a price on Drake's head—to kill him "under colour of his own quarrel."

There were still many to clamour against

Drake as "the master-thief of the unknown world." But although the Queen hesitated to acknowledge his services, her holding back was a question of policy rather than of morality. She was unwilling to break with Spain. She had been doing her best to avert war from her own shores by playing off France against Spain; when that failed, by her half-support of the Prince of Orange, by trusting to luck and to her powers of mystification and dissimulation, and to the extreme caution of Philip.

But diplomacy was powerless to avert the war. It had got to come; it was in the air, so to speak. The current of public opinion, to which Elizabeth knew how to yield betimes, was daily running more strongly for war; and already Drake, and other "sea-dogs," were showing her that the best way to "keep it out of our own gate," was to cripple the foe. So, when it was represented that the treasure Drake had brought back was enough of itself to carry on the war for seven years, she answered the Spanish Ambassador that they might blame themselves for their losses; that the use of sea and unoccupied land, no less than of air, is common to all; that she could not recognise the Pope's right to give away the New World. On the fourth of April, 1581, she knighted Drake on board the "Golden Hind." Nor was the famous ship that ploughed the "furrow round the earth," unhonoured; she was long preserved at Deptford as a feasting and holiday resort, till she fell into utter decay, and a chair, made of her remnants, is preserved in the Bodleian at Oxford. Five years of well-earned repose were now enjoyed by Drake, who, as Mayor of Plymouth, in 1582, showed that he was as useful in a civil as in a warlike capacity.

Towards the end of 1585, he was at work again. Spain laid an embargo on English ships and goods; whereupon a fleet of twenty-five sail, which Drake commanded, set forth to make reprisals, with full permission and assistance from the Queen, though, it is said, she intended to disavow him if convenient. The voyage was a sufficient success: San Domingo and Cartagena were taken and ransomed. It was on this voyage that Drake paid a visit to the Virginian colony, and was besought by the colonists to take them back. It is generally thought now that potatoes and tobacco came over with them.

Drake returned in the middle of 1586, but had no long rest; for three months

after we find him in the Netherlands trying to concert a joint naval project. The hostile preparations of Spain were no secret, though as yet no formal declaration of war had been made. Drake's mission was not altogether unfruitful—involunteers, recommendation, and goodwill.

Wilkes, writing to Walsingham from the Hague in November, 1586, says: "If her Majesty shall determine that Sir Francis Drake do venture again to the Indies, it is not to be doubted that he shall have some good assistance from hence." He goes on to speak of "the necessity that the Queen's principal enemy be attempted that way. If he may enjoy his Indies quietly, he will make her Majesty and these countries soon weary of their defence."

In the spring of 1587, Drake was sent out in command of a strong squadron with orders to harass the King of Spain in his warlike preparations. Seven days after, the Queen practically countermanded the order by bidding him confine his operations to the capture of ships on the open sea. Luckily these orders did not reach Drake, though one wonders what his conduct would have been if they had, for he was as fearless of responsibility as of an enemy. So, in happy ignorance, Drake performed that well-known "singeing of the Spanish King's beard." Such an insult, it was felt, could not and would not be overlooked; the crash must come speedily now, and all the Captains were agreed that their one chance of victory was in making haste so to maim the Spaniards as to prevent all possibility of their landing anywhere in the British Isles.

A few repetitions of Drake's last exploit would have had the desired result; but in this good policy they were thwarted by the Queen's indecision and by violent storms; so that the Armada had time to be repaired and to appear just three hundred years ago, in full force off the Lizard; but, luckily for us, under bad management. The tale has been often told; we need not do more here than just mention how Medina Sidonia might have penned the English in Plymouth Sound; how, when he found Drake and Howard had joined, instead of stopping to fight he made straight for Calais, in the hope of communicating with the Duke of Parma; and how "his feathers were plucked one by one" on the way.

Thence, driven panic-struck by fireships, he was brought to bay off Gravelines, the

chief command falling to Drake, as Howard was somewhat in the rear, engaged in the capture of some vessel. Even when beaten, the foe seemed to Drake "wonderful great and strong." But they were utterly cowed, and Oquenda's brave retort to Medina Sidonia, "Let others talk of being lost, your Excellency has only to order up fresh cartridge," was not seconded, and the Spaniards fled home by way of the Orkneys.

All hope of Spain repeating her attempt was crushed by the expedition for reprisals that the Queen sent out in the spring of 1589. The shipping provisions at Corunna were destroyed; but otherwise the voyage was a great failure. It had been put under the divided command of Drake and Sir John Norris; it was victualled in the same scanty way as the year before; it was marked by a terrible loss of life.

Drake now again enjoyed a few years of repose before taking his last voyage. In 1593, he sat in Parliament for Plymouth, interesting himself in the water-supply and fortifications of that town, building flour-mills, and otherwise conducting himself usefully.

At the end of 1594, the Queen ordered him on a voyage with the same John Hawkins with whom he had begun his career. The expedition was foredoomed to failure; for it was not ready till August, 1595, and by then the Spaniards had got full particulars and had taken the needful precautions. As they came off Porto Rico, Hawkins died. The town had been put in a state of defence; other towns they found emptied of their treasure, so they could only burn them; and everywhere forts and batteries blocked their way. Drake was nearly worn out with dysentery, and that vexation proved too much for him. He died on the twenty-ninth of January, 1596.

MICHAELMAS DAISIES.

You wonder, darling, why I love
These late-blown daisies far above
The wealth of summer hours;
And why, since roses linger yet,
Although with autumn's dewdrops wet,
I wear these simple flowers.

Ah, child! the buds that blow for you
By spring winds shaken, washed with dew
From summer's tender skies,
Are not for me. I cannot wear
The rose you pluck with loving care,
The lily that you prize.

I had my roses long ago;
Fair thornless flowers, that filled with glow
And sweetness all my heart.

I had my lilies white and gold,
My hands were full as hands could hold
Of joys that left no smart.

But lo! they dropped, the roses red
That love had bound upon my head,
With bliss that seemed divine;
And dropped my lilies gold and white,
Fair symbols of the pure delight
That was so surely mine.

Ah child! I lost with those dear flowers
The last of all my summer hours;
I turned my stricken face,
Like Hezekiah, to the wall;
Life's autumn leaves were swift to fall,
And winter came apace.

My roses never bloomed again,
But God had pity on my pain,
And gave me in their stead
Such simple, humble flowers as these,
Not joy of heart, but poor heart's ease,
And I was comforted.

In lieu of love's most sacred ends
He gave good work to make amends,
My broken heart to bind;
For close heart-ties, denied to me,
He gave wide sympathies to be
A link to human kind.

So not unhappy, not unblest,
My heart is waiting for its rest—
The sure rest that remains;
And as the years go softly by,
I learn to count with equal eye
Life's losses and its gains.

My gathered flowers are safe, I know,
And where they are, I, too, shall go—
Ah, love! your teardrops start?
Nay, see my purple autumn flowers,
So life for me, in all its hours,
Hath gold, pure gold, at heart!

A DEAD LETTER.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

UNCLE ANDREW ALISON was not an easy or a pleasant person to live with. Audrey and I, his two nieces, both feared and detested him, and I cannot say how truly thankful I was when Duncan Ferrars asked me to be his wife. Audrey and I had lived with Uncle Andrew ever since when, in my seventh year and Audrey's ninth, our father had died in Canada—first in a small house in Holloway, then, after our uncle grew rich and was knighted, in a large house in Bedford Square, which was, I believe, the dullest abode in all London.

Our mother had died soon after our father, and, as Audrey and I did not get on well together, it may be easily imagined that a good, true-hearted man's love—though that man was only a poor struggling young doctor—was a real blessing to me.

Uncle Andrew was, I have often heard, one of the cleverest and most influential railway contractors of his day. He and my father had started in business, when

they were both young, with a small joint capital which had gradually grown into a colossal fortune. I do not wonder at this, for Uncle Andrew was careful of money almost to miserliness. Audrey and I had a small allowance, and throughout the whole establishment any luxury of furniture, food, or culture, was sternly forbidden as extravagance.

How my father had bequeathed his interest in the business he had helped to build up, or why, in default of a will, some legal settlement had not been made on our behalf, were questions which occurred to Duncan and me more than once when we began to consider ways and means. But to these questions I could give no answer at all. The only person who might have thrown some light on the subject was my mother's cousin, Cyril Holmes, who was a great friend of both of us, but especially of Audrey. However, Cyril, though he had been in the employment of Alison Brothers for many years, was no better informed than ourselves. As to asking my uncle directly, that was an extreme measure not to be resorted to lightly.

It was because Cyril Holmes's admiration of Audrey was no secret that Uncle Andrew frequently took the opportunity of telling us that he was a lazy, worthless fellow, who would never make his way in the world, or be worth the salary he drew. To these attacks, Audrey always listened with indifference, which would not have been the case had she really loved poor Cyril.

My uncle also took great pains to acquaint me with the extremely low estimation in which he held Cyril's friend, Duncan Ferrars; but this carefully instilled knowledge did not prevent us from deciding to ask his consent to our speedy marriage.

My lover obtained but a brief audience in which to plead our cause. From the sitting-room window, in which Audrey and I spent our mornings, I saw him come to the front door, and soon after I saw him go. It was not difficult to fill in the hiatus of that ten minutes.

The front door had barely closed behind Duncan when Lee, my uncle's confidential man, came to tell me that Sir Andrew wished to speak to me in the library.

If Audrey had cared for me as elder sisters sometimes care, she would by that time have been comforting me a little and trying to keep up my courage. As it

was, so soon as I told her that Duncan was coming across the Square, she began to practise the noisy part of the Moonlight Sonata, and only stopped playing, when Lee brought his message, to say :

"My goodness, Sylvia, I wouldn't be in your shoes—you're going to catch it."

"I don't care if I am," I replied, defiantly. "It will soon be over."

"He'll forbid you to see Mr. Ferrars again."

"I shan't be forbidden."

"You'll do yourself very little good by defying him."

"I shall do myself less by throwing Duncan over," I returned.

Audrey raised her eyebrows and twisted round on the music stool, which gave a horrid creak, as if it were jeering at me. Then Lee tapped at the door again.

"Sir Andrew's message was for Miss Sylvia to come directly," and he held the door open for me to pass. Lee was no friend of ours. He looked almost glad to have to hurry me to hear my fate.

My uncle was sitting in his big easy-chair with his back to the light, holding the Times newspaper before him. As he was a small thin man, he was completely hidden from me till such time as he should choose to lay down the paper, which he could not have been reading very intently, though he let me wait five minutes by the clock, pretending not to have heard Lee's announcement or my tremulous: "You sent for me, Uncle Andrew—here I am."

Presently he emerged from behind the paper which he had laid down, and looked at me. He had a small, thin, clean-shaven face, with resolute lines round his large mouth; his eyes were more piercing than any human eyes I have ever seen, and their keenness rarely softened, never entirely gave place to any other expression. I sometimes used to wonder if my father was or ever would have grown like his brother. The thought crossed me now, as taking off his heavy gold pince-nez and looking straight at me, he said :

"Ah, Audrey—I mean Sylvia—there you are. Now, what is all this nonsense?"

"What is all what nonsense, uncle? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Yes, you do, miss; don't waste my time with silly varifications"—then I saw that I might as well put away any faint lingering hope I had ventured to bring into the room—"you understand me perfectly. I repeat: What is all this nonsense?"

"Perhaps, Uncle Andrew, our ideas of nonsense are not the same. Perhaps what you are calling nonsense is not nonsense to me." I tried to answer with composure, but my words rushed out in the most undignified flurry.

"Humph!" returned my uncle, "I have no doubt that your ideas of sense are vague in the extreme, so are young Ferguson's—Fellow's—what's his name? I suppose you know whom I mean, and that he has been here"—he raised himself sharply and leaned forward towards me. "He seems, from what he came to say and the way he said it, to be a fair specimen of a nincompoop."

"Yes, I knew Duncan had been here, I saw him come."

"Duncan, indeed! Why do you call him Duncan? I thought his name was Fletcher, or Fenton, or something else beginning with F. Why do you call him Duncan?"

"Mr. Ferrars's christian-name is Duncan, Uncle Andrew, and I speak of him by that name because I—because we have promised—because he has asked me—" Oh! if I could only have spoken boldly; but with those eyes on me, and those thin lips twitching to interrupt me, I could not keep from stammering.

"I can help you out," he said, grimly, "because Mr. Ferrars—you said Ferrars, didn't you?—has already let me into the secret. According to his version, he, a penniless young fellow, who has just finished walking the hospitals, hopes to make a good thing out of marrying the niece of the great contractor, eh?"

"He doesn't hope anything of the sort!" I cried, angrily.

"Ah, indeed; then I misunderstood. I gleaned from what he said—in fact he put it in the plainest terms—that he did wish to marry you, and that you wished to marry him."

"Yes, that is quite true; but he does not want me because I am your niece, nor because he hopes to benefit by a connection with you, but because he loves me."

"Indeed, that is most disinterested of him," returned my uncle, with a sneer. "Then his visit to me was merely to see how I should take the news that my penniless niece wanted to marry a pauper."

"I don't know what you mean by a pauper. Duncan has money enough to buy a practice, and to furnish a small house."

"Very good—for him—but that makes

no difference to the other part of the programme. If he isn't absolutely a beggar—you are."

"I'm not a beggar, Uncle Andrew!" I cried, indignantly. It was too despotic a fiat to be submitted to.

"Ain't you, Miss Pert? I think you had better think matters over before you give me a fiat contradiction."

"But you—you——" I began, too much excited to get on with my answer.

"I said so," he broke in. "You have calculated on me; you know I am well-to-do, and your high-flown young sawbones thinks a wealthy contractor would be a very comfortable figure in the background of his domestic felicity."

"We never took you and your wealth into account at all," I retorted. "We should have been most foolish to hope for any assistance from you. But I should like to know how I can be a beggar, when my father invested all his money in the business which has made a millionaire of you."

My uncle had leaned back in his chair again. I could not see his face, partly because of the shadow, and partly because my eyes swam with the difficulty and excitement of bringing these difficult words over my lips. He did not answer, and I felt I had gained an advantage.

"Audrey and I cannot have cost you so very much," I went on, gathering courage. "We have been brought up more inexpensively than girls generally are——"

"In fact, I have defrauded you from your childhood," he said, drily; "and now you are going to have it out with me."

"You did as you thought right," I replied, more submissively; the sound of his voice told me that I was going to be humbled. "But now I am twenty-one, and Audrey is twenty-three, and we have talked it over with Duncan, and we should like——"

"To have your father's money, with compound interest," he interrupted again. "In two words that is what it all means; eh?"

"We hope you will settle something. Please do, Uncle Andrew. I don't understand about money matters, but Duncan says——"

Once more he interrupted me, and this time even more impatiently than before.

"Don't understand about money matters! No, I should think you didn't; but for all that, you and your journeyman doctor want to audit my accounts, and to pry into

my private concerns for the last five-and-twenty years. Well, then, you'd better have the bank-books, and the cheque-books, and the letter-books, public and private, and work back through them, if you could, to the year 1868—the year we were out in Canada; you would find the funds of Alison Brothers at a very low level at that epoch; and you would also find that the elder brother—you know," he broke off, "which was the elder brother, I suppose?"

"It was father," I rejoined, and in my inmost heart I believed that he was building up a story as he went on, which should justify his making no settlement on us.

"Yes, it was your father, and you'd find that he, the elder one who signed for the firm, was mixed up in a lot of risky speculations, and that, in spite of the younger brother's expostulations, he made several visits to New York and one into Mexico. He was going to grow rich all at once—that is quite within a woman's comprehension—only, unfortunately, there were some complications, and out of the complications came a terrible crisis, the whole details of which did not transpire to the public. And one fine morning the younger brother found himself alone in the world, facing a heavy responsibility, which he had not incurred himself, but for which he was not wholly unprepared. I hope you understand it all. It required immense exertions to regain the lost prestige, and most assiduous work to recover from the money damage; but I have done it. And now I hope you understand."

"You mean," I said—though my mind absolutely refused to accept this story of which I had never before heard a hint—"that my father lost everything of his own, therefore we have nothing; and that, as he nearly ruined you, we must consider you most generous to have fed us, clothed us, and educated us from the time we were left orphans."

"That is near enough to my meaning," he said.

"Well, Uncle Andrew," I said, "so far from this being an impediment to my marriage, I consider it an additional reason for it. Mr. Ferrars loves me; he will be only too glad to take me from dependence on charity to a home of my own."

It was an ungrateful speech; it was the only way in which I could give vent to the bitterness of the doubt which his words had awakened in me. My uncle bent his head.

"I shall be very well rid of the charge of you. You have always been a troublesome, hot-headed girl. If you had deferred to my wishes, or shown any common sense about your marriage, I should have made you an allowance—for my own sake, and because people would expect it of me—but, since you take this defiant tone, I give you full leave to go to-morrow—to pauperism, if the doctor is ready. You are your father over again: you want to play with ruin. You won't find it a very pleasant companion. I have no more to say to you—you can go."

I went slowly and heavily back to the sitting-room, where Audrey was still at the piano. She looked up enquiringly.

"You've been a long time, and you look perfectly ghastly," she said. "What did he please to say?"

"He told me a great tissue of the basest lies," I cried, my indignation breaking forth. "I couldn't have believed he could have done anything so bad."

"Lies about Duncan?" she asked. "And how do you know they are lies?"

"Not about Duncan—about father. Audrey, do you think it possible that our father was a swindling speculator, and that he died a bankrupt?"

"I never heard it before," said Audrey, composedly. "But we know so little about him that it might be possible. Railway folks do speculate and swindle sometimes, and fall bankrupt, don't they?"

"Oh, Audrey, how can you talk so? Cyril knows nothing of this, I am sure. I won't believe it unless some one else tells it me." And I repeated the whole tale to Audrey.

"I don't see why it shouldn't be true," she said, at the end. "Of course Uncle Andrew wouldn't talk about it unnecessarily, and as it all happened in America nearly twenty years ago, why should Cyril, who is only thirty, know about it? And so," she added, "he has knocked your engagement on the head."

"That he hasn't. He has only concocted this story to get out of parting with any of the money, which has been in his hands so long that he looks on it as his own. He thinks two girls like us will believe anything, and he knows we have no remedy. He cares for nothing but money."

"Well, and how is it to be with your engagement? I suppose you will have to wait till Duncan is a little better off."

"I shall not do any such thing, nor will

Duncan wish to. If Uncle Andrew thinks he can spoil this happiness for me he is mistaken."

"You will be a fool to defy him. Of course he will be perfectly justified in doing nothing for you if you do defy him."

"I should be a bigger fool if I made Duncan and myself miserable in deference to him; and as to doing anything for me, I tell you I don't believe that story about our father; and what he finds a good excuse for shirking now, he would always try to shirk—that is, he'll never part with his precious thousands till he dies, and then most likely he will bequeath them for the building of some hospital, so that his name may be handed down as that of a public benefactor."

"Sylvia," returned Audrey, "it is no use reasoning with you. You will have your own way, I know. All I can say is that I, in your place, should be guided by Uncle Andrew's wishes."

So the discussion ended; and a few weeks afterwards Duncan and I were married very quietly at Saint Pancras Church. Cyril Holmes gave me away; but Audrey did not come to the wedding. She did not even ask me at what o'clock it was to be.

THE ANGLER IN FRANCE.

A SUNDAY in the middle of June is always chosen by the French Government for the opening day of the fresh-water fishing in France. The reason why Sunday is fixed upon is that, as the sport is so essentially democratic and beloved of the people, the day on which they are free to fish from sunrise to sunset is naturally the one most suited for the opening of the season.

The typical angler in France is a species quite apart. The French gentleman rarely touches so vulgar a sport as fishing, for the rivers are not preserved, have very little fish in them, and can be netted and fished by any one. But though the scarcity of fish increases day by day, the number of anglers belonging to the "petite bourgeoisie," and particularly to the working classes, increases even faster; and the fewer the fish, the greater is the fanaticism of the fishermen.

Every one has seen the rows of workmen who line the Parisian quays, and watch patiently hour after hour for the fish that refuses to be beguiled. It is a curious

sight, but not to be compared to the spectacle afforded by the banks of a country river. The real French angler who lives but in the fishing season, whose art is his religion, and who fishes even in his dreams, must be sought in the country. Alexander and the great Condé might sleep on the eve of a decisive battle, but not so the angler on the night before his opening day. He is in a terrible state of nervous excitement, and bustles his wife, and harries his children, and becomes as amiable as a mad dog if the long and heavy pole which he uses for a fishing-rod is not ready and in good order. But in spite of all this he has the reputation of being a loving husband, an excellent father, and the possessor of all the family virtues. The purity of his morals and the placidity of his temper are proverbial; and he has need of all the cardinal virtues to enable him to support with stoic fortitude the shower of jokes of which he is the object. The caricaturists could not live through the summer without him; he is the butt of whom they never tire; but for all that he goes on his way unmoved, and only death can keep him from the sport he follows with such enthusiastic zeal.

During the siege of Paris, in spite of the shells that sang overhead, and of the Prussian sentinels on the look-out for a mark, a great many of these bold sportsmen risked their lives outside the city fortifications, and went "taquiner le gonjon" on the banks of the Seine. These are the enthusiastic anglers who count the days and nights to the opening day, and who pass the off-season in a state of settled melancholy. These are the men who know every inch of the river's banks, and the holes in which the quarry lies hid, and who stand motionless hour after hour, holding their breath, heedless of rain, wind, and sun, half mesmerised by the gentle bobbing of the float on which their eyes are fixed. They will pass the night under a haystack in order to secure at the first streak of dawn a good place where some legendary bite had occurred, and which they have carefully ground-baited overnight.

Though a careful man, the French fisherman never sells the contents of his basket; he fishes for his family; and the proudest hour of the day, second only to the rapturous moment of capture, is when he sees the "friture" placed upon the table. The gudgeon, the roach, the eel, the tench, the barbel, the carp, the perch, and the

pike are all welcome to the angler's paste or maggot, for fly-fishing he considers frivolous, and as requiring a skill that is out of place in so serious a pursuit. But although the net has almost swept the French rivers clear of fish, it is against the modest angler that the law has fulminated its edicts. The fisherman may not make use of more than one line, and may only have one hook at the end of that line; he may not put his rod on the ground, but must hold it in his hand; he is bound to leave the river at sunset, and may not begin to fish till sunrise.

The village policeman, who for the greater part of the year has absolutely nothing to do, is entrusted with the execution of these decrees. His assistant is the "garde-champêtre," whose official hatred of anglers is only equalled by their detestation of him. This functionary never misses an opportunity of worrying the fishermen from the neighbouring town, who crowd the country on fine Sundays, much to the disgust of the peasants.

Not long ago, on the banks of the Marne, a "garde-champêtre" caught an angler using two rods at the same time, and warned him of the crime he was committing in thus breaking the laws of his country. For some time the angler made use of only one rod, but after a while, as all seemed safe, he put together his second rod, and resumed his illegal sport. This was what the "garde-champêtre" was waiting for. He dashed out of his ambush, secure of victory. Retreat being impossible, the angler seized his rods and the rest of his tackle, plunged into the river, and swam across to the other side. But the "garde-champêtre" was not so easily beaten. He stripped off his Sunday blouse, and started in pursuit. When he reached the other side, the fisherman helped him up the bank; but, untouched by the kindness, he gasped:

"I arrest you, in the name of the law."

"You arrest me! By what right?"

"I am the garde-champêtre."

"That's as may be. Where is your badge?"

As the poor "garde-champêtre" had left all his clothes on the opposite bank, he saw that he had been outwitted. He plunged into the water to get his insignia of office, but long before he reached them the angler was out of sight, feeling that he had scored one in the never-ending triangular duel between fish, fisherman, and "garde-champêtre."

ENGLAND A CENTURY HENCE.

A SPECULATIVE FORECAST.

WHEN an old fellow like myself is occasionally compelled to listen to the sneering criticisms of the rising generation, on the manners and customs of the England of my young days, I cannot help asking myself a fugitive conundrum or two, as to what generations to come may think of the present one.

It is all very well to pooh-pooh the past; but we ought at the same time to endeavour to imagine that we ourselves will in turn be pooh-poohed by a generation which has managed to find out a little more of the hitherto unknowable, and plumes itself on its absolute perfection accordingly.

It will require but little fanciful exaggeration to picture a very much changed England in A.D. 1988. Long before that date, in all probability, steam will have been superseded by electricity; the railways of to-day will be unknown; the lumbering, puffing locomotives, of which we are now so proud, will have been relegated to the region of the useless, even as the good old stage-coach has been, and noiseless hundred-mile-an-hour electric engines will have taken their places. Possibly even these latter will be found too cumbersome for our progressive successors of a century hence. Who knows but that the pneumatic tube may be so improved upon that passengers, in days to come, may be shot along from station to station at a speed which, with our nineteenth century knowledge, we can but guess at?

In ocean travelling a similar progress will be noted. Before many years—I had nearly written before many months—have elapsed, it will undoubtedly be possible to cross the Atlantic in four days. Already, the Americans are paving the way with an ocean steamer which will be capable of running twenty-two knots an hour, and that will probably be a snail's pace to the Atlantic greyhounds of 1988. Possibly by that time, Atlantic steamers will be principally used for freight, passengers being conveyed from New York to Liverpool by balloon. A balloon voyage across the Atlantic has long been the dream of adventurous aeronauts, and it is very likely to become an accomplished fact before another century has passed away. If it is true that at about three miles above terra firma the wind blows constantly from west to east, at about sixty miles an hour, it

but remains for a balloon to reach that altitude and do the passage across the Atlantic in a couple of days. The drawbacks which at present exist in connection with such a passage are serious ones, I admit. The sixty-mile wind current has not, so far as I know, been satisfactorily proved, nor is it certain that our present balloons could keep afloat for the length of time necessary to complete the journey. But balloons, like everything else, are being gradually improved upon, and by the time another century has joined its predecessors, balloons, or more correctly, aerial ships, may be a popular method of travelling.

The telephone, too, will be an important factor in the England of the future. It seems wild, even in this age of surprises, to think of being able to actually talk to a person three thousand miles away; but that it will come to pass, the most superficial observer of modern progress would scarcely like to deny. In ordinary everyday life, too, electricity is certain to be widely utilised, and coal and gas will be gathered to their fathers, having done their duty well, but having become too old-fashioned for the Englishman of 1988.

Talking of being "gathered to their fathers" reminds me that our present method of disposing of the dead will probably be unknown at the period referred to, and the critic of that day will wonder what sort of barbarians we were to be guilty of converting the earth into a huge graveyard.

The graveyard of 1988 will be a crematorium, and the ashes of departed friends will find an honoured resting-place on the mantel-shelf, or be carried about, as we now carry locks of their hair, in a little gold locket attached to the watch-chain. The barbarian horrors of yawning graves, and rats, and worms, and mouldy vaults, and decaying skeletons, will have disappeared for aye, and the little locket or bosom amulet will be the coffin of the future.

Marriages will probably be simplified in a similar fashion. Lengthy engagements, elaborate preparations, and ridiculous expenditure will have received their quietus, and John Smith and Mary Jones will be "bound over" to love and honour each other for life with one-tenth of the formality which surrounds the ceremony now. Their children will be educated and clothed in a rational manner, for scamped intellectual training and frost-bitten little limbs would be out of place in

an age of real progress. Altogether, the Mr. and Mrs. Smith of 1988 will be much better off than the Mr. and Mrs. Smith of to-day.

The dress of the future, too, will most likely be as great an improvement on the dress of to-day, as the dress of to-day is on that of, say, the Elizabethan age. People will have learned that it is more sensible to dress for comfort than for attraction; for by that time they will have perceived that it is possible for attractiveness and comfort to go hand in hand. Ear-rings, for instance, will be conspicuous by their absence—indeed, even now they are gradually making their exit—and twentieth century people will wonder how we could have been so heathenish as to allow our wives and sisters to emulate the barbarity of the savage by piercing their ears for the sake of ornament. The hideous bustle will also have died a natural death, and the tortured waist be unknown. Women probably will have realised—what some of them in our own day have already realised—that woollen vests and flannel knickerbockers are by far more healthy than the ordinary system of attire, and that suspenders are decidedly more comfortable than the obnoxious garter. Elderly ladies will have found out that trailing garments are utterly unsuitable for persons in the decline of life, and women generally will have discarded the corset for the more attractive and far more sensible flowing costume of classical Greece.

In male attire similar reform will have been accomplished. The unhealthy and ungainly "chimney-pot" hat will be a thing of the past, and men will have learned that a flannel-backed waistcoat is by far more conducive to longevity than the flimsy material we employ at present. In the item of dress alone, the future Englishman and Englishwoman will have realised the saying attributed to Edward the First, that "it is impossible to add to or diminish real worth by outward apparel." At present the inherent belief in the tailor making the man, and the mistaken ideas as to what constitutes attractiveness, present formidable barriers to dress reform, which only years can surmount.

The domestic servant of the future seems at first sight to be incongruous material for an article such as the present, but it certainly is an item which will have to be reckoned with ere long. At present, it is next to impossible to obtain a satisfactory

domestic servant. And why? Simply because there are so many other occupations open to girls, that they are unwilling to undergo the apparent degradation of domestic service. For, deny it as we may, there exists in the minds of many working girls a close analogy between service and serfdom. Girls—and I cannot bring myself to blame them for it—like their freedom as well as the rest of us, and that freedom is more easily obtainable in the workroom, or the shop, than in the kitchen. How will the people of 1988 get over the domestic service difficulty? Well, in all probability, associated homes will take the place of isolated houses, or, in other words, flats—among middle-class people, at all events—will be substituted for "self-contained" houses. By this means the "degradation" difficulty will be overcome. The domestic servant will be simply an employé. A number of trained servants will be attached to the associated homes, and will have their working hours like the shop-girls of to-day. A certain number will be "on duty" while the others are at play, and just as night and day shifts are now arranged in certain departments of male occupations, so will the domestic service of the future be regulated. In 1841, the number of female servants was one in fifteen of the population. In 1881, the number of both male and female was one in twenty-two. It will require but very elementary arithmetic to calculate the chances of obtaining a domestic servant in 1988.

Finally, there is but little doubt that the England of a century hence will be a much healthier country than the England of to-day. As medical science progresses, so will infectious disease gradually fade away. But for medical science to progress as it ought to do, the restrictions under which it at present struggles will have to be lessened. Nowadays doctors engage in their profession for a living; they have no time to worry after discovery, nor in all probability would discovery pay.

The practitioner who has to earn his bread by toiling from morning to night among his patients, has no leisure to study and think out the niceties of the development of disease. His business is simply to get his patient well again, if possible, by stereotyped methods, collect his fees, and feed and clothe his family on his earnings. The English of a century hence will probably have changed all that. The physicians of that day will, very possibly, be state-

paid officials, will receive suitable salaries, and will have their night and day shifts, like the servant girls. Their employment will be so arranged that a certain number of them will always be at work finding out new developements and experimenting on disease germs. There will thus be greater facilities offered for fresh discoveries in medical science, while a compulsory autopsy of all corpses will hasten the perfection of a science which may in time defy death. The idea of state-paid doctors may seem Utopian, yet no less an authority than Sir Morell Mackenzie has before now advocated it as the one method of making medicine a really progressive science. The England of 1888 pays soldiers to kill people. The England of 1988 will pay doctors to keep people alive.

The possible futures of monarchy, religion, and politics offer many inducements to the speculative mind; but it is, of course, impossible to refer to them here. It will be sufficient to say that when I think of what England is now, and what she will probably become a hundred years hence, I am more than sorry that I wasn't born a century later.

But I suppose that can hardly be helped now!

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VII.

GASPARD felt a little surprised at his own indifference to the straw of hope his mother had permitted him to grasp. The chance of her neglecting, either from carelessness or cowardice, to register her protest against the legality of his marriage before a year elapsed, and letting it thus become lawful by default, was, he admitted to himself, the most likely mode in which Madame Harache would yield to his demands, and was, perhaps, the only one possible to a woman of her nature. Because she was so hard, a little softening on her part meant more than effusive promises from others; and it seemed to Gaspard almost certain that if he could only bring himself to endure patiently his own and Thora's nondescript position for the ten months that had yet to elapse before the anniversary of the day when they two plighted the Troth of Odin—a long time, indeed, in which to submit to a repute which, in the young man's clear-seeing, honest eyes, dis-

graced him as much as the girl on whom his love had brought shame!—he would be able to present her to all the world as his unquestioned wife. He was glad, thankful to have this to look forward to, he said; and yet all the characteristics of gladness were absent from his mind. He thought, at first, that it was only because his nature was so bowed with the degrading worry and distress that had followed his passionate action, that it could not rebound at once to happiness; but as he walked homewards the depression did not grow less, but greater, and as he reached his own door he felt a sudden disinclination to go in and meet his wife. Then a swift flash of memory showed him the brightly lighted little salon at Monsieur Meudon's—his master leaning back in his easy-chair; Madame Reyer, who permitted herself no such indulgence, sitting upright in hers, and studying some of those political or economic pamphlets which, in her character of a woman of intellect, she felt bound to read; Sophie, in a corner, bending over her embroidery. A sigh of longing for the brightness, harmony, and rest his mind pictured brought him to himself with a shock; and he realised that his passion for Thora had vanished, or had taken a lower place in his life than he had guessed, and that now he loved Sophie Meudon. He was aghast at himself; bewildered, too, that such a thing should have happened—it seemed so incredible that his heart should be faithless to a beautiful woman for the sake of a plain one. Then in an instant came the consciousness that he was, after all, free; that there was no tie between him and the beautiful, untaught girl, which he could not break at will. It was possible to him to regain all he had lost—prosperity and comfort, and the love and companionship of his kindred, if only he chose to do what he desired most, and make Sophie Meudon his wife. If only he chose!

He uttered a passionate exclamation, half a prayer and half a curse; and turning from his own door, walked for hours through the dark streets.

When he returned it was so late that he could cherish a reasonable hope that Thora would be in bed and asleep. He did not want to be forced to speak to her to-night; there were too many conflicting passions in his soul. But Thora was awake, and moreover, was very much out of temper.

"You are later than ever, Gaspard," she said, irritably. "Every time you go to

your master's house you stay longer. If you go on like this, you will soon be living there altogether."

Gaspard glanced at her in a startled manner, and a red spot burned on each of his cheeks.

"Monsieur Meudon's is the only house I visit, Thora," he answered; "his family the only society I permit myself."

"I am permitted no society at all," she retorted. "You don't care how lonely I am, so long as you amuse yourself."

"I give you all the amusements I can. I have taken you to the theatre, to concerts; but you do not care for these things."

"No, of course not, when I cannot understand half of what is said, and the music—if you call it music—makes my head ache. You promised me a good deal more than this when you persuaded me to leave Stromness."

"You were ready enough to come," said Gaspard, bitterly, remembering that it was she who had suggested the irregular marriage when he had meant to give her up.

"And you were ready enough to take me," was the answer. "I have lost more than I gained by marrying you."

"I might say the same with equal truth, Thora; and you do not make my loss easy to bear."

Thora went on without heeding his words.

"You deceived me; you promised me a hundred things you could never give me—a very different life from that I lead here. You knew well enough that I would never have left my home and my friends for this."

"Do you wish to return to your home and your friends; to leave me, and, if possible, forget that you have ever seen me?" asked Gaspard, in a voice that sounded harsh from anxiety as to what her reply might be.

"What is the good of talking of that?" she answered, with an angry carelessness. "I am your wife now, and we must make the best of each other."

The hectic colour faded out of Gaspard's face; he bent his head in acquiescence with her words.

"You are right," he said, gravely. "You are my wife, and we must make the best of each other; but for Heaven's sake, let it be the best. We shall have much to bear from the world for each other's sake; let us find what compensation we can in our love and truth."

She looked at him with bewildered eyes.

"I don't know what you are talking about in that—that play-acting fashion;

but I know what you do—leave me for hours to mope by myself, while you are talking to an old man whom you see every day, and to his sharp-tongued sister and ugly daughter."

"Do not speak of people whom you do not know, and who are—different from you."

"I don't want to know them, and I don't want to speak of them—people who make such a fuss about my husband and take no notice of me!"

The reason of the conduct she complained of checked Gaspard's rising anger.

"You are tired, *chérie*," he said gently, "and you look at everything gloomily. But I meant to tell you to-night that I intended to go no more to Monsieur Meudon's. It is not right that I should go to a house where you, my wife, are not received."

Thora looked at him in some surprise, as women do when a complaint they have made without much thought is admitted as reasonable. Her protest had been merely a safety valve for her fretfulness. She was less pleased than astonished to have Gaspard yield to her wishes.

"Do as you like," she said, coldly; and she almost turned her face away from the kiss he gave her, not knowing that it cost him an effort, and that it was the seal of a sacrifice.

After this, Gaspard became habitually gloomy. Occasionally, too, he was irritable, and found fault with Thora for some trifling fault, some awkwardness or stupidity due to her ignorance; making her in turn sullen, as well as discontented. His fate pressed too heavily upon him. He had accepted the punishment of his rashness, but he could not help crying out under it; neither could he help being conscious how much he was giving up for the sake of his duty to Thora, and expecting from her compensation for his loss. But Thora never suspected that he had made any sacrifice for her, and, knowing only her own loneliness and disappointment, met him, as often as not, with angry words or sullen silence. She could not be otherwise than out of temper with her circumstances, unless Gaspard had explained to her whence they arose; and this he would have counted it an insult to her to do. She was only a beautiful dullard, incapable of being in any true sense a companion to him, and he knew this perfectly well; but he respected her; and, knowing that she did not merit reproach, would not let her know that the shadow of shame

had fallen upon her. That she should be to him as his wife, and should believe herself his wife, were the things he had set forth to himself as his duty. But it was a duty which was a martyrdom, and he was not strong enough to repress all signs of pain.

Monsieur Meudon watched his face, and reported every change in its expression to Madame Harache. Taking the sadness of it into account with the half confession of which she had told him, the two arrived at a conclusion not far from the truth. The only thing they forgot was that through Gaspard's gentler nature there ran a vein of his mother's obstinacy.

"Let us wait a few days, a week or two, longer, and Gaspard will be ready to consent to anything we want. At present he declines all invitations to my house; but I can see that the refusal costs him an effort. For the present he is struggling with a young man's far-fetched ideas of right and wrong; but that can end in only one way. If he is tired of this girl, all is well. When both inclination and interest point in one direction, he is certain, soon or late, to take it."

Madame Reyer remarked upon the cessation of Gaspard's visits.

"I thought he was becoming sincerely attached to Sophie," she said to her brother, "and if a man can grow to love a girl like her, he should not tire of her quickly."

"Gaspard will come again some day, ma sceur; at present there are complications."

"Explain yourself, Pierre."

Monsieur Meudon did explain, chuckling over his diplomacy; but his sister did not see the matter in the same light as he.

"You are doing wrong," she said, decidedly; "and if Madame Harache approves of your action, she is a disgrace to womanhood. There is a sex in sins, and though a conspiracy of this sort is bad enough in you, a man, it is wholly unpardonable in a woman. To rob another woman of her good name! It is detestable!"

"Catherine, you become romantic in your old age. Is Madame Harache to let her son ruin his life for a folly?"

"He must pay the price of his folly, even though it be ruin. You do not improve the matter by changing the folly into a crime."

"Bah! Would you tie every young man to an unworthy woman to make him expiate the weakness of a moment?"

"No; but this is not a question of an

unworthy woman. She is innocent; she loves him; she is essentially his wife."

"The law does not consider her so."

"The law is an idiot; and it was not made for cases like this. This girl believes that she is married to Gaspard Harache, you say. Some form of marriage, satisfactory to her conscience, has passed between them. That is the essential, the true bond, and Gaspard's duty is to be faithful to it. Let the law say what it will, in Heaven's sight this girl is Gaspard's wife."

"Take care," said Monsieur Meudon, abruptly; for the door had opened softly, and Sophie was in the room.

She had come to look for a thimble she had forgotten, she explained. Having found it, she noticed, apparently for the first time, her father's troubled face.

"Petit papa, has anything happened to annoy you?" she asked, kissing him, and pulling his short and stubbly beard in a caressing fashion.

"No, nothing, chérie. Leave us for the present," he said, hastily.

And Sophie went away, turning round at the door to waft a smile of exquisite unintelligence across the room.

"Ah! how innocent she is!" exclaimed the father, tenderly.

"Perhaps," replied Madame Reyer, drily.

The little pantomime, which deceived Monsieur Meudon, served to enlighten her. She knew just enough of her niece to be sure that when Sophie appeared particularly stupid and innocent, some subtle thought was moving in her brain. She perceived now that Sophie had overheard some part of the conversation, and she did not wholly regret it.

"It may prevent her thinking too much of Gaspard," she thought. "It would be a pity for her to cherish any feeling for a man who cannot marry her."

Next day Monsieur Meudon asked Gaspard to visit him that evening. The young man tried to excuse himself.

"But I have something of importance to say to you," said the master.

"I will attend you at the office, then."

"At the office we are liable to interruptions, and what I have to say may take some time. Moreover, I wish to speak as your friend, as well as your employer. You must come to my house. I can promise," said M. Meudon with some irritation, "that you shall not see either my sister or my daughter, if it is they whom you wish to avoid."

Gaspard bowed, and promised to come;

but he did not contradict the accusation conveyed in his master's last words.

When he appeared that evening he was shown into the little room, opening from the dining-room, which Monsieur Meudon called his cabinet. His host soon joined him, and plunged at once into business.

"I have lately had an interview with your mother," he began. "She is desirous of seeing you settled in life, and therefore proposes, under certain conditions, to buy you a share in my business. I know the talent and energy you possess, and will be well pleased to have you as a partner. I suppose I may assume that you are equally ready to join me."

Gaspard hesitated.

"No prospect could please me better if I remain in le Havre," he said, "but there are reasons, not connected with business, which may make it advisable for me to live elsewhere."

The elder man shook his head.

"Be wise, my friend. Do not let anything interfere with business. I take an interest in you, Gaspard, and I have pleased myself by picturing for you a career similar to my own. As you know, I became partner to Monsieur Perrier, who had the business before me; then I married Mademoiselle Perrier, his only child, and thus inherited the other half of the business when her father died."

"The latter part of your career it is, as, perhaps, you know, monsieur, impossible for me to copy."

"Indeed! If it were suggested to you that you might marry my daughter you would refuse her hand?"

"I must do so," said Gaspard, gravely.

Monsieur Meudon frowned, but good-humouredly.

"What! is my poor Sophie not fair enough for you, Gaspard? Her dowry should be sufficient for any one who is not too avaricious."

"Mademoiselle Sophie is altogether charming. She would be a prize for any man if she had no dowry at all; but I am not free to marry."

Monsieur Meudon had meant to ignore the existence of Thora altogether; but Gaspard's straightforwardness balked him.

"I will not pretend to be ignorant of your meaning," he said, with some signs of irritation; "but I ask you to think again before you give up the opportunity of establishing yourself in a wise and reputable manner. You are entangled with a pretty and uneducated woman—most young men

are at some period of their lives, and we older folks who have lived long, and out-lived much, regard such a folly as an episode which in no way interferes with the principal narrative of a career. It comes, has a brief feverish life, and goes, leaving as little mark as most childish ailments. But your liaison, Gaspard, has, if I am rightly informed, less of happiness in it than most; assuredly you do not look more cheerful since you entered into it. Your breaking with 'la belle sauvage' is only a question of time, and of a very short space of time; but, meanwhile my Sophie may be married to another, and your opportunity for gaining a useful connection gone for ever. I do not say that you will not then obtain a wife as good as my daughter—I am a loving father, but not a blindly fond one—but she is the child of the chief of your firm, a marriage with her at once gives you a satisfactory place in society, and ensures your future income, and on it, I may tell you without breaking confidence, depends your mother's fulfilment of her intention of buying you a share in my business. She and I are agreed as to the course of action we should pursue, and it is with her knowledge and approval that I speak to you to-day. Now, Gaspard, make your choice. On one side lies a passion for an unworthy woman, which is sure to die soon, if it be not already dead, and which involves the loss of all that men as they grow older esteem most highly; on the other comfort, affluence, the embraces of your mother and sister, and the love of one who will not believe that you possess any of the faults of common humanity. Gaspard, can you hesitate for a moment?"

"Monsieur," replied Gaspard, "I have listened to you patiently, because I know that your intentions towards me are of the most friendly nature: that you seek what you consider my good, and because from you I hear the wishes of my mother expressed more clearly than she has uttered them to me. I have listened to the end, and in reply I say that you must not again, in my hearing, speak of my wife as an unworthy woman. My patience might fail me then."

"Your wife, your wife! Let us admit that, as you say, some form of marriage passed between you and this girl—whether legal or not in her country I do not care to enquire; it is immaterial. The point of importance is that here, in France—in the country of which you are a native, and in

which you propose to live—it is not valid, and never will be, for I know Madame Harache's determination too well to imagine that she will ever yield to your wishes. You may call this Thora your wife in the sight of heaven—a favourite phrase with fanciful and self-willed individuals. But do not seek to make society accept her as your wife; that is defiance, and while it does not make her ruin the less certain, it involves you in it as well."

Gaspard's patience gave way. "Is this your creed?" he cried; "that one may reasonably harm others and escape punishment oneself; that it is permissible to take a woman's heart, play with it for awhile, then cast her out, shamed and wronged, to despair and hopeless ruin, and take, oneself, an honourable place in the world's esteem? You call yourself a man of honour, monsieur; you would strike any one who denied you such a title, yet you have no higher law of honour than the Code Napoleon, no surer test of honour than the approval of society. To every man who possesses a conscience there is a law, unwritten but not less binding, that forbids him to purchase his own comfort at the expense of another's."

The elder man shrugged his shoulders.

"I have a conscience," he said, "which at present has done me the service of bringing down on me your insults, because I would not let a man whom I esteemed, ruin himself without one word of warning. For the rest, I submit to laws which I had no hand in making for the same reason that I wear warm clothing in winter: because experience has shown me that to do otherwise involves discomfort. I offer you the results of my experience to save you from future discomfort, and in return you insult me as if I were a criminal, for whom the galleys would be too good. Very well. I should have remembered a man in love is mad, and that reason is wasted on him."

"This is no question of love, monsieur, but of something higher—more binding than any attachment of the senses. Did I love Thora Sweynson as passionately as man ever loved woman, I might yet take your advice, and desert her when passion reached satiety; but under the law which rules me, I am not free to wrong her, though I had ceased to love her—though I had even come to hate her. She gave herself to me in all innocence, in all honour, regarding herself as my wife; I

might have acted more wisely both for her and myself, had I, who knew the laws of France, refused to accept her; but having done so, but one course is possible to me—to give her a lifetime of unswerving fidelity, and to protect her as much as possible from the consequences of my selfish rashness. To you, then, monsieur, my answer is that I am compelled to decline the hand of Mademoiselle Meudon; not because I regard her otherwise than with the deepest admiration and esteem, but because I hold myself, in truth and honour, already married. To my mother, whose ambassador you are, say that the first benefit I can accept at her hands, is her recognition of my wife. After that, I will take any gift she offers; without that, I will receive nothing, and will hold myself free from any tie of duty or affection towards her. Dear as my mother and sisters are to me, my wife, by the very helplessness and ignorance on which you dilate, by the determination you all show to withhold that title from her, has the stronger claim on my love, and on such protection as I still can offer."

"On my word, young man, you speak as if it were a question of your being the giver rather than the receiver of favours!" exclaimed Monsieur Meudon, disgusted at the result of an interposition on the success of which he had too securely counted.

"In this I am the donor," answered Gaspard. "I offer my mother the opportunity of doing an act of justice; you, the honour of persuading her to it. If you both refuse, my only course is to resign my present situation and go to England, or Scotland, or any country where my marriage will not be disputed."

"And in reply," cried Monsieur Meudon, furiously, "I tell you that I shall persuade your mother to do nothing except incarcerate you in an asylum for idiots. You are the greatest fool I ever met! Go; it is painful to a sane man to have to talk to you."

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LATER on in the day, Madge and Sir Peter were to hear the story of Etelka McIvor, otherwise Jane Shore, so far as it had been confided to the Wesleyan minister.

It was a testimony to the aptitude of the Rev. Joshua Parker for winning the confidence of his fellow creatures, that he should have succeeded in drawing from lips so reserved a story fraught with such bitter memories.

Possibly, however, the supposition that she was lying on her death-bed, and the natural wish not to pass all unknown into the land of Shadows, should by rights share with the minister's persuasive powers the credit of opening those hitherto obstinately-closed lips.

Scared, stunned, with shattered nerves and enfeebled bodily powers, Etelka followed her rescuer from the police-court, which figured to her bewildered fancy as a veritable bar of justice. A fortnight's serious illness followed, during which she was nursed with assiduity by "the Christian woman with many burthens." It was during that fortnight—when she believed herself to be lying at the gates of death—that she gave, in fragments, as her strength permitted, the story of her life.

It was a pitiful story enough. Her parentage was a curious one. Her father was a McIvor of Inverness-shire, who, when cruising in his yacht in the Mediterranean, fell in love with a beautiful peasant girl, whom he chanced to see

dancing in the streets of Ajaccio to the music of a mandoline, played by her old grandfather. The girl was of gipsy extraction, and the old grandfather gained his livelihood partly by his mandoline playing, partly by the practice of magic and occult arts, which had come down to him from his ancestry.

Hector McIvor must have been madly in love with this girl, for when she refused to leave her native mountains and return with him to Scotland, he spent nearly the whole of his patrimony in the purchase of an estate on the island, married her, and settled down there as a fruit-grower and sheep-breeder.

In spite, however, of her great beauty, the Corsican girl could not have made a pleasant companion. She owned to a gloomy temperament; was endowed with all the passions and prejudices of her race; and, among other superstitions, had a fixed belief in the ruling of the planets. It was possibly a matter of congratulation to her husband that the whole of her kindred in the island was represented by her aged grandfather, who died shortly after the marriage.

But though Hector McIvor gave up his Highland home, he did not forget it. When Etelka was born, he sent for his own faithful old nurse and committed the little one to her care. No doubt, in due course, Etelka would have been taken over the seas to make the acquaintance of her Scotch kinsfolk if a sudden accident—a fall from his horse—had not ended her father's life. Etelka was barely four years old when this happened. The father left no will, and his property fell unreservedly into the hands of his wife. Less competent hands could scarcely be imagined. She was accustomed only to the details of a

peasant's life, and the estate, through want of proper management, speedily became unproductive, and a yearly decreasing income was the result.

It was providential for the child that her Scotch nurse was a fairly educated woman, otherwise she would have grown up in all-but heathen ignorance; the mother never attempted to teach her aught save astrological lore and the beautiful dances in which she herself was so skilled. After the father's death the mother, shutting herself up in her lonely house, abandoned herself to the study of the stars; they held, she said, the secrets of all religions, arts, and sciences, and by their motions the destinies of men and of nations were governed. Her odd manner of life and singular belief soon won for her a reputation as the wise woman of the neighbourhood, and the poor and ignorant would come to her for miles round, asking for advice as to their health and the management of their affairs.

Meantime little Etelka, left in charge of the Scotch nurse, was learning from her the language of her father, and getting all the knowledge which the old Highland woman was able to impart. They were sadly at a loss for books, however. Etelka's mother took no interest in procuring them for her child, and the old nurse was intent upon saving every penny she could scrape together in order, some day, to take flight with the little girl to her father's people in Inverness. She kept alive the memory of the father in the child's heart by endless stories of his early days. A Scotch newspaper, occasionally received, was a mine of wealth and enjoyment to the nurse and child. Etelka would have all sorts of strange stories read to her by the old body, who, with finger travelling down the columns, would try to bring before the child the geography of the places whose doings were there recorded.

Honestly enough the nurse tried to do her duty by the neglected child. She racked her brain for tales from English and Scottish history that would amuse and instruct the little one. The stories of "Queen Mary," "Fair Rosamond in her Bower," and of "Jane Shore," were as well known to the child as if she had been English-born. The story of the last-named ill-fated beauty who "bewitched a King and died a vagrant," made a deep impression on her; and the fact of the name being easy of recollection and pronunciation, no doubt led her later on, under

changed conditions, to adopt it for her own, when a sudden request for her name was made to her which she was unprepared to meet.

It was the nurse who, when the child began to develop a rare talent for landscape painting, supplied her with colours and brushes wherewith she taught herself to paint the wonderful skies and grand mountains of her Corsican home. It was she also who gave the little one her first faint notions of religion.

Calvinistic teaching from the nurse, partial initiation into the mysteries of astrology by the mother, wrought in the little Etelka's mind a curious habit of thought. "My mother," she said, as she related this portion of her history to the minister, "believed in fate, and called her belief astrology; my-nurse believed in fate and called her belief by a long Scotch word—predestination."

Lying awake at nights and gazing up at the stars, the little one used to wonder in quaint, childish fashion which was the star with the long Scotch name, which no doubt had ruled her father's destiny.

Debarred from playthings and all childish playfellows, it was no wonder that Etelka turned for companionship to the only young human being who ever came in her way, a boy—Giovanni by name—who kept her mother's goats on the mountains. Giovanni was about her own age, and speedily became devoted to the little girl. He taught her to climb the mountains, he made rods for her to fish with in the mountain streams, and showed her how to peel the young cork trees and make canoes of the bark, which together they floated out to sea.

In return, Etelka taught him all she knew of the lore of the planets, and tried to read his destiny for him in the heavens.

So things went on till Etelka was about twelve years of age, when her aged nurse died. On her death-bed she handed to Etelka the whole of her savings in English gold and Italian silver, bidding her keep the money safely, as sooner or later she might want it in order to make her way to her father's people, who, she assured the girl, would receive her with open arms. She also gave Etelka many and minute directions—which she made her take down in writing—as to the line of route she would have to follow in order to get to her Scotch home.

No doubt the faithful servant, taking into account the young girl's rapidly de-

veloping beauty, saw dangers ahead of which Etelka had no conception.

After the nurse's death, things grew gloomier than ever. The house and the estate by this time had fallen into utter ruin, and if it had not been for Giovanni, and his mother, Elmina—who took the place of the Scotch nurse in the house—Etelka, at times, would have wanted food, and also would have been compelled to perform the commonest household duties.

Her mother she rarely saw. All absorbed in her occult arts, she was shut in one room nearly the whole day, and only wandered out at nights to lonely heights to study the positions of the planets. At rare intervals she would take Etelka with her on these midnight wanderings, show her her ruling planet, and talk to her of sextile, trine, and square aspects, and the passage of the moon through the signs of the zodiac.

Etelka, thirsting for sympathy and companionship, prized these rare opportunities of intercourse with her mother beyond measure; she stood greatly in awe of her, and treasured her words as the inspired utterances of a prophetess. The words "Fate wills it," which were so often on the mother's lips, were slowly but surely exercising a baleful influence on the young girl's daily habit of thought; and when one day the mother took her by the hand, and, pointing out one planet, told her that an evil star was rising for her, and a crisis in her life was at hand, Etelka trembled for what was coming.

Etelka carried her fears to Giovanni, who had by this time grown into a fine handsome youth. Giovanni, for the first time in his life, only gave her half his attention. He had a great piece of news to tell. A chalet on the coast, which had long been empty, had been rented by a Neapolitan gentleman and his mother. The mother was an invalid, and came for the sea-air; the son—the Count Palliardini—was a sportsman, and came for sport. The Count had met Giovanni as he was driving his goats along the mountain road, and had offered him good pay if he would act as his guide during his stay at Santa Maura.

Etelka, describing this Count Palliardini to the minister, admitted that he was handsome in person, courtly and polished in manner. He was cosmopolitan in his tastes, a first-rate linguist, speaking with ease three or four languages; he was also a wonderful improvisator, and skilled mandolinist; last, but not least, he was so

formidable a duellist, that to cross swords with him meant certain death.

The first time that this man saw and spoke with Etelka, he fell desperately in love with her, and, young as she was, wished to make her his wife.

Etelka shrank from him with what seemed an unaccountable repugnance. She distrusted his courtly suavity, and suspected that his obtrusively-displayed effeminate tastes covered a coarse and brutal nature. Man of the world as he was, he laughed at her girlish dislike, and referred the matter to her mother. The mother, in her turn, referred the matter to the stars. She would cast the Count's horoscope, she said, and what the stars told her she would tell him.

Night after night she wandered out into the mountains to study the heavens, the Count, meantime, taking such advantage of Etelka's loneliness to press his suit upon her that, from a shadowy repugnance, her feelings changed into a defined and bitter dislike.

Her heart sank when at length her mother gave her the verdict of the stars. The lines of the Count's life met and crossed Etelka's.

"Fate favoured him," she said to the girl. "It would be useless for her to fight her destiny."

Possibly Etelka, in spite of her dislike to the man, would have yielded to what she was told was her destiny, if Giovanni had not at this time begun to make his influence felt. He brought to her strange stories of Count Palliardini's life in the outer world, of which they knew so little. He had gathered from talk which he had overheard between the Count and his mother, that neither the Countess's ill-health, nor the Count's love of sport, had been their real reason for coming to Corsica; but that the Count was "under a cloud" for a duel which he had fought in Naples under suspicious circumstances, his adversary being his own cousin, by whose death from his sword-thrust he had greatly benefited.

People in Naples had raised a hue-and-cry over the business, saying that the Count had purposely picked a quarrel with his young cousin, and, hence, the Count and his mother had found it expedient to retire for a time from Neapolitan society before attempting to take possession of the dead man's inheritance.

Giovanni further went on to say that the Count, in his own home, drank freely

of wine; was hard and tyrannical to his servants; cruel to dumb animals; and boasted freely of the women's hearts he had broken, and the men whom he had killed in duels.

Then it was that Etelka resolved to do her best to escape her destiny. Her hatred for the Count grew stronger than her love for her mother and her home.

She and Giovanni together laid a plan for taking flight from the island. Etelka was to find out, and take refuge with her father's people in Scotland, and then send for Giovanni to share the good fortune which she was sure awaited her there.

They took Giovanni's mother into their confidence; and she, no doubt stimulated by ambitious views for her son, helped forward their plans. The three pored over the old nurse's directions, which Etelka had taken down in writing, and again and again they counted up the legacy of English gold and Corsican silver which Etelka had kept in a safe hiding-place. They decided that Giovanni should accompany Etelka to Ajaccio, whence she would take boat for Marseilles, and remain there until Etelka sent money for him to follow her, their store of gold proving inadequate for the travelling expenses of two persons. The early twilight was fixed for the time of their departure, when Etelka's mother would be starting on her star-gazing expeditions, and Giovanni's master would be enjoying his evening siesta.

Their councils were held and their arrangements made with the greatest care and secrecy, they imagined. Some incautious act, however, must have betrayed them.

On the day they had fixed, and at the twilight hour, Etelka crept out of her home and made her way over the mountains to the edge of the forest, where she and Giovanni had arranged to meet. She kept her eyes downcast; she would not look up to the skies, for there she knew shone out the bright planet she had learned to hate.

But it was not Giovanni who stepped from out the shadows of the big plane tree and took her by the hand, but Count Palliardini himself.

"Might he have the pleasure of being her escort? Was she expecting to meet the boy Giovanni? Ah, yes, he had met with an accident that day. Well, there were enough and to spare of such canaille as he, and one less would be so much to the good."

These were the words with which he greeted her.

Giovanni's accident, when it came to be told, proved to be "that last dread accident, which men call death." The Count's statement was that he and Giovanni had gone fishing in the early morning in one of the mountain streams; he had gone higher up the stream than the lad, and when he came back he had found him lying face downwards in the river-bed with his rod floating down-stream. He conjectured that the lad had dropped his rod into the water, and trying to recover it, had fallen in, and been carried out of his depth. The Count had called to some shepherds for help, but when between them they had got the boy out of the stream, life was extinct.

Etelka went back to her mother dazed and stunned; she and Elmira suspected foul play on the part of the Count, but there was no evidence to support their suspicions.

Before Etelka had time to rally from the shock of this calamity, another followed on its heels. Her mother, in attempting to cure herself of ague, from which she suffered as a result of exposure to damp and night air, took an over-dose of some vegetable poison that she was in the habit of employing as a medicine, and in a few hours was dead.

Her last words, as she lay on her death-bed, with eyes fixed on Etelka, were: "Not poison, nor flood, nor fire, can harm those who are to die by the hand of man."

Enigmatic words they seemed to the girl at the time; but later on she read her own meaning into them.

After her mother's death, the Count pressed his suit more hotly than ever. Then it was that Etelka, driven to desperation, looked up at the evil, glittering planet, high in the heavens, and defied it. She resolved to fight her destiny. She had tried to escape from it, and had failed; she would fight it now.

But of the means by which she endeavoured to do this the minister knew nothing for certain, although, possibly, his suspicions went near to hitting the mark. "At this point in her story," he said, "the girl had turned her face to the wall, and her lips had once more been obstinately sealed. Of her attempt upon Count Palliardini's life, her hurried flight to England, and her stay at Upton, she had told him nothing."

From this point, however, Madge found it easy enough, in imagination, to take up and finish the pitiful story. She could picture Etelka, in the gloom of her desolate home, handling her mother's poison bottles, while the lamentations of Elmina over her only son rang in her ears, together with the woman's cries for vengeance on his murderer.

She could picture the girl laying her plans, step by step, up to and after her terrible attempt at crime; her hurried flight to Marseilles; her brief stay there to provide herself with less remarkable clothing than that her island village could supply; her arrival, half-dazed and bewildered, in England; her attempt to reach her father's home in Inverness; her recognition of the hand of Fate in the railway accident, and the arrival of Lance and Sir Peter on the scene of disaster.

After this, there had come, no doubt, a partial awakening of conscience, a sense of remorse intensified by the thought of a relentless pursuing Nemesis.

With the light of her luckless history thrown upon it, it became easy to understand her attempts upon her own life; her terror of what was hanging over her head as each attempt failed; and, finally, her revulsion to joy and gratitude, and her tremulous snatchings at better things when the newspaper brought the tidings that she was not the murderess she had supposed herself to be; and when the proffer of Lance's love seemed to open to her a door to a new and better life.

HOLY NOVEMBER.

THE MONTH OF MIRACLES.

ENGLISHMEN are apt to abuse the month of November, taxing it with every kind of vicious propensity. They designate it by every kind of opprobrious epithet—the dreary, the foggy, the damp, nay, even the suicidal. Some, indeed, go so far as to call it “the month of crime.” But in Catholic countries November is held in such high veneration, that it is denominated “the month of miracles,” by reason of the greater number of spiritual manifestations which have occurred in the persons of the Holy Saints, whose festivals are celebrated during its passage.

On the first day, for instance, we have the Festival of All the Saints. This day is one of universal rejoicing amongst middle-class believers all through Italy and

France—a day of roasted chestnuts, and sparkling cyder; of traffic in bon-bons, and sweet curds. And the usual bouquets are not presented, but exchanged, for, as every individual without exception has his or her guardian Saint in heaven, each one is expected to honour the patron Saint of his neighbour, according to the means provided by his own. It is touching to witness the pride and exultation exhibited by the poor peasant godchild, when, in return for his handful of daisies and field-grass, he receives the bunch of rare flowers from the garden or the greenhouse of the rich godfather, who represents to the boy's imagination the earthly image of the patron Saint in heaven.

At sundown, however, the gaieties are all over—the dancing, and music, the buying and selling, the kissing and embracing are at an end. The flowers are all deposited on the altars of the various Saints—to whom the offerings of right belong—and the atmosphere of the churches is perfumed with the mingled fragrance of a thousand flowers. The festivity and joy of the past day are changed, as if by magic, into the expression of the most lugubrious woe. The church bells, which have been ever since sunrise sounding a merry peal, now toll with the most melancholy rhythm, and the crowd moves along with solemn pace to the favoured shrines. The heart-rending service for the dead begins its weird and warning chaunt, and every head is bowed low in humble supplication for mercy on the souls of the departed. In an incredibly short space of time the gay ribbons have all disappeared, to be replaced by black-crape bands on the muslin caps of the peasant girls, while a knot of black ribbon looms from the button-hole of the peasant boy, in lieu of the gay posy which decorated his velveteen jacket in the morning.

The second day of the month, the Day of All Souls, is one of sympathy as universal as that of All Saints. As every individual in the South is supposed to claim patronage of the Saint whose name he bears, so does every human being mourn the loss of some dear relative or friend, for whose redemption from purgatory a prayer for mercy is addressed to Heaven. “The twenty-four hours' supplication” occupies the whole of the night and day without ceasing, till the sunset following. It is in Paris alone that the two festivals are combined in one single day.

At Rome the Festival of All Saints is one

of the most important amongst the celebrations of the Catholic Church, being observed as strictly in a mercantile as in a religious point of view. On that day the hawkers of Holy Relics come up to Rome, for the sale and barter of their wares at the various shrines. The Relic Fairs are held just one week afterwards; mostly in the distant, out-of-the-way villages in the mountains. Thither the peasant brings his humble faith and his hard-earned soldi for acquisition of the treasure which is to ensure him freedom from all trouble in this world, and secure him salvation in the next. The licensed pedlars, most of them belonging to the wandering friars, drive a roaring trade. During the hours of the fair the traffic is enormous. The relics become, as it were, a circulating medium among the simple-minded peasants; and are bartered for others, of more or less value, among the visitors. I leave you to imagine the clatter and the clamouring of the vendors as they point to Heaven to bear witness to the value of their merchandise, and spread out their palms, and expand their fingers upwards, and raise their eyes to heaven as they vaunt the virtues of their own particular Saint, and the volubility with which they relate the legend connected with his name. Many are the favourites, for there is fashion in relics as well as in gimcracks. The pedlar knows well enough the temper of his customers. Faithlike, taste is personal and peculiar, and, in the case of the mountaineers especially, depends upon the locality. The charcoal-burner and the chalk-cutter, the mulberry-pruner and the chestnut-gatherer, has each his preference, and never enters into competition for possession of the same relics. But the most interesting study of all, to the observant visitor, is the change of sentiment amongst the population; the diminution of veneration towards one Saint when faith has been worn out by long disappointment, and the gush of tenderness towards another in whom they may have hope for the future. The chalk-cutters and the chestnut-vendors of Verona interchange with the greatest coolness the earthly patronage of their heavenly patrons—transferring the sacred banners and regalia without compunction. The pedlar looks on, meanwhile, with twinkling eyes while the bargain is being concluded, and aids with glib and ready tongue the barter between his customers.

Every Saint has his votary, but preference is given to those of the month.

First in order comes Saint Hubert, whose relics are eagerly sought and generously paid for by the isard-hunters of the mountains, and the wild boar-hunters of the forest. The pedlar who wanders through the villages as bearer of Saint Hubert's holy relic, blows a joyous note on his hunting horn to draw attention to his wares. Saint Hubert was the most intrepid huntsman in all Christendom. The banner, carried by his votaries, is of green and gold—the staff surmounted by a gilt staghorn. It is always borne by the oldest huntsman of the district. At the Chapel of Saint Hubert at Royaumont, on the edge of the forest of Chantilly, part of the leathern jerkin of the Saint is preserved. A sniff at the jerkin was allowed on Saint Hubert's Day to the hounds of the Prince de Condé, who were brought over from Chantilly, after being blessed at the Mass of the Parish Church.

In the lining of the jerkin lies the power of healing hydrophobia. This lining is made of the coarsest hempen canvas cloth, not much finer than the sail-cloth in use for the fishing-smacks of our days, and yet every fibre of its texture is beyond price, nay, every thread is measured to a half and quarter millimetre, and the smallest measurement, even when scarcely visible to the naked eye, might be sold, were it possible of acquisition, for a formidable sum. And strange to say, the superstition of the holy "doubleure" retains as great a power over the minds of the upper classes, as over those of the uneducated peasants themselves.

Not longer ago than last April, the hotel at Royaumont was occupied by a German Princess and her suite, who had made the journey all the way from Wurtzburg to kneel at the shrine of Saint Hubert, and seek protection from the consequences of a bite from her pet "Mopse," who had died of rabies after having bitten several members of the princely household.

The treatment of a patient at Saint Hubert's Shrine at Royaumont is simple enough, and is supposed to have remained unchanged since its first votaries knelt and prayed, and were admitted to the benefits of the miraculous "doubleure" many centuries ago. A portion of a thread drawn from the canvas is cut off and laid upon the wound made by the fang of the mad dog. If already cicatrised, as in the case of the German Princess alluded to, the skin is raised and the thread inserted beneath, then bandaged tightly with a strip

of linen, which has been duly rubbed upon the jerkin. A novena to Saint Hubert and a certain number of prayers and litanies form the treatment, after which the patient may go forth in comfort and security, completely shielded from the terrible result of the bite of the rabid animal, however severe that bite may have been. Now Saint Hubert had been in his youth a courtier, a gay and gallant knight, and a sinner devoted to pleasure of every kind; moreover, so passionately fond of the chase that he had never been known to spare a moment to offer up a single pater or an ave at the "reposoirs," or rustic altars fixed to certain trees in the woods for the express benefit of the huntsman piously disposed. One evening, the young sinner, destined to become a Saint, lost his way while in pursuit of a fine antlered stag which had led him beyond the usual track. He was much perplexed, for it was growing dark. He sounded his horn, but no answer was returned. Although he did not bend the knee or sue for Heaven's aid in his dilemma, Heaven, always merciful and kind, took pity on his benighted condition, both moral and physical, and his path amid the darkness was suddenly enlightened by the glorious vision which has become known to the whole world, through the poetry and painting of all nations.

"The stag with the flaming cross between his horns, guided the man who all his life had been misguided through sin," says the old chronicle, "and who, throwing down his cross-bow, knelt upon the turf and prayed."

From that moment, Hubert the Sinner became Hubert the Saint. He vowed to retire to a monastery for the rest of his days; but the Lord willed it otherwise. His fame for piety became so great, that he was elected to follow Saint Lambert as Bishop of Maëstricht.

On the eleventh of November comes Saint Martin, the brave, bold warrior of the Gauls—a great and magnificent Saint, full of courage and charity. The day was bitterly cold when he went up to pay his devotions at the altar of the Virgin, at Amiens, before departing to take the command of his legion, which was bound for the war. He wore a long furred mantle "which kept his body warm as the summer of charity within his soul," says the record of his legend. A beggar was seated at the chapel door, shivering with the cold, scantily covered with an old ragged gaber-dine, and begging alms in a piteous tone.

In a moment, the warm flood of charity overflowed Saint Martin's pious heart. Drawing his sword from the scabbard, he cut in two the rich official mantle he wore as insignia of his rank, and flung the warmer half over the shivering shoulders of the beggar; then rode quickly on his way to rejoin his troops. To the most simple understanding will the legend reveal the origin of the "Saint Martin's summer"—those few warm and genial days beginning on Saint Martin's Day, which precede the first frosts of winter.

The next great day in November is the seventeenth, dedicated to the glorious Saint Gregory—the greatest worker of miracles in the whole saintly calendar—called the great thaumaturgist, from this very gift. The staff, borne by Saint Gregory, on being raised to heaven in a drought, brought down at once the refreshing rain, which had been prayed for night and day by the population of the district. Saint Basil compares him to the great leader of the Israelites, calling him a "sinless Moses." With the same miraculous staff with which he had brought down the rain from heaven, he stayed the inundation of the Lycus, which threatened destruction to the crops, and had carried away whole flocks of cattle. The Saint wept to behold the desolation caused by the overflow. Proclaiming aloud his faith in Heaven, he planted his staff firmly upon the river's bank, and commanded the water, in the name of the Lord, to cease from troubling the earth beyond that landmark. The waves retired on the instant, and the inundation ceased. He was gentle in spite of the mighty power he enjoyed, and so great a lover of music that he undertook to reform the Church harmony; and to him we owe the Gregorian chant. His charity and humility are set forth likewise in the fact of his inviting every day a certain number of the starving poor to his table.

The next day of renown is the nineteenth, dedicated to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, whose legend renders her memory precious to all poets, painters, and sculptors in the world, as well as to all tender-hearted, pious people of every degree. A sweet and lovely saint! Humility, charity, and love were her especial attributes. She was young, beautiful, and a Queen, wedded to the sovereign of a brilliant and valorous nation, King of that "eagles'-nest, unconquerable Hungary," as the old historians designate the country. The incident of her coronation is recounted in prose

and verse, and sung in chorus by the vine-dressers to this very day. The ceremony was one of the greatest splendour in Buda. The King was proud of her grace and beauty, and, as he led her in triumph up the cathedral aisle to the foot of the altar, he looked round in delight at the admiration she excited. But her heart was far from all these worldly vanities. She bowed to the very earth before the image of her Redeemer on the Cross, and as she gazed with streaming eyes upon the semblance of his sufferings, she tore from her head the crown of gold and jewels, placed there the moment before by the Cardinal; and while the loud notes of the *Te Deum* were still resounding through the building, she vowed never again to wear a crown of gold upon her brow while that of Christ, her Saviour, was bound with thorns.

This legend is told by the old monks as an illustration of humility; that of charity is still more picturesque.

The people of a city in Thuringia having revolted against the excessive taxation which had been imposed upon them by the King in order to satisfy his taste for splendour and his love of war, siege was laid to the fortress of the town wherein the rebels had shut themselves up. The King had resolved to starve them out, and encamped with a detachment of his army outside the walls, proclaiming that death should be the award of the traitor detected in supplying the insurgents with food—for the wall of the fortress was low enough to enable any charitably disposed person to throw provisions to the besieged. This state of things had lasted for some days. The cries of the women and children were so shrill and piercing, that they echoed through the camp where the King and his courtiers were holding high wassail in the Royal tent. The young Queen was at prayers with her maidens in her richly decorated bower. The shouts of laughter which issued from the Royal tent, as the unfeeling warriors made merry at thought of the sufferings of the imprisoned rebels, mingled with the hymn of supplication addressed to Heaven for relief of the sufferers by the beautiful young Queen. The revelry from the tent grew at last so boisterous, the wailings and cries for help from the tower so terrible, that, unable to bear the heartrending emotion any longer, Queen Elizabeth stole forth alone, amid the darkness, to carry beneath the rich dalmatique she wore, a whole lapful of the millet loaves, crisp, russet and fresh

baked, which had been just brought from the oven for the table of the King, and threw them to the famishing inmates of the tower. She had already twice passed the lines, unheeded of the sentinel, who had been listening open-mouthed, and full of glee, to the ribald songs and jests issuing from the Royal tent; but the third time the dawn was just beginning to break, and the glistening shimmer of the silver-woven dalmatique caught the eye of the watcher. No answer being returned to his summons, he rushed forward just as the Queen was about to throw her third provision over the wall. Dragging her towards him, he tore aside the folds of her embroidered robe to ascertain the nature of the burthen she was carrying. But full of faith and reliance on the intercession of the Saints, she called upon them all to help her. The King heard the voice of the sentinel giving warning of treason in the camp. He sprang forward in rage at the call. Seizing the Queen rudely by the arm, and flourishing his sword above her head, he swore a mighty oath that she should suffer the penalty of her crime like the meanest of his subjects. As he spoke he wrenched the dalmatique asunder, and out rolled the burthen contained within its folds. No loaves of millet seed, russet and fresh baked, were there, but a lapful of roses—pink, white, and crimson, and seemingly gathered scarce an hour before—fell in a shower upon the grass, perfuming the atmosphere all around. The King was so amazed, that in the confusion created in his mind by the strange event, he first condemned to a sound castigation the stupid sentinel, for accusing the Queen of foul treason to her husband and her country, when she had merely sauntered forth in the early dawn to gather roses with the dew upon them; and then directly yielded to the prayer of his gentle wife, and freely forgave the man for his blunder. Besides, so great was his delight at having been spared the horrible alternative to which his passion would have led him, that he ordered a flag of truce to be hoisted, and pardon to be proclaimed to the insurgents, with permission to retire with wives and children, bag and baggage, unmolested from the tower. The monk who first relates the story observes that the King always maintained an embarrassed comprehension of its reality, "which shows," says the wise old recorder of the event, "that even seeing is not always believing to the unjust and wicked." But the Hungarian people to a man

believed in its truth—ay, and still believe it to this very day—and the highly-coloured record of the miracle in many wondrous tints of red, blue, and yellow, will be found upon the walls of every peasant's cottage in Hungary.

The twenty-second is the day honoured of musicians. Saint Cecilia, the patroness of harmony, is then revered by all lovers of the divine art. The great miracle of her life resided in the power she possessed of bringing the angels down from heaven to listen to the melody produced by her touch upon the organ and the sistrum. Her parents had insisted upon her marriage with a young Pagan officer in the Roman army. But she converted him to Christianity, with every member of his family. For this, she was condemned to be beheaded. She was led to the scaffold, singing as she went with such divine harmony, that, according to Saint Chrysostom, her accents had the effect of lighting a heavenly fire in the most hardened heart. Saint Augustine chronicles his practice of the holy melodies sung by Saint Cecilia as the greatest and most elevating of the influences which tended to his conversion. While the licitor's axe hung suspended above her head, the lovely strains still poured from her lips. So beautiful were they, that the man paused to listen, and the Saint, looking upwards in his face, signed to him to give the blow. Mechanically he obeyed, but no sooner was the deed accomplished than, full of remorse, he flung himself upon the bleeding corpse and proclaimed himself a Christian.

And now we come to the twenty-fifth of the month, the day on which a Saint—of memory as excellent, and fame as unimpeachable as any—is venerated wherever youthful womanhood is loved and admired. Saint Catherine of Alexandria was a right royal and noble lady, of undaunted courage, and most profound acquirements in all the sciences; able to discuss the most abstruse points with the learned doctors of philosophy; and belonged to the unrivalled School of Alexandria, appointed to retain her in the ranks of Paganism by the Emperor Maximin. Saint Basil describes her pure, calm beauty to have been absolutely luminous as though the light of Heaven shone forth from within. And when she entered the hall, where the twelve learned doctors were assembled to discuss with her the truths of Christianity, as commanded by the Emperor, they all arose and bowed low before

her. The reasoning of the Saint was so conclusive, her logic so profound, her arguments so finely drawn, that the strangest contradiction of sentiment arose in the assembly. It was the twelve philosophers themselves who were converted from Paganism to the new religion, and so they were all burned alive together in one huge furnace, while the Saint herself was condemned to be broken on the wheel. So determined was the Imperial idiot to wreak full vengeance on the woman who had defied him, that an instrument of novel design, invented expressly for the more exquisite torture of the victim, was used in her case for the first time. A double wheel was brought furnished with iron spikes on which, bound with cords, she was laid with face upturned to Heaven. "But Saint Catherine called upon the Lord," says Saint Basil, "and in a moment the cords were snapped asunder, and she stood before the crowd assembled to witness her execution in all the majesty of that preference and favour shown by the Lord to those who trust to Him with faith unsullied by worldly thought." But Saint Catherine could not escape the decree of the tyrant, who had vowed to exterminate the Christian element from amongst the people; and the Saint, after having suffered a long imprisonment, was beheaded, and her body cast into a pit at some little distance from the scaffold. For three centuries did the Christians search in vain for the place of burial. It was found at last, and the legend of the Church declares that the body of the Saint was borne by angels to Mount Sinai, where it was deposited in the chapel of the monastery founded by Saint Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine. But Falconis, Archbishop of San Severino, destroys the tradition by the commonplace explanation of the body of Saint Catherine having been carried to the tomb by the monks of Mount Sinai, whose habit is called the angelic robe, and the monks themselves looked upon as angels by reason of their pure and blameless lives.

Saint Catherine is by far the most popular of all the female Saints in the calendar, being patroness of all unmarried females of every age and every degree. The twenty-fifth of November is, therefore, a day of rejoicing among the young, and of regret amongst the old. Every girl brings a bouquet of chrysanthemums, called "Catherines," in France, and "tarinas," in Italy, to lay upon the altar of the Saint.

To the young and blooming maiden is assigned the task of knotting the garters of Saint Catherine, while to the old maid is confided that of braiding the tresses of her hair. The dread of being left to "coiffer Sainte Catherine," has led many a young French girl into a hasty and imprudent marriage. The boarding-schools are uproarious on the evening of Saint Catherine's Day, and balls, and parties, and private theatricals—to which, on this sole occasion, the brothers, the male cousins, and their friends are admitted—are given by the young ladies. No wonder, then, that at the Relic Fair, the relics of Saint Catherine should be the most popular of all. Chips from the stone of her sarcophagus on Mount Sinai; fibres of the wood from her coffin; are brought to Venice by the Arab merchants, and thence distributed all over the world.

KING COLE'S CITY.

FROM being a myth—for it is doubtful if he ever was anything else—"King Cole" became long ago the undignified hero of a popular ditty. Everybody has heard how

Old King Cole was a merry old soul, and a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,
and he called for his fiddlers three.

It is the same with "Le bon Roi Dagobert," who was not a myth; but who, though he really did something important in French history, is in the song scolded as if he were a schoolboy, by his friend and counsellor, Saint Eloy, the French Dunstan.

Cole, they say, is only a myth, invented to account for the name of a town; and accounting for it on a wrong principle. Colchester—Colne-ceaster—is no doubt Colonia, "the settlement," a common name for Roman towns in new countries. Cologne, on the Rhine, is the most famous instance.

Ceaster, Chester, Ceter, Xeter, is, under various forms, the Roman "castrum," a fort. The word was adopted (as street, stratum, a paved road, was) by the English invaders, and every place that is so distinguished, even if, like Wroxeter, it is now merely a village, was a Roman walled town.

Cole is a myth, say modern "Dryasdusts"; but their explanation of the town's name does not quite run on all-fours. How comes the river to be called Colne? Of course it is a corruption of

Colonia; and yet river names in England are nearly all Celtic. I cannot recall another case of one derived from the Latin. Besides, there are other Colns: in Middlesex, in Shropshire—Colebrook—and so on.

So I advise the Colchester people not to give up, without a struggle, the King Cole myth; it may be true, and it is, at all events, very respectable.

Geoffrey of Monmouth tells it, and so does the Chronicler of Saint John's Abbey. Both assure us that, in the days when Britain was the battle-field of would-be Roman Emperors, Allectus, sent from Rome for the purpose, killed Carausius, who is said to have been a Briton, and who, anyhow, struck money here and got himself acknowledged Emperor within the four seas. Allectus, however, was himself killed by the King of Cornwall, who proclaimed himself King of the whole island. To him the Eastern men would by no means submit, and Coel, King of Caer-colvin—Colchester—fought against the Cornish usurper, slew him, and set up for sole monarch.

But Rome's arm was still long enough to reach British rebels. Constantius was sent to chastise Coel. He besieged him—one story says for three years—and, during the siege, got sight of Helena, his daughter, beautiful as her Greek namesake and as accomplished as a Girton girl. Of course he fell in love with her, and immediately offered Coel terms, one of which was that the lovely Helen should become his wife. The bargain was struck, and by-and-by, at York, was born Constantine, afterwards the Great.

True history—not that of Geoffrey, but of the Roman historians—says that Helena was a Moesian slave-girl, and that Constantine never set foot in Britain till he was thirty years old; but clearly that is the slander of a heathen who wished to throw discredit on the first Christian Emperor's parentage.

Whether, however, Cole is or is not a myth, Colchester was a British capital long before it became the Roman colony of Camulodunum. King Coel's pump in the middle of the High Street, his kitchen (at Lexden, probably the site of the Roman theatre), his Palace (where the Castle now stands), his Castle (the West-gate), may all be legendary; but about the year 1 A.D., this "oppidum" (hill fort) of the Trinobantes had grown into what Dion Cassius calls the Royal town of Cunobelin (Shakespeare's Cymbeline), son of Tascovian, a

sort of British Egbert, who united under his sway a good many tribes from what was afterwards Essex, right across to the Severn. He was a civiliser as well as a conqueror—coined money ("the Britons," says Cæsar, "do not use money but iron tallies regulated to a certain weight"); made roads—a system of roads has been traced all over Southern Britain ("British track-ways"), not coincident with, probably much older than, the Roman roads; conquered the Trinobantes, and then changed his capital from Verulam to Camulodunum; lived, indeed, very much as Shakespeare represents him, in almost Italian luxury.

It is by their coins, mostly found in Hertfordshire, that we trace the succession of the Cymbeline family; besides Verulam, they were coined at Segontium, Calleva (Silchester), Cunetio, Uriconium (Wroxeter under the Wrekin, where not many years back the hypocaust, or warming apparatus, of the town-hall was opened out); so that the dominion of the King who held his court in Colchester was a wide one.

Camulodunum is the "dun" or fortress of Camulos, a Gallic (therefore, we suppose also a British) deity as uncertain in his attributes as most Gallic deities. One of Cymbeline's sons was Caractacus, one of whose subject-Kings went to Rome and besought aid from Claudius against his master. Hence the expeditions of Aulus Plautius, of Ostorius, and of Claudius himself, during which Camulodunum was taken and made a "colony," that is a settlement of Roman veterans with municipal privileges. Less than twenty years after its temple and Senate-house had been built, and its College of Claudian Flamens founded by the self-glorifying Emperor, who marked it out as the capital of the whole island, Camulodunum was a heap of smoking ruins. While Suetonius Paulinus was away in the West pursuing Caractacus, the East broke out into wild revolt. Boadicea and her Iceni took Camulodunum, storming the temple after a two days' siege, and killing the hated veterans. We all know how the revolt was crushed, though Boadicea, with her yellow hair flowing below her waist, her piercing glance, and her harsh voice like that of a centurion (Dion is not complimentary), was at the head of her troops. Camulodunum was rebuilt, but ceased to be the Roman capital. London soon shot ahead of it in trade; York, nearer to the frontier of the unsubdued Caledonians, became the military capital. Colonia, however (we may drop

the earlier name), was a big place with strong walls, which still exist. Archæologists say that while at Lincoln, Exeter, and, perhaps, Chester, the modern walls are on Roman foundations, at Colchester it is the Roman walls themselves that still remain, enclosing about one hundred and nine acres in a circuit of three thousand one hundred yards—less than Chester, but a little more than Roman Exeter.

The Western or Prætorian Gate still stands. It is called the Balkern—no one knows why—or King Cole's Castle. It is worth examination, with its central arch eleven feet wide, its two smaller side entrances, its bold, semicircular bastion with two guard-rooms; for, since the similar Eastern Gate was taken down a century ago, it and North Gate, Lincoln, are the only Roman gates in England. No columns or friezes, no other remains of an architectural character have been found in Colchester. The want of building stone—the walls are of blocks of chalk, alternating with layers of Roman tile—probably led the builders to use moulded clay or cement, just what is used in so many of the Tudor houses in East Anglia. And the Roman tile, or brick, was a godsend to later builders. Trinity Church Tower is pre-Norman, with the "Saxon" round-headed windows divided by a little balustrade-pillar; but, unlike St. Benet's, Cambridge, and all other "Saxon" towers, it is of Roman brick instead of stone. Again, St. Botolph's Priory must nearly all have been built of Roman brick. The west part is a fine bit of Norman; the great nave pillars are Norman; but both are of Roman brick, and very curious they look, the instance being probably unique of such an adaptation to new work of old material. The treasures of Roman Colchester have, therefore, been mostly found below the surface—inside the walls, basements of villas with tessellated pavements; outside, in the burial-ground, glass vessels, vases, etc.—among them "The Colchester Vase," with an inscription, which is not in the Museum, but in Mr. Taylor's collection—and a glass vessel embossed with a representation of Olympic races, which is in the Slade Collection in the British Museum. On an urn in the Colchester Museum is scratched the laconic epitaph "fuisti," a pendent to the not uncommon inscription "vixi." Then there is the leaden cist—burial box—of the Centurion Favonius,

containing a pearl-grey earthenware cup, as thin as the finest porcelain, reminding one of the Japanese ware so popular a few years ago. The glory of the local Museum is an altar found seven years ago in Balkern Lane, dedicated "Matribus Sulevis"—to the Sylph mothers. Similar records of this Sylph worship—connected probably with the belief in fairies—have been found in Switzerland and France. Was "Sul," whose head is one of the striking things in the Bath Museum, and after whom Bath was called "Aquæ Sulis," corrupted into "Aquæ Solis," one of these "Mothers"? She was a great goddess all over Britain, if, indeed, Salisbury City, Salisbury Crags by Edinburgh, and Little Salisbury, the last spur of the Cotswold overlooking the Bath valley, are named after her. The Colchester folks do not seem to have been religious. Besides this altar, only some half-a-dozen statuettes of gods and goddesses have been discovered; while of Christian emblems (excluding the cross in a circle, which is common to all ornamentation), there is only one—a bone pin, with head carved into a Latin cross.

How the Saxons got possession is not recorded. Of some towns, like Andredescester—as the Saxons called Pevensy—the Saxon Chronicle says they were taken by storm, and every soul therein slaughtered. Of others, like Wroxeter, the state of the remains points to a fiery fate. Colchester was probably stormed, and left waste until the inroads of the Danes forced the Saxons to seek shelter in the walled towns which, till then, had been their abomination. For some time, indeed, the Danes—who from the first valued fortified towns—held Colchester; but it was wrested from them by a popular rising under Ælfred's son, Eadward. "Much people," says the Chronicle, "drew together during harvest, and went to Colceaster and beset it, and fought against it till they mastered it, and slew all the folk therewithin, and took all that was there, save the men who fled away over the wall."

Domesday shows Colchester to have been a thriving place. For taxation purposes it was reckoned as a "hundred." It had two hundred and seventy-six King's burgesses—among them Saxons like Colman, and Lewin, and Godwine, and Sprot, and Not, and Pic, and Scadebutre; Danes like Hacon, and Tovy, and Ogood; and Normans such as Rossel, Dimidius Blancus, Willelmus Peccatum. Each burgess had a house, and from one to twenty-five acres.

Under the Conqueror, the great man at Colchester was Eudo. He had sixty-four manors in the Eastern counties, twenty-five of them in Essex; and on the resignation of Fitzosbern, he became Dapifer (Seneschal) of Normandy. His father, Lord of Ric, a little castle close to Bayeux, had helped William in his troubles; and William never forgot a kindness. He built the Castle on the site of the Temple of Concord, largely using Roman materials for his work; so that in Colchester the Castle is not near the wall, but in the middle of the town. Its keep is so like the London White Tower, that it was probably by the same architect, Gundulph, Bishop of Rochester, the greatest castle-builder of his day. The effect of the Roman bricks alternating with bands of yellow stone is very striking, and must have been more so when it had, what the London Tower still has, its top storey. It is of vast strength, all its towers being of solid masonry as high as the first floor; but its strength was little tried; for Eudo left only a daughter, and the King took possession of the Castle. More than a century after Eudo's death, in 1215, it stood a siege, and its French garrison, after being battered by John's engines, surrendered under a safe conduct. In the great siege of 1648, the Castle was of no use to the defenders; for what caused the surrender was the refusal of the Royalist soldiers to fight any longer.

Eudo built an abbey—Saint John's, just outside the walls—and a leper hospital; for leprosy, brought back by the Crusaders, had grown into a veritable plague, thanks to dirt and bad food. By-and-by guilds sprang up, the "Oddfellows' clubs" of the Middle Ages, which insured their members against loss by fire, helped them in sickness, old age, and poverty, and lastly gave them decent burial. How Henry the Eighth's inquisitors stole the poor decorations belonging to these guilds—their palls, their banners, their plate—is one of the ugliest stories of the Reformation. Colchester has several guilds, among them that of Helen, Saint and Empress, at whose yearly "pageant" a "fair youth" was dressed up like the Empress, while old men with spade and cross headed the procession to typify the finding of the True Cross. A very frugal dinner ended the day—bread and cheese, and ale.

The richest men in Colchester were the

butchers—the trade is still one of the most money-making—and the “taxations” of Edward’s time, during which an inventory was made of everybody’s goods, the veriest trifle being set down, enable us to see exactly who were rich and who poor, among the townspeople. Most of them were very poor, even the clergy; the total valuation of the chief butcher, gold buckle and ring included, was only seven pounds fifteen shillings and twopence; but then (1300), the gold buckle is valued at fourteen pence; the ring at twopence; two silver spoons, sixteen pence; two gowns, ten shillings; two horses, one mark; while a trivet, an andiron, and a candlestick, are thrown in for twelve pence; and a cart is only worth four shillings, though two barrels are valued at ninepence.

Colchester had its Jewry, usury being forbidden to Christians. Up till 1177, all Jews had to be buried in their London graveyard; after that date they spread into all the chief towns. Probably they suffered, as we know they did in other places, during the outbreak of 1189; for in the Sixth of Richard the First certain townsfolk had to answer at Westminster about the death of some Colchester Jews.

Not long before their expulsion in 1290, they seem to have been on the best of terms with their Christian neighbours, for when a deer fled past the city and the town lads started in pursuit, the hunters included Saunte, son of Ursel, Cok and Samuel, sons of Aaron, and several other Jews. The deer was intercepted and driven in at one of the gates; but she leapt over the wall and broke her neck, whereupon the balliff and beadle came up and carried off the game. In the trial that ensued it is pleasing to find that Jews became surety for Christians, and vice versa.

The expulsion of the Jews was not a wholly lawless proceeding; the Jews belonged entirely to the King, and the large sums which he could squeeze out of them made him independent of the people who were striving might and main to uphold the principle that taxation and representation must go hand in hand. Hence everywhere the people rejoiced at their being driven out, even if they did not suggest it.

Colchester believed that Richard the Second survived his supposed death. The Abbot of Saint John’s sent to Scotland and got assurance that the King still lived, whereupon he, the Prior of Saint Botolph’s, and all the other Church dignitaries around began distributing badges of the White

Hart. The French were to land at Ipswich at Christmas, 1413, and the Countess of Oxford, in her Castle of Hedingham, was ready to take the field. But the French did not come; Queen Isabella, who was to have led them, thought she was a widow, and married the son of the Duke of Orleans; and the Abbot and Prior were tried and deprived.

Perhaps this experience kept the place quiet during the Wars of the Roses; but it had excitement of a different kind, for in the Seventh of Henry the Sixth, William Cheveling was burnt as a heretic. Such a scene must have been more thrilling than the wager of battle between two rascals, Huberd and Bokenham, who accused one another of robbery and murder, and were by the Sheriffs set to fight clad in leather coats, with targets in their hands and staves piked with horn, the vanquished to be straightway hung.

The Colchester Sessions book contains two curious entries of a later date. In 1651, a burglar, found guilty, claimed “benefit of Clargie,” and as he could “read like a Clarke,” he was burned in the hand and set at liberty. In the Fourteenth of Charles the First, a man was pressed to death for refusing to plead.

Like other East-Coast towns, Colchester received a contingent from the Flemings who fled from Alva. They brought with them the serge and bays (baize) manufacture, and had leave from Elizabeth to form a congregation in Saint Giles’s Church. At the time of the siege this was a thriving body, and not till 1728 did it dissolve itself.

The oysters, which everybody nowadays connects with Colchester, were much prized by the Romans; but were not much heard of afterwards till the time of Elizabeth, though the oyster feast took place every year when the Mayor was chosen.

Why, after the war seemed over, the Royalists made a last stand at Colchester, is not clear. The place had strong sympathy with the other side. The Reformation had made a cleaner sweep there than elsewhere of the religious endowments, “The magistrates asking the Abbot of Saint John to a feast, and then hanging him incontinently”; and the tithes being so swallowed up by laymen that, even in 1748, one living was worth only nine pounds, another six pounds ten, a third only twenty shillings. Poverty had made the clergy despised; and in 1642 the mob plundered the house of the Vicar of Ard-

leigh, and pelted him, old man of seventy though he was, with mud and stones whenever he appeared in the street.

In 1648, however, many Presbyterians were disgusted with the treatment of the captive King. The Kentish men rose under Goring; but Fairfax dispersed them, and the runaways crossed the river and threw themselves into Colchester, intending to push on into the Midlands. But Fairfax was too quick for them, and so, amid a thoroughly hostile population, were cooped up Goring, now Earl of Norwich, Lord Capel, Lord Loughborough, Sir G. Lisle, Sir C. Lucas, and some five thousand troops. Fairfax tried a "coup de main." He beat the Royalists under the walls, and "seven colours" of his foot entered the town with them; but Lord Capel led a charge by a side lane, and his men closed the gate by sheer strength in the face of the enemy, he slipping his cane into the staple till the bolt could be found, and all the Parliament men who had got in, being killed or taken. The siege then became a blockade, enlivened by a naval fight on the Colne, in which the horse on both sides joined, the Parliament dragoons helping to board the Royalist ships; the Royalist horse, who came up late, vainly endeavouring to retake them.

Hunger soon began to afflict the besieged; and they had the mortification of daily letting through their lines, with trumpet and flag of truce, hot pies and other provisions for the Parliamentary Commissioners whom on their march they had seized at Chelmsford, and whom they kept as hostages. Gradually the end drew on. Three weeks after the siege began, Colonel Whalley seized Greenstead Church, and set up a battery in the churchyard. The Royalists, expecting help from the North, which never came, made a great sally, "rushed" the breastwork at the bridge-end, and charged up-hill towards Whalley's battery; but his horse met them and drove them back into the town. Then the suburbs were taken, and the Royalist horse tried to steal away between Fairfax's lines. They forded the river, but the miller who guided them led them on the enemies' sentries.

Fairfax sent in arrows, with broad-sheets attached, describing the defeat of the other Royalist risings: the Welsh at Saint Fagan's; Lord Holland, in Surrey; and the capture at Linton of a party on its way to help Colchester. The leaders, however, did not lose heart, though the besieg-

ing lines were pushed so close that the two sides took to pelting each other with stones; and Fairfax might have stormed the place had he not been anxious to save bloodshedding.

Sallies went on till the last, but all in vain; and horseflesh did not prove dainty fare, though a horse was roasted whole and solemnly cut up, the joints being decked with ribbons to encourage the feasters. Meanwhile, the townspeople suffered badly. "Colchester's Teares," is one of the pamphlets describing their hard case. They began bringing Goring their dead children; and the Mayor begged Fairfax to let them pass out, seeing they were starving.

He replied, "his trust did not permit it," and if they tried he would be constrained to drive them in again. So, between the two, they had to starve—victims of a cause which they utterly abhorred.

The Royalists still hoped against hope that the Prince of Wales's fleet in the Thames would help them; but when, after a two months' siege, a paper kite was flown in telling how the Duke of Hamilton had been utterly crushed in the North, and offering liberty to the soldiers, and passes to their homes, "the officers to be rendered to the General's mercy," the men mutinied, refused to attempt to cut their way out, and surrendered in their leaders' despite "to fair quarter," that is, to have their lives, and clothing, and food while prisoners. Of the officers four were selected for execution, Fairfax wishing, by striking terror, to put an end to further plots and risings. These were Colonel Farre, who had once served on the other side, and who managed to escape; Sir G. Gascoigne, really Guasconi, an Italian "pirate" with no belligerent rights, who was pardoned; Sir C. Lucas, and Sir G. Lisle, who were shot on the charge of having broken their parole. They were not even allowed time to settle their affairs. Lisle, after kissing his friend's dead body, said:

"How many of your lives have I saved in hot blood, and must now myself be most barbarously murdered in cold blood."

He then bade the musketeers draw nearer; and when one of them retorted: "I'll warrant you, sir, we'll hit you," replied:

"Friend, I've been nearer you when you've missed me."

The last words of the inscription in St. Giles's Church, "By command of

Thomas Fairfax, in cold blood barbarously murdered," are cut very deep. The Duke of Buckingham, married to Fairfax's daughter, wished to erase a sentence reflecting on his father-in-law. He asked Charles, who spoke about it to Lord Lucas.

"I will have it struck out," was the reply, "if your Majesty will permit me to write instead that the pair were murdered for loyalty to Charles the First, and that that King's son ordered the memorial of their loyalty to be obliterated."

Charles was ashamed of himself, and ordered the letters to be cut in to a greater depth.

Having seen this monument, you may say good-bye to King Cole's town. There is nothing more to tell about it, except that a Quaker, Parnell, was so badly treated in the Castle prison, that he died in consequence. But this was in 1651; for the Parliament was fiercer against the Quakers than either Charles the First or his sons. In 1884 came the earthquake, which was so serious—though it is hard to believe it—that for the repairs of churches, etc., nearly two thousand pounds was sent from the Mansion House Fund.

A DEAD LETTER.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

WHEN Duncan and I first settled in our new home, in an out-of-the-way Staffordshire village, we found ourselves persons of considerable importance. It had transpired—such things always do transpire—that Dr. Ferrars had married the niece of Sir Andrew Alison, the great railway contractor, and this fact cast around us a halo reflected from my uncle's well-known name and wealth. Many of the county dignitaries called on us, and I found myself treated with deference by my neighbours in the village. Our new circle, however, was not long in discovering that between the man of millions and his niece yawned a gulf which neither had any intention of bridging over, and the great expectations which had attended our installation, shrank away disgusted before our diminutive and unpretentious establishment.

These social questions did not trouble us. Duncan was glad to be able to devote all his spare time and attention to scientific reading and experiments, and did not want to get into the swim of local gaieties. Unfortunately, he found more time for

reading than he cared to bestow on it; besides which, his practice was so scattered through the lonely moorland farms and hamlets, that a hard day's work was far from being a remunerative one.

I tried not to grow faint-hearted as we gradually realised that the investment, which had absorbed nearly all our capital, was a mistake. I gave myself every possible trouble with housekeeping, in which, of course, I was by no means an expert; and, in order to make both ends meet, I calculated every halfpenny with a parsimony which would have done credit to Uncle Andrew.

It availed me nothing; the ends did not meet. Every week there was a wider gap between the limit of the money and the limit of the needs. I soon found that I had to forego every little luxury myself, and that Duncan must be deprived also; and, after I had reduced my domestic staff to the smallest possible apology for a maid-of-all-work, my poor husband dismissed the stable-boy, and took the office of groom on his own shoulders.

I can see it all now: how when he came in from a long tiring round, on a muddy, dark afternoon, I used to seat myself on the corn-bin holding the stable lanthorn while he served his apprenticeship as a hostler. We tried to make a joke of it; but our laughter was only a make-believe, for, in spite of everything, we were getting into difficulties; and the suave consideration with which my first orders had been received by the local tradesmen, had given place to disdainful inattention and aggressive demands for settlement of fast-growing accounts. The butcher was appeased at the cost of my pearl set, which had once been my mother's, and then I used every precaution not to get into his black-books again. This meant that we had to be very sparing with beef and mutton until better times came.

But better times did not come, or at least did not come permanently. Life was one incessant struggle, until sometimes I felt as if it would be useless to struggle any more.

Audrey wrote to me with tolerable regularity, but she did not ask any searching questions, and I was too proud to confide in her. If she could believe that story about our father, and that Uncle Andrew was justified in what he had done regarding my marriage, she and I could never be on a confidential footing again—besides, such a confidence might have looked like

an indirect appeal for help, and we had not yet fallen so low as that.

One day—it was the second winter of our marriage, and baby was three months old—I sat in the sitting-room with my account-books before me. I had been a long while ill, and still longer recovering, so that there was a terrible accumulation of liabilities to be investigated, and the prospect was not very encouraging. I had no trinkets left wherewith to cover a deficit, and my few pretty wedding presents had followed in the train of my jewellery.

As I sat thus with throbbing head and a shawl round me to make up for the meagreness of the fire, there came an imposing rap and ring at the street-door.

I scarcely ever had any callers then—the halo of importance had long faded, and people looked terribly askant at us—so my little maid was scarcely equal to the emergency of opening the door to a visitor who sounded so important. She pushed open the sitting-room door with an awkwardness so complete, and an apron so black, that tears of mortification rose to my eyes, as she announced tremulously, "A gentleman, mum;" and Cyril Holmes walked in.

For one moment I felt inclined to laugh and cry with delight, the next I remembered that after this visit our poverty could no longer be a secret from my relations, and the words of welcome died on my lips.

"I needn't ask how you are, Sylvia," he said; "and I hope I shan't hurt your feelings if I say you look awfully pale and thin."

"Do I?" I tried to reply, briskly. "You see, I've been rather ill, and getting about again tires me."

"You look very busy, too, for a convalescent. Why on earth do you have all these papers about, if you feel tired?"

"Oh, I must do something," I answered, mendaciously. "It amuses me."

"Does it? Perhaps it amuses you too much. You ought to be glad that I have come to be a substitute in the way of amusement."

He spoke gaily, but there was something troubled in his manner, which I, in my preoccupation, put down to the impression my comfortless home must be producing on his mind.

But when he began to talk and to question me about Duncan, I saw that the burden on him was not ours, but his own; and that, though he tried to appear interested in my answers to his questions, his thoughts were straying to something else.

Presently he got up; walked to the cradle; and looked at my quiet, little, wan baby.

"What have you called it, Sylvia?" he asked. Then, before I could answer—almost, in fact, as if he did not want an answer—he went on: "Audrey is not so brave as you are, Sylvia."

I looked at him. I saw that he was going to tell me his trouble.

"It is strange that one so calm as she is should not be braver," he continued. "Do you know why I have come to see you? Naturally you would not require any reason, but there is one, and I am going to tell you all about it. I have grown tired of waiting for Audrey. Perhaps you do not know that she made me a promise to be my wife some day—long before you were engaged to Duncan. She made a great secret of it, and said I must be patient. Heaven knows I have not been impatient, but time is going on. I am eight-and-thirty; Audrey is past her first youth. What is the use of waiting? Andrew Alison will never learn to like me now. We are only wasting our lives. I have been thinking this out ever since your marriage; and the other day I went to her, and asked her if she loved me enough to keep her promise without delay. Sylvia, can you believe it?"—poor Cyril! his voice faltered—"You could not guess."

"I think I can," I replied. "I am sure she refused to."

"Worse than that."

"You mean that she has given you up."

"She really has, Sylvia; I cannot believe it; she gave me up as if it did not hurt her a bit, and now—"

"You have not come to ask me to use my influence with her, Cyril," I interrupted.

He shook his head. "No, indeed, I haven't. I have not allowed myself to cling to any vague hope. I thought I should like to tell you all about it, and to bid you good-bye. I couldn't stay in London. I have left Alison and I am going to America. I came just for old times' sake."

"You wouldn't care to tell me what she said?" I hazarded the words timidly; I was, in truth, very eager to know how Audrey could have accounted for her resolution.

"I will tell you all you care to hear. She said that your uncle had told her plainly that she might marry me as you had married Ferrars, against his will, but she added, she had no mind to go

and live a pauper's life—to be in debt; to be scouted by respectable people—good gracious, Sylvia, what am I saying? I beg your pardon. Don't cry, dear; what a brute you must think me!"

But it was no use telling me not to cry. I was too weak to restrain the floods of tears that lay so near the surface always now.

"Who told them all that?" I sobbed. "Who told them that we are in debt, and that people are turning their backs on us? How could Audrey know it, and never send me a word of sympathy? How dare Uncle Andrew know it, and never send us a shilling? Oh, Cyril, he is a wicked, cruel man. He has been the means of breaking your engagement, because he knew that Audrey was too cautious to be driven into marrying against his will. His object is to avoid any necessity that might arise for accounting for our father's money."

I had left off crying now—the anger in my heart had scorched up my tears.

"I do not think you are quite just in what you say, Sylvia," Cyril said, as I paused for breath. "You knew you were breaking with your uncle when you married. It is not likely that he will make advances to you; other men in his place might, but he is too obstinate. As to Audrey, I feel sure she is acting on her own conclusions—her love for me has worn out—perhaps, even, she cares for some one else."

He spoke half interrogatively.

"That is possible," I replied, "but I am not in Audrey's confidence; I never have been. I know this much about her—though it is a hard thing to say of one's sister—she is a very cunning woman; she will stay with Uncle Andrew to the last; she has no heart to break, nor will she care if yours is broken. When she is growing old and worn out, Uncle Andrew will die and leave her all the money he loves so dearly—that money which partly belongs to me. It is too shameful. If he has heard of our poverty, does not his conscience tell him that our creditors have a righteous claim on that of which he is defrauding us by weak pretences?"

"Sylvia," said Cyril, very seriously, "you are ill, and you are over-excited, and you scarcely know what terrible things you are saying. I don't like Andrew Alison, myself. I know him to be absolutely without affection, and that he has a real pleasure in tyrannising over those who are in his power; but I have

worked for him for fifteen years, and his honour and honesty I firmly believe to be without reproach."

"And I, Cyril, have lived under his roof for nearly all my life. I think I know his character, and what he is capable of, quite as well as any one can. I look upon him as quite capable of appropriating our money when we were little, and refusing to give an account of it when the time came. It is waste of time to argue about it."

"But, Sylvia," Cyril replied, "if you are in need, why not make the first steps—perhaps that is all he is waiting for—why do you not write to him?"

"Do you think I would tell our troubles to him, who has no sympathy with any one?"

"But if he knows them——"

"Besides," I went on, "Duncan would not like it. It may sound ridiculous, but the mere curiosity of our postmistress would be almost enough to keep me from writing to Sir Andrew. She actually had the assurance to ask me one day why I did not write, and tell him what difficulties we are in sometimes. You are laughing at me, Cyril; you don't know what such trifles weigh when they touch a sore place."

"I dare say it is very galling," he replied, sympathetically, "but this is not the only post office in the world. Suppose you write now, and suppose I take the letter with me to Liverpool and post it. I am on my way there now, and shall sail to-morrow; then it would escape inquisitive eyes."

"I will!" I cried, "since, as you say, he knows of our poverty—half the humiliation is spared me. I shall have a good starting-point to tell him what he richly deserves to hear."

"My dear Sylvia!" cried Cyril, "I did not mean that kind of letter. Do not venture on any rash assertions or accusations. Tell him what straits you are in, and that you have a claim on him, but do word it carefully."

"I am going to word it carefully," I replied, taking my pen to begin; "do not trouble yourself about what I say. It is between him and me, and it shall be a case of kill or cure."

"Would you like to see it?" I asked when I had finished it. "I am a little hazy about legal matters, and you might, perhaps, help my ignorance."

He hesitated.

"I had rather not, Sylvia."

"You are no braver than Audrey," I

rejoined, contemptuously. I felt immensely brave myself just then. "If you had had more courage, who knows how things might have been!"

He smiled rather sadly—then, after giving me a great many messages for my husband, he went away, carrying my letter with him to Liverpool. Poor Cyril! and this was the end of his patient love for Audrey.

I was glad, later that evening, that I had written, hurried as the impulse had been; for when Duncan came in, he looked more tired and wan than I had ever yet seen him look.

"You really must make a better fire, Sylvia," he said, though I had increased it in honour of his arrival. "I am starved through. No, thanks, no bread and butter, that butter is so nasty. I will have some tea as strong as you can give it me."

My heart sank, as I looked at him and felt his burning forehead. Was he breaking down under his burden?

The next morning I got a letter from Audrey. She must have known that Cyril was coming to see us, for she had gone to the trouble of giving me an explicit version of her own side of the breaking of their engagement. "Cyril was horribly foolish to act as he did," she wrote, "but, perhaps, I was a little hard on him. I certainly did not think he would take what I said so much to heart as to resolve on leaving England; when I had had time to look at the matter all round, I wrote him a few lines to take off the sharp edge of his disappointment. Uncle Andrew can't live for ever; in fact, he seems to have aged and worn-out a great deal this last year; I may be free to do as I choose in a short time, and I put it to Cyril, how short-sighted it was to bring about an unpleasant crisis instead of waiting a little longer."

Was ever woman more heartless and calculating than my sister Audrey?

I read this sitting by Duncan, who was in bed with what he chose to call an influenza cold. But he did not impose upon me for a moment, and, even if he had, the course of the day would have undeceived me. By evening he was lying half unconscious, with burning hands and pulse at fever-rate; and, whatever name the doctors might have given to his illness, it would only have been the scientific disguise for starvation and over-work.

On the third day of his illness I was surprised to see another letter from Audrey—a letter, whose perusal came as a thunder-

clap in my already tempestuous sky. "You will no doubt be startled to hear that Uncle Andrew is dead. Lee found him yesterday, in the library, struck by apoplexy while reading his letters. He recovered consciousness for some time this morning, I believe, though I did not see him. He sent for the lawyer as soon as he could speak, and I believe they all thought he was going to get over it; but, late this afternoon, he died quite quietly and suddenly. Of course neither of you will go to the trouble and expense of coming up here for the funeral, as you know so well what his irrevocable decision about you was. I am awfully sorry that you never made it up with him. I shall of course do my best to help you if the terms of his will allow me to do so."

As I read, the words kindled and glowed as if they had been written with fire. Lee had found him struck down reading his letters—smitten to death. Something, whispered my conscience, must have agitated him terribly. Yesterday, in Audrey's letter, meant the day before yesterday, and Cyril took my letter to Liverpool—when? How many days ago was it since Duncan had come home ill? I had lost count of everything. I took up Audrey's letter, and looked at the date again; and again I tried to reckon when my letter, posted on Cyril's journey, would have come into my uncle's hands.

Bah! what was the use of worrying? Out of so many letters that reached him every day, why should mine, or why should any letter at all, be at the bottom of this sudden death-stroke? It might have been the course of nature; Audrey said he had grown older and weaker.

If I could only have told it all to Duncan—all that I could remember of that angry letter—how I had called him a thief base enough to defraud an orphan; how I had upbraided him with all our misery! But Duncan lay half asleep and half unconscious. I could not lighten my conscience by asking him to say that it did not seem to him probable my letter had had anything to do with it. All day long I went about in a pitiful state, and in the evening I wrote to Audrey, telling her of Duncan's illness, except for which I should have certainly gone to Bedford Square at once to learn all the particulars—to see if there were any chance of my being cleared in my own eyes from the apparent consequences of my rash deed.

Audrey's answer came by return. She said it was a pity I was so urgently required at home, as Uncle Andrew had left directions that I was to be summoned to the funeral. "Fancy," she said, "his treasuring up a mortification for you, even when he was not there to enjoy it. Ever since I heard," she went on, "that he had been struck while he was reading some letter, I have been expecting to hear that all his fortune had collapsed, as the fortunes of great contractors occasionally do; but Mr. Long, the lawyer, assures me that there is no probability of such a thing. I have talked to the doctor, too, and he says he fancies it was a private letter, which annoyed him very much just when he was least able to bear agitation."

So there it was. I had longed to punish Uncle Andrew, and I had done this thing. I reasoned with myself, I argued for and against myself; but there the matter was, and Uncle Andrew had ordered that I was to come to be present at his funeral! That was, in itself, overwhelming evidence against me.

It was the afternoon of the day on which Sir Andrew Alison had been followed to the grave by some hundreds of men who had been interested in his life and startled by his death. Audrey and I had been chief mourners, and Audrey, who did not even assume the slightest show of grief, wondered why I was so terribly shaken.

"I suppose it is all you have gone through lately," she said, "for you can't be humbug enough to want us to think you are sorry for him."

She said this as she and I, and one or two far-away cousins, some old employés, and the servants, were collecting in the dining-room to hear the will read. The library had been first mentioned; but I had ventured to object, and to my amazement, the lawyer had promptly deferred to my half-expressed wish that we should not go into that fatal room. I sat down by the fire, clasping my baby in my arms, while my thoughts rambled off to my poor husband, lying so weak and lonely far away; and, sitting in imagination beside him, I ran through all the gamut of self-accusation and reproach, which I felt must kill me. I did not, I dared not listen to the will. I knew that my own name would come sooner or later, and then——

Presently, sooner than I expected, Mr. Long read it aloud with great emphasis. Then I heard my father's name, and the

room seemed to waver and float round me.

"When was this will made?" I gasped.

I knew, but I wanted to stave off the evil moment.

"Didn't you hear the date?" asked Audrey, sharply.

"I drew it up for the late Sir Andrew," replied Mr. Long, "on the morning of Thursday last, the twelfth instant, during the few hours of consciousness which preceded his death, and during which time his faculties were so little impaired that I was astonished to hear, later, the sad news of his decease."

He then proceeded, and by degrees I learned from the long involved sentences that there was incontestable proof of the truth of what my uncle had said about our father, and that though I had been ungrateful and defiant in my conduct, he considered me honest and trustworthy; therefore, after a few legacies to the distant relations, to his oldest employés and the house servants, he left me heiress to the whole of his property, to the exclusion of his elder niece Audrey Alison. Then the property was specified, but I did not hear anything further. How could I accept this enormous fortune after what I had done? Surely in those last hours Uncle Andrew must have been strangely changed, to have made such an unheard-of reply to my furious attack!

I looked across to where Audrey sat with wide open, half-dazed eyes. Yes, he had been true to himself; this exclusion of her was just one of those tyrannical caprices which had made our lives so burdensome. I really pitied Audrey, and I made up my mind that she must not suffer from my fault.

The short silence which followed the lawyer's voice was broken by her.

"He was a wicked old man," she cried in a sharp, bitter voice, heedless of Mr. Long and the rest of them. "A wicked old man! I have sacrificed my best years to him, and he has left me a pauper; while Sylvia, who consulted nothing but her own selfish happiness, is to be a millionaire. It is too hateful. I do not believe he was sane at the last."

"My dear Miss Alison," said the lawyer, "he was perfectly sane—marvellously collected. His will had been settled quite differently; he altered it from beginning to end; but I am convinced he knew what he was about. I know why he did it."

"I think I know, too," I said, with an

effort to make some amends by confession. "It was that wretched letter. Audrey is right; he may have been sane, but he acted as if——"

The lawyer cast a glance of inquiry at Lee during my words, and Lee, in answer to this, interrupted me, or rather I paused to hear what he was about to say.

"No, sir, certainly. I never mentioned anything about it. Master desired I should not; them was his first intelligible words."

"So I understood; in fact, Sir Andrew's solemn charge was that, after the will had been read, and not on any account sooner, Miss Alison was to know what had become of her letter."

"Miss Alison!" I exclaimed; "you mean me, don't you, Mr. Long? The letter I speak of, was from me to Sir Andrew."

"There is some mistake, my dear Mrs. Ferrars," replied the lawyer, benignly. "Sir Andrew, several times on his death-bed, distinctly asseverated that you had borne your power—, hum, your separation from your family with perfect fortitude; but that he only knew that by side-winds, as he had had no direct communication whatever with you since your wedding."

I stood aghast. What had become of my vituperative letter? Was it possible that I was really free from the incubus that had weighed on me so heavily during the last week?

"Here," continued Mr. Long, producing from his pocket-book an envelope marked "On Her Majesty's Service," "is the document I was to return to Miss Alison."

With the keenest interest I watched her open it. She drew out a letter in her own handwriting, addressed to Cyril Holmes, which had been returned to her through the Dead Letter Office.

"And why did he presume to open this?" she asked, defiantly. "It is the old story, that listeners never hear anything good of themselves."

"Sir Andrew wished you to be told that, misled by the appearance of the cover, he opened the letter without noticing the address; I suppose when he saw the contents he investigated them. He did not justify what he had done, I think he considered he was acting according to his rights, as your guardian."

I had no need to see the letter itself, to recall the outline of its meaning, which Audrey had written to me a little while ago. For perhaps for the first time in my life, I felt a touch of pity for the

hard old man, who had been so bitterly wounded by the heartlessness of the one person whom he believed to be true to him.

"And you had written to him, Sylvia?" said Audrey, when we were alone. "Why did he tell a falsehood about it on his deathbed?"

We had looked everywhere for my letter, but could find no trace of it. It was very odd. A week or so later all was explained, when Cyril, writing from New York directly on landing, sent me back the letter he had undertaken to post. "Don't be angry with me, Sylvia," he wrote, "for my want of courage. I felt that if you had had time for consideration, you would have worded your letter to Andrew Alison differently. On landing, I heard of his death, which has caused quite a sensation here. I am sure you will be glad that you did not insult him so deeply in the last days of his long, useful life."

I do not think any one will be surprised to hear that Cyril did not lose Audrey after all. About six months after Uncle Andrew's death, she went out to New York, where they were married, and have settled.

Duncan and I have left the Staffordshire village. We are rich enough, now, to live as we like and where we like; but we never pass a day without speaking of the days when we were so poor that Duncan groomed his own horse, while I sat on the corn-bin and held the stable lanthorn.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VIII.

GASPARD bowed, with a smile that did not contradict the pained expression in his eyes, and left his employer, who had turned his back upon him in order to avoid as speedily as possible the offensive spectacle of a man throwing away his chances of worldly prosperity out of obedience to a fanciful, and—for Monsieur Meudon—a non-existent law.

In the "salle-à-manger" he met Sophia. She was standing near the door of the cabinet; it was evident that she had moved away only as he opened it. She was paler even than usual, her face was strained, and her eyes were almost colourless. Gaspard would have passed her with a hasty bow,

but she stepped forward and laid her hand upon his arm.

"What has happened?" she asked, in a whisper. "I came into the room and heard voices—yours and papa's. Then I—I listened; but I could not understand. But papa seemed angry. Surely you and he have not quarrelled."

"No, no—at least—our opinions differ, and I am going away."

"Going away! Whither? And why?"

"I cannot explain to you why I must go, mademoiselle. For the rest, I do not yet know where I shall live, except that it must be out of France. Probably I shall go, in the first place, to England.

"But what will you do there?"

"I do not know yet. I shall seek employment as a ship-builder first, but, if I cannot get it, I must take any work I can get."

"Oh, Gaspard, Gaspard, that is terrible. Do not go!"

"Alas, Sophie, I must."

"Do not say so, I ask. I beseech you to stay in Havre."

She clasped both her hands round his arm, and looked at him earnestly. For the moment her plain features were transformed to beauty by the passion of her gaze.

"Do not go," she repeated; and, though her voice was not raised above a whisper, the pain in it thrilled Gaspard's heart. But he moved away her hands, and passed on towards the door of the room. Her gliding steps, however, were quicker than his, and she stood before him again.

"At least, tell me why you must go," she demanded.

He thrust her aside roughly, but he answered her question.

"I go," he said, bitterly, "because I fear that if I remained here I should not have courage to do what I know to be right."

A sudden flash illuminated Sophie's dull eyes, and she stood aside to let him pass.

She followed him into the hall, however, with one more question.

"Have you any friends in England?"

"Not one."

"I have one—only one, and she is a girl. But her father is a ship-builder, like mine, and, perhaps, she could help you. Tell me where you live, and I will send you a letter to take to her."

Gaspard told her his address. Then he held out his hand and took hers in it—the pretty, plump, white hand which he had of late seen so often in his dreams; the hand

which was offered to him, and which held so much in its grasp; the hand which he had forced himself to refuse. He bent down and kissed it.

"Adieu, Sophie," he said, sadly.

"Sans adieu," she answered, with a tone of determination.

With a rueful countenance, Monsieur Meudon told of the failure of his boasted management of Gaspard to Madame Harache.

"Is he determined on this madness, this suicide?" she asked.

"Assuredly. His words to me on the subject were as plain as need be. As for his comments on my conduct, I need not inflict them on you. Moreover, he has to-day sent me in a formal resignation of his post in my employment, and has asked me for a certificate of his qualification for another."

"You will not grant it, and you will not let him resign."

"Chère madame, I must. One cannot keep a man in his service who wants to go elsewhere. Neither can I, who know Gaspard's merits, refuse him the testimonial he asks for. As your friend, I have done all I could to prevent Gaspard's ruining himself. I can do no more."

"Postpone your acceptance of his resignation; invent some work which only he can do. Try any plan that will give us more time. This mad passion will burn itself out in time, as you prophesied, and then he will do as we wish."

"A vain hope! All that is passionate in his attachment, if I mistake not, is already gone; but what remains is a dogged determination to adhere to his choice, and your opposition makes him only the more obstinate. He regards the girl as a martyr to French law and your harshness, and he is determined to share her martyrdom. It is for you to choose, madame, between giving up all communication with your son or yielding to his wishes; there is no middle course."

"He will not desert this woman?"

"Assuredly not."

"Then she must be made to desert him," said Madame Harache, setting her teeth.

"Do you think that will be easy?"

"Not easy, but possible, and if it is possible I shall accomplish it. I shall never submit to have the life of my only son ruined, while it is in my power to prevent it."

Monsieur Meudon thought that his

friend would find her plan more difficult of accomplishment than she guessed; but he neither inquired into the details of it nor tried to dissuade her from attempting it. "Women would rather fail in anything than leave it untried. They think they have done something meritorious in burning their fingers, where a man's sense would tell him to avoid the fire."

Certainly, Madame Harache's scheme would not have commended itself to the masculine diplomatist; for anger had deprived her of all the finesse she had hitherto shown.

One morning while Thora was sitting gazing disconsolately at the December sunshine falling on the now familiar street, and wondering if the winds were tearing the water of Orcadian seas to foam at that very hour, her landlady announced that "une dame" wished to see her. Thora started. Since she came to Havre no woman's foot had crossed her threshold, save that of the old landlady, who, putting the almost inevitable construction on the relation of Gaspard to the beautiful foreigner, treated her often with something less than respect.

Instinctively the girl guessed who her visitor must be, and with an inward trembling rose to her feet to receive her. But when Madame Harache, entering the room, saw before her the stately form, the proud, beautiful face of the Northern girl, it was she, and not Thora, who seemed startled. She had not been prepared for a woman like this. She had pictured to herself the "Meess Anglaise" of French caricature, tall, indeed, but raw-boned, ungraceful, featureless; and she felt a momentary doubt of the success of her mission, as she looked on this "daughter of the gods, divinely tall, and most divinely fair," who stood in silence, which she thought was scornful, waiting for her to speak.

"You are—the girl," she faltered, at last.

"I am Thora Sweynson," was the reply.

Thora by this time had learned enough French to understand it fairly, and to express herself, not grammatically, perhaps, but intelligibly.

Madame Harache collected her senses, recalled to her mind that she had never yet been permanently beaten, and proceeded to attack.

"It is you, then," she said, "who have caused the alienation between my son, Gaspard, and myself?"

"That is your fault," returned Thora. "You will not do as he wishes."

"It is the custom here for the child to obey the parent; not the parent the child. I yield to any reasonable wish of my son's; but it is a mother's duty to prevent his committing follies. He now proposes a most insane folly—to make you his wife."

Thora flushed at the insult implied in her interlocutor's tone, but simply replied: "I am his wife."

"Indeed! do you think so? Poor girl! If you are his wife, how is it that you are not received as such by his friends?"

"Because you, his mother, refuse to receive me."

"That would account for my standing aloof," said Madame Harache, carefully controlling her voice, that it should betray none of the anger and excitement throbbing within her, and speaking as if the matter were one indifferent alike to herself and her companion—"that would account for my standing aloof. But there are other ladies, known to my son, who have no reason for taking up my prejudices. Have any of them visited you?"

"No."

"And why?"

"I do not know; I never thought of it."

"Let me enlighten you. You live here alone, ignored by all Gaspard's reputable friends, because you are not his wife."

"What do you mean by saying this to me? I am Gaspard Harache's wife."

"Impossible."

"I swear it."

"Then some form of marriage passed between you."

"We plighted the Troth of Odin."

"Poor girl, did you think that made you his wife?"

"I know it did."

"Of course you are ignorant of civilisation, and of the protection it affords man from his own weakness. I have heard of savage tribes whose wedding ceremony was the breaking of a pitcher, or some such mad act; among your people it is doubtless similar. But of such forms the Church takes no cognizance. The Church—that is secondary; the law refuses to accept them. Think yourself what you will, you are not, never have been, never will be, Gaspard Harache's wife."

"You lie—though you are his mother! I know that you lie! Gaspard would not deceive me."

"Gaspard is a man—was a lover, deter-

mined to win you at any price. I do not say he meant to deceive you, and it may be that in your country your marriage is valid enough; but here in France it is worth nothing without a parent's consent—my consent, which I have refused to give. Do you understand now?"

Thora sank into a chair.

"Yes, I see it all now; why Gaspard is so sad often; why he lays such stress on your friendship; why he says your acceptance of me is of so much importance. But, madame," cried the girl, rising up again and seizing Madame Harache's hand, "you will consent, will you not? Your son's happiness depends on it; he loves me, honours me, will not give me up. In ignoring me, you separate yourself from him. And I—I am innocent. In my own country no one would dare say I was less than an honourable woman; you will not take advantage of a wicked and cruel law to ruin me; you will accept me as your son's wife?"

"No, I will not," exclaimed the elder woman, with a sudden burst of ferocity. "The law serves my purpose well, and I cling to the rights it gives me. Besides, my yielding now is useless; it comes too late. If I were weak enough to say the word that would make you Gaspard's wife, who would think well of you, since your life with him for all these months is known to all?"

"Listen to me, girl," Madame Harache went on, speaking coldly and harshly. "The harm is done now, your reputation lost beyond possibility of recovery. Besides, you are wrong in supposing that Gaspard still wants you for his wife. He is tired of you—would gladly leave you. Indeed, arrangements are already made for his marriage with a young lady of his own station and country. His brief passion is past, and he no longer presses your claims on me; for he is too grateful to me for refusing to recognise them. Do you see now how hopeless your case is?"

A moan was the only answer.

"I have now a proposition to make. I possess what you would regard as wealth, and I am willing to give you money enough to keep you in comfort, if you will return to your own land, and promise never by letter or in person to interfere with my son again."

"Go back to Stromness, and confess to all my friends that I am disgraced! Never!"

And Thora rose up in righteous anger.

"You are a wicked woman," she cried in English, forgetting her acquired tongue in her wrath. "Gaspard may well be as false and heartless as you say, since he is your son. I will leave his house; yes, at this moment, and for ever; but it will not be to go your way, nor bribed by your money. Stand aside, and let me pass you. I would not have the hem of my skirt defiled by touching yours."

Madame Harache did not understand the words; but the horror and contempt of the tone was evident enough to her. But for that she cared little, if she could obtain her will. Thora was welcome to despise her to her heart's content in any place except Havre.

"You will go?" she asked, eagerly, stepping forward, and laying her hand on Thora's arm.

The girl drew back as if the touch contaminated her. "Yes, I go at once," she answered, and passed Madame Harache to go to the door. But a sudden blindness overcame her; she fumbled vainly for the handle of the door, and with one low moan she sank senseless on the floor.

For a moment, Madame Harache thought this was only some trick to win her pity; but there was nothing of pretence in the attitude of the huddled figure in the corner by the door, and, after a few seconds, Thora's head fell back and the elder woman saw that the features were distorted as with pain. Another moan came from the unconscious lips, and she saw that the blow she had inflicted on the unhappy girl had told as well as she could desire. Even at that moment the thought "she will die," roused a spark of terrible gladness in her soul; but she dragged Thora to a sofa, and called in the landlady.

The old woman looked at the girl, and then glanced curiously at Madame Harache's face.

"She has fainted; it is nothing serious," said the latter in reply to the glance; but her voice faltered as she spoke.

"Eh! perhaps," answered the landlady, angrily; "but there are times in a woman's life when everything is serious. And what was it that caused her to faint?"

"What do you mean?"

"I know who you are; you are the mother of Monsieur who lives here, and I can guess why you came. Oh, you virtuous woman! You can kill without mercy when you choose; but know that if what you have said is the death of this poor child, you will be guilty of a double

murder. It will be bad for you in the sight of Heaven to have the soul of this erring girl accuse you; but it will be worse if there exists a soul for her unborn child. Go, you have done your work; leave me to undo it."

Madame Harache left the house, cowed, and in some degree ashamed; but not without a hope that, even at such a cost, her wishes might be accomplished. Still, she feared to picture what Gaspard would think of her.

For three days, Thora lay between life and death. Gaspard, who had been told of his mother's visit, could guess in some degree what had passed at the interview; and, in his heart, anger, grief, and shame struggled for mastery. The neglected, half-disbelieved religion he had felt in his boyhood revived in him, and he prayed continually, frantically, for Thora's recovery; prayed all the more fervently because he was conscious in his soul that there was an inner voice which told him that it would be well, both for him and for her, if she should die. The thought degraded him in his own eyes. He felt that it made him share his mother's crime; yet it would not be wholly quelled, and could not be kept under save by this weapon of ceaseless prayer.

But Thora lived. The burden of life was to be borne longer by both; neither was to escape so easily from the consequences of the selfish impatience of youth.

The bitterest moment Gaspard had yet known was when Thora, pale and gaunt with recent pain, asked him: "Is it true that I am not your wife?"

"You are to me as my wife," he answered.

"That is not what I mean. What am I to the world?"

He was forced to tell her half the truth. "According to the law of France you are not my wife, because certain conditions were not complied with in our marriage."

"But in other places, not in France," she asked, pitifully, "I am an honourable woman?"

"You are that in the sight of Heaven anywhere, my Thora; and, except here, it shall never be disputed."

"For," he said to himself, "anywhere but in Havre, I may present her as my wife, and no one will question my word. Why should I not give her this consolation?"

"Then take me away," she cried; "take me to some place where I shall not be called evil names."

"I will take you to England, where we can live in peace, and your good name will never be called in question."

He recollected with thankfulness that he had in his pocket a little note from Sophie Meudon, recommending him to her friend, Elinor Mason, and her father; but he did not mention this to Thora.

As soon as she could bear the journey he and Thora went away. He did not wait till the month's notice he had given Monsieur Meudon had expired, nor did he apprise any one of his departure. One morning he did not come to the old dock-yard, and when his master asked for him he learned that he had left Havre. Monsieur Meudon waited till his day's work was done, thinking that he would himself convey the news to Madame Harache; but when the hour came he lacked courage, and sent one of his men with a note telling her of Gaspard's departure.

She, who had been sitting in her house, trembling with fear and shameful hope, was struck to the earth by the news. She rushed to Monsieur Meudon's house, and burst in upon the family.

"Cannot you tell me where he is gone—my son, my best-beloved child!" she cried. "I will consent to his marriage with this girl, to anything, if he will come back, and leave me no more. Surely there is some trace, some clue, by which we can find him?"

"Alas, madame, there is none. He gave no warning of his departure, he has left no hint of his destination," said Monsieur Meudon.

"Perhaps he has gone to the place this girl came from; it would be natural that he should seek a home among her people, when his own are cold to him and her," suggested Madame Reyer.

Sophie said nothing—the most modest and discreet thing for a young lady to do under such circumstances.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XL.

SIR PETER'S handkerchief had gone very often to his eyes during this recital. "If we had only known, eh, Madge?" he said again and again, picturing to himself the benefits he would have showered upon the friendless girl had he known one quarter of her friendlessness.

His heart was divided in two. It seemed to him that so much misery should by rights be crowned by the happy story-book ending: "And she lived happily ever afterwards."

Under the influence of this thought he was disposed to bid Lance God-speed in his wooing. Yet there was another side to the question; there was Madge looking every whit as white and forlorn as ever that friendless young girl had looked. Really, it was hard to say which way his sympathies should be allowed to incline.

But something else beside sympathy must surely be required of him. They had been sitting still a long time, it would be a positive relief to set the wheels of life going in one direction or another. "Did you ascertain from Miss McIvor the name of her father's family place in Inverness—McIvor is a very general name in the Highlands?" he presently asked, with a passing vision of a delightful little trip to the Highland capital to make the acquaintance of the young lady's kindred.

"Miss McIvor refused to give me any information on the matter. 'It was not to be,' she said, in reply to my enquiries.

From this I concluded that she imagined that fate had spoken against her joining her father's people, and she had given up all idea of doing so. I confess I did not urge her on the matter. I could not see her in her right place among the followers of John Calvin, getting the seal set, as it were, to her fatalism. It also occurred to me that supposing Count Palliardini saw fit to pursue the poor girl to England, he would naturally, in the first instance, trace out these relatives of hers."

Sir Peter suddenly seemed to see a way to a benevolent interference in Miss McIvor's affairs.

"It occurs to me," he said, taking a little trot round the room and coming to a standstill at the minister's side, "that if any one had taken the trouble to put the matter in the right light to Count Palliardini—I mean had represented to him the impropriety of persecuting a young girl with his addresses, he might have been induced to offer her friendship instead. Now I should amazingly like to have a good talk with the man; I'm sure I should do something with him."

And now the old gentleman's brain was filled with the vision of a pleasant little trip to Corsica, and a delightful tête-à-tête with the Neapolitan Count.

"My dear sir! my dear, good sir!" ejaculated the minister.

"Where is Miss McIvor now—at Liverpool?" interrupted Madge.

The minister resumed his story. "I quickly found out that she was out of place in the busy home in which I had placed her; but where would she be in her right place? I asked myself again and again. I tried to picture her in a modern fashionable drawing-room, on the boards of a theatre, in a convent even. No, I could

see her nowhere in her right place. Then one day I had a letter from my sister Jenny——"

"Ah, Jenny! Who was she; what was her occupation in life!" interrupted Sir Peter; to his fancy the minister was not telling his story half fast enough.

"I was about to say. I left Jenny a child when I went off to the colonies, I returned to find her—well—say mature. Jenny is a capital housewife, stout, handsome, healthy, and active. And she had been condemned, by circumstances, for years to lead the life of a student; to be eyes, in fact, to a blind astronomer; to read science to him, and act as his amanuensis by day, and at nights to gaze through his telescope at the stars."

"Capital!" cried Sir Peter. "And you made sister Jenny and Miss McIvor change places!"

"I did so. I could see Miss McIvor—mentally, that is—in her right place in a lonely observatory, with face upturned to a night sky!"

Madge started. There came back to her the vision of a white face upturned to the stars, with a prayer for mercy on its lips.

The minister went on. "I knew, too, that her astronomical knowledge and habit of close observance of the heavens would be most useful in an observatory. Poor Jenny used to get such severe scoldings at times for inaccuracy and carelessness. 'Deliver me from this if you possibly can,' she had written to me on my arrival. 'I'm losing my hand for short crust, and as for stockings, I couldn't turn a heel now to save my life!' So I asked Miss McIvor if she would allow herself to be guided by me in this emergency. 'It is written,' was all her reply. On her lips it meant 'Kismet! I bow to that.'"

Here Sir Peter's handkerchief went to his eyes again. "Ah, that Count," he murmured. "I would like to get hold of him for five minutes!"

Mr. Parker continued his story. "I knew something of this astronomer, or I would not have suggested such a thing. He is of Norwegian descent, Harold Svenson by name, a man between seventy and eighty years of age, whose eyesight failed him ten years ago. He knows that his life is drawing to a close, and he is bent on verifying and classifying his observations of the past fifty years of his life. He is very poor; has spent nearly all his fortune in astronomical instruments, and consequently cannot afford to engage

a scientific assistant in his work. His wife, a woman of about sixty years of age, does his housekeeping for him; and, because Jenny wanted next to no salary, he engaged her to act as his amanuensis, and, under his direction, to survey the Heavens. He is a good man; all who come in contact with him are the better for it."

"Ah! poor, learned, good!" summed up Sir Peter. "We must get him here, Madge. Bring him back with Miss McIvor, build him an observatory on one of the hills, and set him up in instruments. What's the name of the place where he's to be found?"

"It's not far off. There is a bleak rock on the Cumberland coast, about five-and-twenty miles from here—at high tide it is cut off from the land; on it stands a round tower, which, some years ago, was used as a lighthouse. Svenson has been allowed to locate himself in it for a small yearly rental, and the roof-room, which formerly held the light, he has adapted to the exigencies of his telescope."

"Rather circumscribed for space, though," ejaculated Sir Peter, thinking of the difficulty of getting "a little exercise" under such conditions. "It strikes me Miss McIvor will be uncommonly glad to get a little more breathing-room. How long has she been there?"

Here Madge leaned forward with a look of intense, painful interest on her face.

"About ten days since we left Liverpool—we means Jenny, Miss McIvor, and I—I had written to Jenny to arrange matters with Mr. Svenson and to come to Liverpool, in case I might not be able to escort Miss McIvor on her journey north. We reached Carstairs. There I received a telegram recalling me to Liverpool on matters connected with my ministerial duties, so I commissioned Jenny to continue the journey alone. She had an anxious time with Miss McIvor after I left them. The young lady refused to continue her journey, and took to gazing at the stars again. There was another crisis in her life at hand, she said, as also a crisis in some other person's. She kept her room all day long, and wandered out at nights. Jenny was scarcely so vigilant as she ought to have been, and Miss McIvor disappeared one afternoon, and did not return till early the following day."

"Did she give any account of her doings during her absence?" queried Sir Peter.

"She came back saying that she had taken train to a place that was memorable to her,

and had seen what she had expected to see — ‘the stars had not lied to her.’ Those were her words.”

Madge drew a long breath. She felt that the grey, shadowy form in the church-yard was accounted for now.

CHAPTER XLI.

ALL Madge’s plans seemed turned upside down; her preparations for her journey to Spain came to a halt. The startling revelations of a brief twenty-four hours had seemed to put the Spanish convent into the far distance. Now that what had appeared to her as a sin, almost beyond the hope of Heaven’s pardon, no longer brought a tragedy in its train, all thought of penance for it vanished. Her mind began to recover its balance, and, unconsciously to herself, other duties in life began to assert their claims. At the present moment, however, her future was a blank to her. Till Lance’s fate was decided she could give no thought to her own.

Although she no longer harboured enmity against the woman who had supplanted her in Lance’s love, she had no wish ever again to stand face to face with her. Also, from the bottom of her heart, she prayed that she might never again in this life meet the look of Lance’s wrathful eyes. All she desired now was to know that the happiness of this man, for whom she had risked so much, was assured to him. Gervase Critchett’s death had given back to him wealth and worldly prosperity. Her one desire was that love and happiness might crown both for him.

She waited impatiently for a telegram from him acknowledging hers. When, however, one day had ended and another had begun, and there had not come back the swift “Thank Heaven” on which she counted, she grew vaguely uneasy, and consulted Sir Peter on the matter.

His face, as he listened, implied a secret to be kept from her; and his lips disclosed that secret on the spot. He even fetched Lance’s letter, and, skimming it with his eye, read portions aloud. He seemed to feel considerably relieved when he had got rid of his secret, and she knew as much about Lance’s movements as he did. He hazarded the conjecture that Lance’s investigations might have taken him out of Liverpool—to London, perhaps—but suggested that work might be found for the telegraph wires in the shape of a kindly message to Miss McIvor.

Madge demurred vigorously to this.

By a painful effort of self-abnegation she put herself for one moment in Miss McIvor’s place, and swiftly decided that overtures for a renewal of friendly intercourse must, in the first instance, come from Lance. If Miss McIvor were inclined to accept him as a future husband, she might be willing, for his sake, to pardon the slights put upon her by his people. If such a far-away possibility as her rejection of Lance’s suit came to be realised, then the wider the gulf between her and Upton the better.

Before that day ended, Sir Peter’s conjecture as to the reason of Lance’s silence was confirmed.

A stranger arrived at the Castle stating that his business was urgent, and that he wished without delay to see both Mrs. Cohen and Sir Peter. He was a detective from Liverpool. For Sir Peter he had a question; for Mrs. Cohen an important communication. The question to Sir Peter was: what was the latest news received of or from his late secretary, Mr. Stubbs? The communication to Mrs. Cohen conveyed the intelligence that cheques for various large sums, bearing her signature, had lately been paid into the county bank at Liverpool, by persons who had had dealings with Mr. Stubbs, and it was important to know if these signatures were forgeries.

The detective went on to say that suspicion in the first instance had been aroused against Mr. Stubbs by enquiries made by Mr. Clive of local magistrates, and subsequently of the police authorities. It had so chanced, also, that, on the very day on which Mr. Clive’s enquiries were made of the police authorities, a man, who gave himself out to be a clerk in a private enquiry office at Carstairs, in which Mr. Stubbs had at one time been employed, made an important communication to the chief inspector. It was to the effect that he had reason to believe that Stubbs had stolen Mrs. Cohen’s cheque-book, and that certain cheques, which he had been dealing out rather freely of late, had forged signatures attached to them.

The detective furthermore added that there was little room for doubting that the informer had at one time been an accomplice of Mr. Stubbs’s in certain shady transactions which had recently come to light, and it was possible that Stubbs’s greed in keeping his spoils to himself in his latest peccadillo had severed the bond between the two rogues.

Madge had also but little doubt on the matter, when she recollected Mr. Stubbs's ready talk of a friend at Carstairs, who had acted as his agent from time to time.

A search through the davenport, in which Mrs. Cohen had been wont to keep her cheque-book, confirmed the surmise as to its abstraction.

Sir Peter's grief and bewilderment at these revelations took in turns a comic and a tragic form. He vowed—walking up and down the room very fast—that he would have no more protégés if he lived to the age of Methuselah; that he would withdraw his name from every charity list on which it figured, except that of the asylum for lunatics and idiots, who, after all, were the only reliably honest people in the world. Finally, he "got upon rockers" in front of the detective, and, raising his eyebrows very high, and tip-toeing very fast, asked a series of surprising questions: Why should he not withdraw his charity subscriptions if he felt so disposed? Was not his money his own, his name, and his time also at his own disposal? Was he to stand still, and allow himself to be cheated by every rogue who came along?

The worthy detective, never before having had the pleasure of meeting Sir Peter, was a little inclined to doubt the old gentleman's sanity. His doubts grew upon him when, the next moment, Sir Peter suddenly sank into a chair, supplemented his series of questions with a series of apologies—"He wasn't himself at all; his head was going round with the startling news he had received during the past twenty-four hours"—and then as suddenly started up again, vowing that he had had no exercise that morning; and there and then set off for a promenade in a gale that fell little short of a hurricane.

Madge, left alone with the detective, put the question which she had with difficulty kept back:

"Did he know where Mr. Clive was at the present moment?"

The detective replied that when Mr. Clive had called at the police-office on the previous day, he was on his way to London to institute an investigation into the disappearance of a young lady who, Mr. Stubbs had stated, had committed suicide at Liverpool, but who it was possible might not have been near Liverpool at all. Mr. Clive, however, had said that he would be back at Liverpool the next day in order to follow up a certain clue which he had in hand there. He had given in writing a

description of this young lady to the chief inspector of police, who had forthwith set enquiries on foot.

Then the detective drifted back to Mr. Stubbs and his roguery. There was every reason to believe that the man, under another name, had taken passage to America with his stolen property; the cable, however, had been used, and there was little doubt but that as soon as he landed he would be arrested and sent back again.

But Madge had too many deeper interests at heart at the moment to be much concerned by Mr. Stubbs's chances of detection or escape.

"Did Mr. Clive give any address in London to which a telegram could be sent?" she asked.

"He did not, madam," replied the man, astonished at the lady's want of interest in her banking account. "He won't dare attempt to pass another cheque now—he'll guess that by this time the affair has got wind—Stubbs, I mean," he added, getting back to the subject which had the greatest professional attraction for him.

Sir Peter came back, scarlet and breathless with his battle with the elements, but in a decidedly more cheerful frame of mind. It was to be a busy day for him. He had no sooner got back to the house than Mr. Parker presented himself, great-coated and with bag in hand, ready to depart. His time was not his own, he said. He was but a paid servant after all, and was bound to go about his business, not his pleasure, without further delay.

Sir Peter was vastly disappointed. He had conceived a strong liking for the worthy minister, whose theories on matters of benevolence were, from one point of view, strangely in accordance with his own.

"If I had only known you earlier in life I could have accomplished so much more in my sixty years," he sighed.

He forgot his outburst of a moment ago against philanthropy in all its branches, and pictured regretfully what a wonderful partnership in benevolence might have been set up, if his active mind and liberal purse had seconded the minister's keen eye for matter in the wrong place.

"We'll build you a chapel here, in the valley, and find you lots to do if you'll pitch your tent here," he said, utterly oblivious of the fact that he had always announced himself to be "a staunch supporter of Church and State, sir."

The minister shook his head.

"I must go where I'm sent. I can't see myself here among your educated respectful farmers and peasants; but I can see myself where I'm ordered to go—among the rough-and-ready miners in the Durham coal-pits."

Sir Peter's hopes revived when he found that the minister's destination was not far from Redesdale. He knew that he must of necessity see a good deal of Redesdale, now that Madge's interest in her property there had grown so languid, and hence there was a chance that he and the worthy minister might often meet.

A large amount of hand-shaking and a very hearty farewell followed.

The minister's last words were an entreaty that news of Miss McIvor might be sent to him so soon as there should be anything to tell, for, although he would never cease to take the deepest interest in her, he felt himself to be supplanted in his guardianship of the young lady by these influential friends of hers.

The arrival of a second visitor, before the wheels which conveyed the minister on his road had died in the distance, thoroughly restored Sir Peter's equanimity.

"Dear me!" he said to the servant who announced the fact to him; "first one thing, then another. Wanted everywhere; can't get a minute to myself! What name did you say? Palli-ar-di-ni! Count Palliardini! Ah! Show the gentleman in at once, and see that we're not disturbed."

It seemed to the old gentleman that this unlooked-for event must have been arranged by special intervention of Providence, in order to give him scope for his benevolent intentions.

"He has come to make enquiries after Miss McIvor, of course," he said to himself. "Now I shall have the opportunity of reasoning with him, and setting matters before him in a right light. Shouldn't wonder if I make a different man of him altogether before I've done with him."

His sense of importance grew upon him. He wheeled a big chair up to a big table, and pictured himself seated there lecturing the Count.

"But I must be discreet—very," he said to himself as he heard the Count's steps approaching. "What am I to say when he asks where the young lady is? Well, I'm not obliged to tell him, am I? I flatter myself I can keep a secret if I set my mind to it."

OLD RYE HOUSE.

It may be doubted whether, in these days, the River Lea gets a fair amount of appreciation. It has its devotees, no doubt, who, following the footsteps of their great master, Izaak Walton, count no time so happy as that spent with rod and line in some pleasant nook by this eminently fishable river. And it has plenty of more indiscriminating frequenters, who on public holidays swarm upon its banks, and crowd into every boat and skiff available. For boating, indeed, of the heroic cast there is little scope on its placid, winding stream. But what can be pleasanter than lazily to paddle along where the stream is brimming full, with grassy margin, and to rest at times in some shady nook full of a tranquil repose, that is broken only by the splash of a fish, or the chime from some distant church?

The river comes to a terribly bad end, certainly. Nothing can be imagined more doleful and lugubrious than the last few miles of its course ere it reaches the Thames—its waters defiled with manufacturing refuse, and flowing in an evil-smelling stream among the grimy wharves, and dreary-looking factories. But at Clapton, where a glimpse of the river is obtained from the railway, the Lea asserts itself as a thing of beauty and a joy to the beholder's eyes. When the rays of the setting sun are streaming over the heights of Stamford Hill, heights terraced with white houses and covered with luxuriant foliage; when the valley below is filled with a dusky radiance, and white smoke curls upwards from the village on the river's bank; the river winding gracefully beneath, now glowing with rosy light, and now darkly reflecting the shaded heights above, completes a scene that may vie with any other, however famous, in the essentials of beauty and picturesqueness.

Then we have broad green flats stretching out on the one hand into indefinite distance, but bordered on the other with a range of heights crowned by the dark fringe of the Forest of Epping, and here the river winds along its course marked by clumps of willows, by big floury mills, by factories, and tall chimneys. The scene is pleasant enough in the soft autumnal haze; with meadows, and cattle feeding thereon, and great fields of green and purple cabbages—and at one place a great patch of blazing colour, dahlias, chrysanthemums, and other

gay autumnal flowers growing by the acre in a superb tissue of colour. Of all this enough is to be seen from a railway carriage on the Great Eastern, by a traveller towards Cambridge. The best part of the Lea is, perhaps, somewhere about Cheshunt, although there are many nice bits of river scenery about Enfield Lock and Waltham Abbey. But at Broxbourne the charm of the river culminates. We have left the wide plains; low hills gather in on every side; and the river winds along from one green nook to another, with homely wooden bridges spanning its stream, and comfortable-looking fishing taverns nestled in shady corners where the gravelled shore is strewn with boats and punts.

And then we reach Rye House, whose inn is placed upon the very pleasantest part of the river, with lawns and gardens sloping to the river's brim, among trees, whose branches trail in the gentle current of the stream, which seems not to hurry past, but to linger on the way,

Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge.

But our business is with old Rye House, the Rye House of the Plot, the Horrid Phanatical Whiggish Plot, as it is styled in pamphlets of the day, and, while the train whisks away towards Ware and pleasant Hertford, we mount the steps to the roadway, and coming in a few paces to the wooden bridge over the River Lea, the whole pleasant, soft, and yet radiant scene is before us. There are suggestions of a festive character here and there—some one has established a row of "coker-nut shies" in a little nook by the river-side; and the brown-faced gipsy-woman who sits knitting, and keeps an eye on the coker-nuts, is not an unpleasing feature in the landscape. A boat lies just below the bridge, with a girl handling the sculls, while papa sits placidly with the morning paper in his lap.

Downwards, the river winds with a gracious curve, and against the bank lies a gaily painted barge, with tall mast and sails, and rigging all in a tangle together, that has come, perhaps, from Faversham, or the Sheppey shore, while further still, along the dim reaches, veiled by the foliage of the willows, a white sail shines among the green meadows, and just below us are the gardens of Rye House Hotel. Here the road having crossed the bridge, plunges into a thicket of foliage; and dimly among the trees to the left can be seen a twisted chimney and the loom of a massive build-

ing—and there is old Rye House, the scene of the "Horrid Plot."

Just above the bridge the moat of old Rye House runs parallel with the river, with which it is connected by a sluice. Green hedges replace the ancient walls, and the moat itself is almost filled with watercresses. An oblong space is enclosed by the moat, in the further corner of which stood the house. And, following the road from the bridge, there is the moat again, on another side of the house; and here was the "narrow place" where it was proposed to stop the King's coach and dispose of "the blackbird and the goldfinch," in the cant terms of the conspirators, or in other words, of the King and the Duke of York.

If we refer to a plan of Rye House and its grounds, now in the British Museum, and made soon after the Plot, every feature of the place can plainly be recognised to this day. The bridge over the river occupied the same position as now, the road slanted towards the house at the same angle. All are in the plot, bridge and road, and overhanging trees, the malt-houses and stables, the green moat, the enclosed garden, the half-fortified manor house.

The road, which is marked in the plan as the road from Hoddesdon to Bishop's Stortford, was the cross-country way along which King Charles was accustomed to pass to and from Newmarket. We may trace the Royal progress, even from the gates of Saint James's or Whitehall, by sundry small local indications. There is Kingsgate Street, Holborn, destined to become famous as the locale of Mrs. Gamp's lodgings over Paul Sweedlepipe's shop. Well, there was an actual gate there once upon a time, opening from the thoroughfare of Holborn to the King's private road to his seat at Theobald's, the road which along part of its course between Bloomsbury and Clerkenwell, is still known as the Theobald's Road. At other points, the old "Route du Roi" may be traced, although nothing remains of stately old Theobald's; and this road here, by the bridge over the Lea and past old Rye House, was the King's road to Newmarket, to Cambridge, and to Royston.

Queen Elizabeth, too, must have been familiar with this then private highway; for it is the direct road to Hunsdon, a noble seat which she had given to her kinsman Carey, afterwards Lord Hunsdon. And she loved to visit her

faithful Burleigh at Theobald's; and from Theobald's she would pass to Hunsdon in stately progress. There is a somewhat famous print by G. Virtue, 1792, copies of which are not uncommon in print-shop windows, which depicts the Queen

Girt with many a baron bold,
as, bareheaded, and in ruff and doublet, the nobles of her court form a guard of honour about her litter, all on their way to honour cousin Carey with a visit. And such a train must have passed over the bridge here, and wound along this strip of road by old Rye House.

Another old friend we shall meet on the bridge in the person of Mr. Samuel Pepys, who, in later days, but still nearly twenty years before the plot, tells us in his diary how he travelled from Cambridge to Bishopsgate, "avoiding the bad way in the forest by a privy way, which brought us to Hodsden, and so Tibald's, that road which was mighty pleasant."

But we have lingered long enough upon the way; and now let us see what remains of the old house.

The hotel is passed on the right, that famous resort of the "merry 'prentice boys," and of thousands of others who have long passed the 'prentice stage—the scene of trade banquets and club dinners, of beanfeasts innumerable, and of merry picnics winding up with tea and cresses. There are no such cresses anywhere, as are gathered from those ancient moats about Rye House.

With the old plan of Rye House impressed upon the mind, it is easy enough to find the way about. Here the moat turns to the front of the house, and just beyond, a gateway opens from the road, that brings us into the outer curtilage. The old house, in fact, rests "entre cour et jardin." The malting-house and store-rooms that formed one side of the outward court, are still in existence, restored and beautified, with a thatched and tiled roof, and the conical dome of the malt-kiln prominent at one end, while the interior of the long building is occupied with tables and rows of seats, suggestive of the revels of holiday-makers, who come here in crowds in the season of the year. And here is a wooden bridge across the moat; and beyond, rising in grim antiquity among the fading leaves, is the old gate-house, the last sturdy witness that is left to the story of Rye House.

The gate-house is of red brick, with

battlements and a staircase turret, and a fine arched gateway, and above, on either side, are handsome oriel windows, with fine brick mouldings and transoms. It is a building rather for ornament than defence, although purposes of defence are not altogether wanting.

If we turn to the county historians to know something about the builder of this suggestive pile, we shall gain the following rather meagre information. The Manor of Rye originally formed part of the possessions of the Abbey of Waltham, but about 1440 was granted to Sir Andrew Ogard, who obtained license to enclose a park, and build a castle—that is, he obtained a license to crenulate his mansion, for without the permission of the Crown he could not have indulged in those battlements at the top of his gate-house.

At first sight, the building looks more modern than the above date; but there are sundry fine examples of brick-work in the eastern counties, which are of the same period—Tattershall Castle, for instance, in Lincolnshire—and this Rye House, on a smaller scale, has features of resemblance to old Tattershall. And thus we may fairly assume that we have here a building of the time just before the Wars of the Roses.

Of the mansion, that was protected by the gate-house, hardly a trace remains, but its plan and elevation are in existence. From the gateway you entered a courtyard, the main "corps de bâtiment" being on the right, with three peak-gables. Here were hall, kitchen, buttery, and offices on the ground-floor, with chambers of state above, while a wing opposite, at right angles to the other, contained the great and little parlours with fine oriel windows looking over the garden to the rear. A stout wall completed the enclosure, from which you entered the wide, walled garden, in the corner of which was a turret that flanked the walls on each side, and formed at once an outlook towards the road and bridge, and a summer-house, where, at the date of the Plot, pipes and tankards of ale were probably not unknown.

For when the Plot began, the house had already fallen in the social scale—no longer the resort of Knights, and Lords, and Ladies gay, it was inhabited by an old Puritan soldier, one Rumbold, who had served in Cromwell's wars, and who now followed the earlier calling of his ancient chief, and occupied the old place as a farmer and maltster.

The old, sunny garden still exists, its walls replaced by green hedges, and it is prettily laid out for the benefit of visitors with seats and pleasant shade under the trees. Sitting here in the stillness of an autumnal day, with sunshine all about upon the lawns and flower-beds, and with the old gate-house peering over the scene, the thought is suddenly presented: Something of this kind was happening about a couple of centuries ago. Here was somebody sitting, probably enjoying his tobacco, in the pleasant sunshine, when he heard a sound of wheels, and peering over the wall—now the hedge—he beheld—not Brown, the butcher, driving home from Bishop's Stortford market, but a gilded coach, with four horses, and postilions in their great jack-boots. There was one within in black velvet, and another in a scarlet coat. They knew nothing of the keen, unfriendly eyes which were surveying them behind the leafy screen, and so the cavalcade moved on at a trot, and half a mile behind came the royal guards, talking, laughing, swearing, discussing their bets and their conquests, and never dreaming that an old trooper of quite another sort was watching them behind that ivy-covered wall.

Truly, Charles was grandly right when he said that nobody would kill him to make his brother King; but there was such a thing as killing two birds with one stone—blackbird and goldfinch at a shot. Thus thought Master Rumbold irreverently, and, with his soldier's eye, he saw the whole scheme at a glance—a cart overturned in the way, a fallen tree across the road, and then out and upon them!

Twice a year—in April and October—King Charles was accustomed to go to Newmarket for a month's racing, hunting, and coursing. It was after the King's autumn visit that Rumbold found himself in London, and among his old comrades—grizzled captains, and colonels, and other old troopers—who were getting an honest living in the way of plotting and contriving.

The Duke of Monmouth was the moving cause of the plot; from him and his friends came the funds that kept the cauldron still seething. There was, of course, an inner and an outer plot, and the great people contrived to keep themselves well outside any plans of an assassination; but the more fervent and desperate spirits had resolved on putting both King and Duke out of the way—a process which they pleasantly termed "the lopping."

They were upon this wicked discourse when Rumbold came among them. He told them that "he had a farm near Hodsdon, on the way to Newmarket, and there was a moat cast round his house through which the King sometimes passed on his way thither." The suggestion seemed full of promise. There was talk at once of raising men and securing horses—forty or so—and arms for the troopers; and it was reported afterwards that Rumbold had secured cannon, and certain murderous weapons, jointed in the middle like a flail; whence the Royalist lityny:

From councils of six where treason prevails,
From raising rebellion in England and Wales,
From Rumbold's short cannons and Protestant
Flays,

Deliver us, etc.

It was thought that all would be ready for the King's return from Newmarket in the spring; but that year a great fire occurred in the town, and so the King left the place a week sooner than he had intended, and got safely past Rye House before the conspirators had notice of his movements.

Then the Plot was blown by one Keeling, an Anabaptist, who had been incautiously admitted to the secret. Keeling's brother, who was faithful to the cause, contrived to give the chief conspirators notice that the Plot was discovered, and Rumbold escaped to Holland. But two of the other conspirators, determined to save themselves by turning King's evidence, deposed to a rising that was planned for the seventeenth of November, Queen Elizabeth's Day, which was supposed to be a propitious one for the purpose, "for then the citizens were used to run together and carry about Popes in procession, and burn them." They also brought in Rumbold and his scheme for waylaying the Princes at Rye House, which was to be executed about the same time.

A tradition exists that Rumbold was forthwith hanged upon a tree within the grounds of Rye House, and in full view of the scene of his proposed crime. Somebody may have been hanged there, for popular tradition is rarely without some foundation. But Rumbold's fate was longer deferred.

James the Second had come to the throne, when Rumbold joined the Duke of Argyle's ill-fated expedition to raise the Presbyterians of the North against the new King. Rumbold was captured in

Scotland, and executed there, suffering his fate with the utmost constancy and resolution, and making his dying confession of faith in the following words :

"He did not believe that God had made the greater part of mankind with saddles on their backs and bridles in their mouths, and some few booted and spurred to ride the rest."

But all was not at an end in this tragic business, when Rumbold was hanged, and drawn, and quartered. A final episode is recorded by Sir Walter Scott: "This man's death was afterwards avenged on one Mark Kerr, the chief of those who took him; he was murdered before his own door, by two young men calling themselves Rumbold's sons, who ripped out his heart in imitation of what their father had suffered on the scaffold. Thus does crime beget crime, and cruelty engender cruelty. The actors in this bloody deed escaped, not so much as a dog baying at them."

Other and greater names will suggest themselves in connection with Rye House Plot, and as sufferers in the proscription that followed. Lord Essex cut his throat in the Tower, or was murdered there, as people hinted; Lord Russell suffered on a scaffold in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and Algernon Sidney on Tower Hill, glorifying that "Old Cause in which I have been engaged from my youth up"; and a number of lesser victims perished. But for us, evermore, the interest of this affair will centre in Master Rumbold, old Cromwellian soldier, farmer, maltster, and tenant of Rye House. We have been about his house, his malt-kilns, his store-houses; we have walked in his garden, and have felt, somehow, the bodily presence of the man. And taking leave of Rye House and making our way towards the bridge and station, we almost feel as if the grizzled old trooper were stalking behind the hedge, beyond the dark moat, and looking sternly out for the King's coach, which never will come that way any more.

THE PLEASURES OF DULNESS.

I AM a dull fellow. Perhaps it will be thought that I am duller even than I am, when I confess that I value my reputation for dulness fully as much as the most sparkling of my acquaintance can value the reputation his wit and ingenuity have

gained him. Who so free from intellectual responsibility as the boy who has stumbled so often in his construing, that stumbling has come to be expected from him? Who so oppressed with heart-breaking care as the boy who has once shown his ability to get to the top of his form? From that day forward, he will be made to dream of lexicons, and processions of embodied scholarships and exhibitions will periodically haunt him in nightmare.

It is the same in mature life as in the world of school. Had I a name for my wit, or my excellent stories, I should be pestered with invitations to fifty houses which I have no wish ever to enter. A refusal, howsoever polite, to enlarge one's circle of acquaintance, is seldom welcomed in the liberal spirit which prompts the offer of it. Hence, I may literally thank my dear dulness that I have not fifty enemies, where now I have neither friends nor foes.

But, I hear my readers protest, wherein lies the pleasure of being such a very stupid creature as you must needs be? Pardon me, dear readers; it does not follow that because I am dull, slow-witted, and sober, I am also stupid. No doubt the hare in the famous fable conceived that his clever excellency was mightily insulted by being set to race with a tortoise. Nevertheless, the tortoise won the race. Similarly, I like to fancy that though, to common eyes, I am monstrously handicapped in the race of life, I have yet at least a fair chance of winning enough of the latter to satisfy my modest desires.

Supposing that you are not possessed by a wish for stage fame, which would you rather be: one of the people sitting at their ease in the stalls of the theatre; or one of the actors, sweating and fretting to win the applause of yourself and your companions? It is not so very different in real life. Each country has a number of platforms or stages, upon which the most brilliant people try, one after the other, to struggle into particular eminence. There is the stage of politics, for instance; a thorny and comfortless erection. The stage of art is not more easy to ascend. That of literature is very contracted, and surrounded by grim shadows that frighten a dull fellow like me. And so on, with all the professions and trades which make up a civilised community.

Well, just because I am so dull, I feel none of that ambitious itching which urges so many of my friends to go pell-mell into the crowd that swarms and

tussles at the foot of each of these imaginary platforms. They talk grandiloquently about the battle of life, the glory of "experience," this notorious man and that who have done deeds on their platforms which have procured for them "immortal fame," and so forth; but they do not convince me. At any rate, I am willing enough not to stand in their way. They shall not be stayed in their course by my body striving against theirs. To me, it seems more interesting to watch the innumerable conflicts between individuals at the bases of the platforms, and the restless discomfort of those who, having through much trial attained to a good place on the platform, ought to be as happy as human beings can be. Human nature is eccentric. Every one knows that it is so, though not why it is. I, as a dull fellow, and a consistent spectator, have unusual chances of realising this. For many are the men of extraordinary ability to whom I have given a confident "God-speed" on their career, and whose coffins, in a little while, I have been called upon to help to carry to their graves. And not few are they from the élite of mankind whom I have seen jump headlong from the highest eminences of their platforms, that they might either die ere their time, or once more enter into that deadly struggle with their fellow-men from which one would think they ought to have been mightily glad to be delivered.

This, in fact, brings me to one of the redeeming points of my dullness. A writer has said, and I think said well, that, "intelligent people are generally far too keen and too active-minded to be sympathetic." It is easily understood. To become what is called "successful in life," an entire subordination of all the constituent parts of our nature to the one resolute principle of "willing" towards a certain goal is necessary. Poor, unobtrusive little "sympathy," in such a case, soon gets hustled into a corner, where she stays. Now and then, when her master has been hit very hard, and he is half inclined to give up the fight, she ventures timidly forth with a tender whisper of condolence. But in a trice she is made to shrink back into insignificance. "What!" exclaims the deluded man, "have I so much softness left in me? No wonder I have thus come to grief!" Straightway, therefore, he covers himself with armour of a hardness quite impenetrable by any sympathetic influences; and again he enters into the battle.

Dull as I am, too, I am able in this way to explain the insensibility of so many of our modern women. They have not the genuine unostentatious sympathy which women used to have, before they went with clenched fists into the arenas by the platforms of celebrity. If they are sympathetic, it is a conscious sympathy: not the kind of sympathy that pours in unmeasured streams, as from a heavenly source; but well-weighted, exact sympathy, for which a receipt must be given upon delivery. The woman who reasons with the sick and suffering is, to my mind, unsexed. The woman who vaunts of her benefactions of sympathy is, to my mind, equally unsexed.

However, I am not going to say that it is one of the offices of the men who are dull to dispossess, little by little, the other sex of that gift of sympathy of which once they had the monopoly. Nor would I imply that I, and those like me, do nothing but look about us with sad eyes, purring words of indiscriminate comfort, like an old cat at her ease before a warm fire.

Dick Steele, in one of the numbers of the "Guardian," says that "a merry fellow is the saddest fellow in the world." Like most epigrams, this overshoots the truth. But it is by no means all falsehood. Pope's line about dullness ever loving a joke is a fair antithesis to it. Indeed, I think Pope in this instance beats Steele, in the matter of truth. Speaking for myself, I adore a joke, even when it is a practical one in which I am the victim.

I remember—as well I ought—a little incident of my school life, which I will narrate to prove this. It was a strict injunction in the big school to which, as a boy of eight or nine, I was sent, that no novels were to be read unless certificated by an initial of one or other of the masters of the school. Regularly, after every vacation, therefore, confiscations of books were made; and these prohibited volumes were kept locked up in a tall cupboard in the large room. Now, the key of this cupboard was not unattainable—at some little risk; and it was a custom with us to pilfer these novels discreetly, read them one after another, and return them. One day I borrowed a book from another boy. The book was Ainsworth's "Mervyn Clitheroe." I was delighted with it.

"Look out that you're not caught with it," said the boy who lent it to me.

I had paid him for the loan of it with a piece of plum cake as big as his two fists; but not until he had got the cake did he

tell me that the book was a "cupboard" book. He had abstracted it with his own hands.

Well, thanks to my dulness and my ill-luck, I was caught with "Mervyn Clitheroe." I read it in bed; and one night went to sleep with the illicit thing wide open on my pillow. The master, who came by-and-by to put out the gas, espied the book, and carried it off. The following day, I am sorry to say, I was birched for this abominable crime. But on my way into the playground from the place of torture, whom should I meet, grinning like a Cheshire cat, but the boy who had enjoyed "Mervyn Clitheroe" to the end, and also my cake, and for whose sin I had been birched! I was tearful, for no mercy had been shown me; and he, for whom I had suffered, was grinning and glad! This incongruity, not to say injustice, struck me there and then with so much force that I too grinned, gradually; and a minute later the bad boy and I proceeded to the corner of the playground, both laughing to the very best of our ability. It was an excellent joke, you see; though I doubt much if a very intelligent boy would have appreciated it as much as I did.

It will of course be assumed that, as a dull fellow, the softer sex (as I still like to imagine them) give me the cold shoulder. The assumption is very wrong. Do you not perceive that I have here a supreme advantage over my more intellectual brethren? I am not by my wit and omniscience a reproach to the lingering remnant of old-fashioned girls, who have inherited no particular notions except that charming one which teaches them that their chief end in life is to look pretty. These pretty, old-fashioned girls are as ignorant of Euclid as I myself now am. A few common French words slip unwittingly to their fair lips in case of need; otherwise they are as much befogged as myself when they set foot on the other side of the Channel. Thus we are in that most comfortable of all situations: we have a common standpoint. There is no affectation between us.

Again, it does not follow that the learned young ladies of the day most love the society of learned men—men with several alphabets of initials after their trivial names. Of course it does not. Such intercourse is too wearing. Wisdom likes to fraternise with dulness, not only because this is true relaxation for her, but because, also, dulness has the art to remind her over and

over again that she is really a most extraordinary person. Place me side by side with a learned Professor; introduce a young person from Girton into the room, and see if, after a few words of commonplace with the Professor, she do not revert to me, with those sweet signs of satisfaction in her bright eyes that I never tire of seeing.

But, it may be asked, how does your lazy dulness contrive to keep yourself in bread and butter in these exacting days? Unless you are in the hands of a special Providence, you are surely doomed to lag sadly in your profession. Well, I need not say that the question is a hard one for me to answer. Special Providences are rare, and the world is sceptical about them in general. Yet I sometimes think I am looked after by some such beneficent agency. By profession I am a lawyer. I have never exerted myself, and yet I flourish.

If you are disposed to be cynical, pray look at the matter in this light. You see, as a confidential person, I am so safe. My clients would as soon expect to hear that the Archbishop of Canterbury is a gambler, as that I am speculative. My advice, moreover, is always very solid. I tap my forehead repeatedly during a conference; and this unostentatious summons upon my faculties is held to be positive proof that I am straining all my energies on behalf of my client. Old people, and the fatuous, feel at home with me. My contemporaries—when not given to back-biting—merely remark to each other that I have a big head on my shoulders—which is perfectly true. And those younger than me conceive that I look the very picture of an honest man—long-sighted and reflective. Could a professional man wish for more thorough eulogy?

The older I get, the more convinced I am that life is a game to be won by "staying" powers, not by pistol shots and excitement. Roger Ascham's words on the matter are so good and so complimentary to me, that I must quote them.

"This I know," says he, "not only by reading of books in my study, but also by experience of life abroad in the world, that those which be commonly the wisest, the best learned, and best men also when they be old, were never commonly the quickest of wit when they were young."

I really think Ascham is right. Recall to mind—as who in the middle term of life cannot!—the various bright meteoric

youths who astounded you at a school examination, and who have long ago passed into limbo. They went forth into the world, and wore themselves out with futile enquiries as to the nature of the globe upon which they were living, and the life they ought to have been enjoying. To me, such conduct is as if a man never ate his breakfast until he had chemically analysed it, and never kissed his wife without a metaphysical dissertation upon the affections. The question: "Why are we?" has never to me been difficult of answer. "We are because we are;" this is my solution of it. The reply does not claim to be exhaustive or even very profound: but I think it suffices.

Briefly, and in conclusion, I believe that more often than you would suppose, it is in such dull bodies and minds as mine, that true wisdom elects to take up her abode. Where else could she be so sure of untroubled dominion? I have indeed seen many careful portraitures of the ideal wise man, and have fancied that in many of them it is I, myself, that am limned. For example, do not I listen rather than talk, believe not easily, judge seldom, and always with deliberation, "admire none, deride none, envy none, and despise none"? These, according to an ancient of undoubted wisdom, are certain of the characteristics of the wise man. It is comforting and bracing to imagine, as I do, that this ancient was, like myself, a dull fellow.

THE TWO LOVES OF JAMES BALFOUR.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"GOING already, Jim?" There was unmistakable disappointment in the tone. There was even reproach.

"Yes. I have promised to go and read a little to Jeff to-night. Good night, Molly."

Molly put up her face to be kissed. It was a pretty face enough, though not in its first youth, and it was apt to look faded beside the dainty fairness of very young girls. At seventeen she was as fair a thing to look upon, as any man's eyes could have desired. So Jim Balfour had thought, and so thinking, he had wooed and won her. To-day she was still his. But she was thirty.

They were not married yet. He always

declared that for a man to tie a woman down to a life of drudgery was to act the part of a selfish coward. There was no fault to be found with the idea. It was even noble, as most of Jim's ideas were. But there were people who said that this theory had another side; and that if he had been willing to spend considerably less on himself, he might have, long ago, asked Molly to accept the other part of his income.

This waiting till he should grow rich enough to offer her a comfortable home, had not told on him. But it had on her. In the first place she was penniless, and her daily bread was given to her grudgingly by an old uncle, who exacted the fullest payment, in the shape of endless toil and patience.

So there had come lines of weariness about the mouth. A shadow, bearing some kin to disappointment, had dimmed the brightness of her eyes. Yet the tender love, strong as death, which she had given him long ago, was there still. And when it shone into light in her eyes, and into smiles on her lips, her face was once more fair enough to delight the soul of a man. But Jim did not see her with his soul's sight. Few men ever do use their spiritual vision, when contemplating a woman who is neither their mother, nor their sister, nor their grandmother. He only beheld her with his earthly eyes.

"How dreadfully old, Molly is beginning to look!" he thought impatiently, as he left the house. "Her complexion is growing quite muddy, and her eyes are wrinkled!"

It was the first time he had ever acknowledged the fact with such brutal plainness. The thought had flashed through his brain, but to be suppressed with a quick sting of shamed self-reproach. To-night, the shame did not follow. The impatience and the aggrieved sense of bondage remained. Perhaps it was, because it was the first time he had ever told her a deliberate lie.

Jeff was a sick friend, and Jim had not the smallest intention of going to read to him. He had simply said so, because he knew, it was the most certain way of stopping any entreaties for him to stay longer with her. In her sweet-hearted charity, she would efface herself at once, for the sake of the sick friend.

The sense of the baseness of the lie angered and hardened him, and made him frankly brutal. He was angry with her

for having forced him to tell it. To-night was the first time he had ever heard that ring of bitter disappointment and reproach in her voice, and it had goaded him, he said to himself, into that lie.

Yet, he might have considered her bitterness justifiable. He had not been near her, till this evening, for a whole fortnight, and then he had stayed only for a short half-hour.

"She is selfish, just like all women," he thought, as he strode along smoking the cigar, which was not one of the smallest of his expenses. "She never thinks how I am slaving to get a home for her, and that I need a little——" he stopped; even though it was dark, and he was alone, his face coloured crimson.

A superficial judgement at this moment would have decided that Jim Balfour was an entirely unamiable young man. But beneath this present unamiability, there was so much mental disturbance; so much moral discomfiture; so great a struggle of feelings which were at war with all his hitherto conceived notions of honour and truth; so passionate a protest against influences utterly opposed to common sense, to all the sceptical, practical, nineteenth century life; that a judgement with a deeper power of insight would probably have tempered its decision with some pity. He walked slowly, each step a protest against an outer influence from which his better nature revolted. But gradually his steps quickened in proportion as that influence gained the mastery of his will, already weakened by yielding. By the time he reached Notting Hill Gate Station, he was walking with the eager, impetuous feet of a man, hurrying to keep an appointment in which heart and soul were engaged.

It was a dark, wet night in December; the rain falling in the cheerless drizzle that makes the pavement and roads black and slippery with mud. There was a bitter wind, and the streets were almost deserted of pedestrians. It blew up the long, straight Uxbridge Road, driving the icy rain into the faces of those who were compelled to be out in it, and sending them along, shivering and chilled to the bone.

Jim felt nothing of it. He was consumed by a raging fever that burnt out his heart; and drove the blood, hot and tumultuous, through his veins.

He reached, at last, a block of houses raised a little from the level of the pave-

ment. They stood some distance back from the road, shut off from it by a wall, which skirted the long strip of sloping garden in front of each house. The gardens were separated by other walls, while a few trees, and shrubs, and some thick, overhanging ivy, gave still more seclusion to each. The three end houses of the block were empty; the middle one had been so for years. Jim swiftly opened the gate of the latter, and hurried in, carefully and stealthily closing the door after him. The darkness in here was scarcely broken by the flicker of the street-lamps in the road outside. He went hastily through the weed-grown garden, skirting a clump of shrubs that grew at the upper end, and came out on the gravel path in front of the house. The dining-room window was unshuttered. The drizzling rain trickled down its panes. The leafless trailers of a Virginian creeper rattled drearily against them, as a gust of the icy wind caught them. He drew as close to the window as he could, and then, leaning forward, looked eagerly into the dark panes, straining his eyes to see into the empty, night-filled room beyond.

What was he looking for? He did not know. Ghost, witch, angel? He did not care. He had lost now all fear, doubt, sceptical incredulity. He only knew that, as he stood looking, his passionate gaze would conjure out of the cavernous gloom of the empty room, the most exquisite face man's imagination could conceive. It would look out into his, illuminated by some pale, mysterious radiance, which detached it from the shadows around. If he attempted to draw near, the face vanished, and there was only the dark window-pane. The door of the house was always barred. He could only stand and look.

But the desire to draw nearer—to be able to speak—to touch with his lips the beautiful mouth, with its half-mocking, half-mysterious smile, was growing into a delirium.

Ah! at last! slowly taking shape, dainty, flower-like—quite close to the window. Exactly as he had always seen her. No! There was a change. The faint mockery had vanished; the smile was soft, appealing. Heavens! She was raising her hand—she was beckoning—to him! For one moment he stood powerless to stir. The blood rushed to his face; his eyes were dazed with lights that seemed to flash before them. Then he sprang towards the door.

CHAPTER II.

It opened as he reached it; and, as he stumbled into the pitch-dark hall, it closed swiftly behind him. The silence and loneliness of the empty house shut him in.

In a moment, he realised his position; though, whether it were fear of the supernatural which had cast so weird a glamour over that strange, lovely face, in spite of his nineteenth-century scepticism, or only a prosaic sense of physical danger that overwhelmed him, for a second he did not know. He made a sudden step back to the closed door, brushing past a shadowy figure, that stood motionless, outlined against the blackness of the wall. As he struck against it, a low laugh, musical, amused, intensely human, broke on the silence, waking faint echoes through the empty house. Then the shadow by his side, stretched out a little hand and caught his. It was a soft, warm, living hand. As its touch thrilled him, the nameless horror fell from him, and he remembered only the glorious face.

"Then you aren't a ghost!" he exclaimed, with a hoarse half laugh.

"No, nor a vampire," laughing merrily.

The hot colour flew to his face. At that very instant there had flashed through his mind, a weird German story, which he had once read, of a vampire who had taken the shape of a mysterious and lovely young woman.

"Why did you make yourself so miserable about coming to see me?" exclaimed the sweet mocking voice again. "It was only natural. A long engagement is so foolish, for women soon grow old."

He stared at her through the gloom, aghast. Who was she to know all this? His manhood revolted against her speech, though it had been but the expression of his own secret thoughts; but before he could collect himself to reply, the little hand was laid with a suddenly appealing tenderness on his arm.

"It is so cold and dark down here. Come upstairs—you are quite safe," as he, perhaps involuntarily, drew back. "I am here all alone, and I don't want your watch or your purse," with the same frank, musical laugh.

Jim was no physical coward, and he felt thoroughly ashamed of the thought of his valuables, which had really flashed through his brain. He followed her with-

out another second's hesitation; he was overwhelmed with desire and curiosity to find out who she was, and, as he stumbled up the dark staircase after her, the sense of her beauty grew, till he forgot all else. Suddenly she opened a door on a landing above, and a flood of light fell down the dark staircase. She stood for a moment in the doorway, looking down at him as he mounted. Against the background of light, he saw a figure—tall, slender; every lovely line in it carrying out the exquisite beauty of the face. He was at her side in a moment. She drew him into the room and hastily pulled to the door behind them.

"We must shut them out!" she exclaimed, in a tone of fear and disgust. He did not hear. For a moment, his eyes, after the rest of the house, were dazzled by the light in the room. There was little furniture—two chairs, one or two small tables, a piece of shabby, moth-eaten carpet—but wherever a light could stand there was a lamp or a candle on the tables; there was a row of candles on the mantelshelf; they stood in clusters in the corners of the room, and from the centre of the ceiling swung a large and powerful lamp of beautiful Oriental work, whose coloured crystals, like jewels, seemed to catch and reflect all the other lights in the room.

"I hate the dark!" she exclaimed, petulantly, as he stared about him, bewildered between the contrast of the lights, and the shabby, dirty room, with its smoke-stained ceiling, and torn, soiled paper. "The rats come in the dark; the house is full of them!"

"But do you live here—alone?"

Then he forgot the strangeness as he looked at her. Her beauty as she stood before him—a living, breathing woman—seemed ten times greater than when he had only looked on her from the darkness, not knowing if she were woman or shadow, or only a fancy conjured up by his own brain.

But the most wonderful thing in her loveliness was her eyes. They were large, dark, Eastern eyes, almost sombre in their depth, and yet full of the most marvellous light, which seemed to shine out from them into the very heart and soul of the person they looked on. They changed, too, with every word she spoke, and were now mocking, now tender, now darkly mournful. They were fringed with long, black lashes, which made them darker

and more mysterious than ever, and formed the strangest contrast to the exquisite fairness of the skin and the golden hair. There was something almost unnatural in the contrast, and yet her beauty was so great that if there were discord, it was forgotten as soon as felt. As those marvellous eyes rested on his, Molly, faith, honour vanished like a dream. A curious smile flickered across her lips.

"Why don't you marry Molly Carleton?"

Then, as he stared at her, startled beyond speech: "Because you are poor—so you tell her. But she is rich—very rich; or will be one day. She knows that her uncle, whom everybody thinks so poor, has a great fortune."

An incredulous exclamation broke from the young man.

"It is true—every word. I can prove it. He used to live once in my country. My people know him. He heaped up riches there. How—well, it is not good to think of." The light in her eyes flashed into such fierce fire, that Jim recoiled from her, for an instant, as from something unwomanly. "Even he doesn't dare to think of it! He is afraid! That is why he lives that lonely life. There are ghosts, and he fears that one may arise from the past and avenge the cruelty and extortion. But he is rich! And he has left it all to Molly—on condition she marries you. You are his next and only kinsman. She knows it. She has known it all along. But she promised him to keep silence. And she has kept her promise."

He scarcely believed it. And yet—if it were true! He felt as if his life had been wasted. It would have been so different if he had only known. His anger rose hot against Molly for having kept the secret so well. All the time he had talked so nobly about working to win a home for her, she had known that she was a rich woman. He felt as if he had been tricked. Did those wonderful eyes looking at him, read his thoughts? The same curious little smile parted her lips.

"There is another condition to the will. If Molly Carleton should ever place herself in a position to justify you in refusing to marry her, the money comes to you. If you, on the contrary, act so as to make her refuse to marry you—all the money goes to charities. Old Jeremiah Carleton has had reason to doubt the care that women take of money. But you and she will marry, and the long years of waiting, in which she has grown old and faded, will be rewarded."

Was it the words, or the tone, that made Molly's face, pale and wearied, rise up beside the radiant youth and loveliness of the one before him? A chill blankness fell on him as he thought of the marriage—of the home with that faded face always before him.

"If only you were free," she exclaimed, in a low voice. "If the money were yours!"

"Don't!" hoarsely. "Are you a witch, or an evil spirit, to read my thoughts—to tempt me so?"

"Neither!" Her whole manner changed, her eyes softened into passionate tenderness. "Only a woman who loves you!"

His heart, his soul, and his manhood melted in the tender fire and light of those glorious eyes. With an inarticulate cry, he stretched out his arms. They fell again to his side as a fearful terror suddenly convulsed her face. She sprang to him, seizing his arm; clinging to him in a very paroxysm of frantic horror and loathing.

"Oh! Look! Look! In the corner! It is there, mocking at us with its red eyes— Oh! kill it! There will be hundreds of them in a moment. They rush across the floor, and gnaw and gnaw with their fierce, cruel teeth! Oh, will they get at me?"

"No, no! It is nothing," holding her close, his own momentary pang of strange fear gone, conscious now only of her white face, her trembling figure; and of the overmastering delight of holding her in his arms. He soothed her, and talked to her as if she were a child.

She grew quieter at last, and laughed—though still a little tremulously—over her own fears. But she would not let him stay any longer. She would not listen to his entreaties.

"But tell me," he pleaded, unsteadily, "by what name am I to think of you?"

"Call me—Anne," she said. Her face was uplifted to his. Did her eyes speak consent? He did not know. He bent his head and his lips touched hers.

She pushed him gently from her.

"Go," she said. But she knew that that kiss had made him her slave for ever.

CHAPTER III.

THE grey January afternoon was closing into the evening. The little house, in a poor neighbourhood, in which Molly and her uncle lived, was full of the shadows of the winter dusk. The only light in the

house was the glow from the kitchen fire, and even this had sunk into red embers, for the old man, crouching over it for warmth, would not stir it into a blaze, because it hastened the consumption of coal. The house was lonely and silent. Molly—very unusual for her, for she always sat with her uncle at that time, he having a curious reluctance to the twilight hours—was out. She had been strange and restless during the last fortnight. If he had not been too blinded with his gold-lust, too heartless from its worship, he would have seen that she was suffering intensely. But he saw nothing. And she came and went; and did her hard tasks; and spent the long hours of the dreary, toiling day; with her heart breaking silently within her.

Her uncle scarcely thought of her. He despised women, and did not even notice that she was out to-night. His thoughts, in spite of his efforts to force them to other things, had gone back to the past, out of which he was always dreading to see appear the Nemesis of old cruelties and oppression. One of those who had suffered so bitterly at his hands, had sworn to avenge himself. But the oath had not been kept. His old enemy did not know where he was. He had lived so close, and so obscurely. Probably this enemy was dead—dead of starvation and want.

The door behind him opened stealthily. The room was so dark at that end, that the fresh shadow that stole in, was not perceptible. But the old man, crouching over the fire, shivered as a breath of cold air from the passage swept through the room, though he was too absorbed in his thoughts to notice whence it came.

But the new shadow stole nearer and nearer—its shape was that of an old, feeble man, with hungry, glittering eyes, clothed in miserable rags—with bare feet. Nearer and nearer, till it stood behind the chair. There was a flash of a sharp blade in the fire-lit air, an inarticulate cry of fierce triumph mingled with a groan, then a heavy fall. Jeremiah Carleton lay dead on his hearth. And the avenging shadow glided swiftly back through the room, out into the dark street, and was seen and heard no more.

It was Molly who found her uncle. She had come back from that secret errand, feeling that life would give her no more to bear, and had found this! The shock, following on what she had already endured

that afternoon, was too much. She was completely prostrated, and could scarcely give her witness at the inquest.

The murder caused considerable excitement. There was so much mystery about it. The motive had not been robbery. Not a single thing had been disturbed in the house. The old man had had a considerable sum in gold on his person at the time, and even this was untouched. He was not known to have any enemies. His few acquaintances could all explain satisfactorily their relations with him. Even the fact of his great wealth, which was made public at the inquest, explained nothing, as his lawyer said that he knew for certain that none of those who would profit by it, had the smallest notion of the wealth. Miss Carleton's position, indeed, as she would only know it, would be worse at his death, for with him she lost a home.

Molly, who was almost too ill to give her evidence, excited universal compassion and interest. To find out, in so painful a fashion, that she was a great heiress, made her case doubly interesting. She could never explain the reason, even to herself, why she still kept secret her promise to the dead man. It was not fear, for never once did the thought of danger to herself pass her mind. She scarcely thought at all of anything. Her brain seemed numbed, and she felt only vaguely the horror of her uncle's death. Her heart seemed to have received its death-blow, on the afternoon of the murder, when, in obedience to an unsigned letter she had received that morning, she had gone to the park, and there, seated side by side, she had seen Jim and her rival. She had crept close up to the tree by which they sat, without their seeing her, and had overheard a sentence from Jim.

It was quite enough. She stole away again into the dusk which was gathering among the trees, and wandered about aimlessly, hopelessly, till, perished with cold, and sick with fatigue, she had instinctively made her way back to the house where that dreadful sight awaited her.

She had known for weeks that Jim no longer loved her. Though not a word had passed between them, her woman's heart had told her, that his had gone from her; though, until that dreadful afternoon, she had never known who her rival was. The desire to know—to be sure—had made her yield to the base, anonymous letter. Her heart's pain conquered pride, and she went. Now, with the remembrance of her rival's

exquisite youth and beauty, she knew that never more would Jim come back to her. As yet, neither had spoken. He had scarcely come near her since the murder, and then only in the presence of others. She was only waiting for an opportunity to speak. He apparently was not in a hurry to give it to her. But for Jeff Lee, his old school-friend, who had recovered from his illness, and had devoted himself to her service, she would have been alone on the evening of the day of the inquest.

Jim was with Anne in the house in the Uxbridge Road. He had been there, or had met her every day, since that first evening. He had scarcely seen Molly; and the only times he had called at the old man's house had been in obedience to an imperious command of Anne's. She had her own good reasons for his not breaking yet with Molly.

Jim, utterly infatuated now, reckless with a passion that not even the dreadful events of the last day or two could check, was urging Anne, as he had been doing ever since he had discovered that she was really a woman, to marry him. Not a thought of Molly remained. Even to-night, as she sat, for all he knew, alone, with her great trouble, he could not think of her. The very sight of this beautiful new love of his, banished all recollection of the great, faithful devotion that had been his. The sound of her voice hushed his conscience within him.

"If I marry you now, you will be ruined."

Was there a flash of satire in her eyes?

"If you really loved me, you would not always be thinking of that," he cried, passionately.

"Did not you always think of that when you loved Molly Carleton?" It seemed as if she could not help mocking at him. "See, I will be honest. I will say that I don't want to be poor. I hate poverty, for your sake and mine; we could not be happy, poor. And I will not be the cause of your suffering."

The very arguments he had used so often to Molly! But they did not seem so conclusive now.

"But I would marry you at once, if— Oh!" with a passionate gesture, "if only I were sure you had the courage. The opportunity is at hand, if only you were brave enough to seize it."

He looked her straight in the face.

"To win you, I would do anything," he said, slowly.

But, as he met her brilliant, piercing

gaze, he caught his breath, and his eyes fell. She sprang up, facing him with imperious anger.

"You can still think of that woman! You dare compare her love to mine!"

"For Heaven's sake!" he cried, hoarsely, "tell me who and what you are, that you can read my soul before I even know it myself!"

It seemed at times as if his soul lay bare before her; as if the power and beauty of her wonderful eyes burned into him like living fire, casting an intolerable radiance on every ugly blot of darkness. There were moments when, even now, he shrank from her as from something mysterious, incomprehensible, when his reckless love and passion rolled back on himself, leaving him filled with a strange dread.

In an instant her whole manner changed. She drew close to him, laying her hand on his arm.

"Would you feel what that power is?" she said, in a strange, low tone, which chilled and thrilled him with its terrible earnestness. "I won it, at what indescribable cost you could not guess! I could not live through such an ordeal of suffering, and self-sacrifice, and horrible toil and desolation again!" shuddering from head to foot, but still keeping her hand on his arm, her eyes on his blanching face. "I have the power to give it to one I love, for a moment. See, I love you; I give it to you. Use it that our love may conquer!" She bent forward, and, for the first time, laid her lips of her own will on his. "Go and see Molly to-night," she said.

CHAPTER IV.

It seemed as if, with that kiss, some outer will, mysterious, inexorable, merciless, took possession of him. He went out of her presence and left the house, always moving in obedience to the power that held him passive. He walked on and on till he reached the house where Molly was in lodgings. It was late to call, the clock had struck ten; but he was not conscious of any of the smaller influences of social life. He must see Molly, though why, he did not know. He moved as one in a dream; he reached the house at last. The servant, who opened the door, looked a little startled, even frightened, as she saw his face. It was very pale, and his eyes were burning with an intense, suppressed excitement, of which he himself was not conscious.

She led him to Molly's sitting-room. Molly had already a visitor. Jeff Lee was still there, looking through some papers of her late uncle for her. It was Jim's duty; but he had not come near her. What his friend's thoughts on the matter were, that young man kept to himself; but as he looked up at the entrance of Jim into the room, some exclamation choked in his throat which was more expressive than polite. But the next instant he sprang up from the table, and, as Jim advanced, went quickly to Molly's side. He, too, was startled at Jim's face, and thought he had been drinking. Molly was seated by the fire-place in her sombre mourning garments. Her face was very pale and thin; her eyes looked as if she had been crying. There was nothing left of the old beauty which had once won Jim. She rose, too, as Jim entered, and looked at him as he came over to her, her eyes shining with indignation, and shame, and pain. And suddenly, as he stopped in front of her, it seemed as if her whole soul lay before him. He saw it full of shame and intolerable self-humiliation that she had ever loved so selfish a thing as himself. He saw written on it her knowledge of his cowardice, his baseness, his heartlessness. He read there the record of those long twelve years when he had left her to toil, and suffer, and wear out her girlhood that he might have more to spend on his own pleasures. And he knew that her judgement was true; and because of the truth, a great wave of rage and humiliation swept over him, and in the place of the lost love sprang a great hate.

"Good Heavens! Jim," Jeff exclaimed, "are you mad?" and he stepped between Molly and the fierce fury in the other man's face.

Jim turned his blazing eyes on him, and there saw, with that strange mysterious power that had come to him, that his old friend loved Molly faithfully, devotedly, hopelessly, and that the friendship between them was dead, because Jeff, too, saw him now as he was. It was the last stroke.

"Have not I cause?" he cried, hoarsely. "You and she—" then did he hear a whisper, "This is the opportunity," or was he avenging himself, frenzied with rage and humiliation? "Oh, she is a nice woman to love! Do you know that her hands are stained with blood? She killed her uncle. Who else would do it? She knew he was rich; she—"

"Jim! Jim!" With a wild, sobbing cry, Molly sprang to him, and caught him

by the arms, and flung up her hand to his mouth to stop his words. "You don't know what you are saying! Oh! it is that wicked woman; she is killing your soul. Jim, Jim, for the old love—"

But he thrust her from him, for between him and the piteous, terror-disfigured face uplifted to his, came the exquisite vision of the one for which he had sold his soul.

"There is no love. Could I love a murderer?"

With a choking, gasping cry, she staggered back, and, but for Jeff, would have fallen to the ground. Jim rushed from the room.

Before the morning, Molly was arrested for the murder of her uncle. At her examination, the chief witness against her was Jim. He gave his evidence with, apparently, extreme reluctance. Few suspected that it was at his instigation that the charge was made against her. He spoke of the harshness and cruelty of her uncle towards her. He let fall, as if by accident, some passionate words she had uttered to him not many months before, when she had declared that she would find some way of escape from his tyranny. He betrayed the fact, that she had known all along of her uncle's wealth. It was not so much what he said, as what he insinuated, that told against her. But his conscience made a last stand, and his distress of mind was evidently so great, that all the Court, knowing the engagement between them, pitied him for the dreadful position in which he found himself. It was marvellous how many things, mere trifles in themselves, took shape against her, after her relations with the dead man were thus exposed. She was committed for trial. Jeff, who had never rested night and day since the arrest, set about retaining the first counsel for her. Jim disappeared. It was well that he did not meet his old friend. He went straight to the house in Uxbridge Road to tell Anne the result of the examination. If it ended in a committal, she had promised to marry him at once, though the marriage was to be kept secret till a decent time had elapsed, and he could fairly claim the property. Molly thus publicly disgraced, he could consider it his. Even Anne was afraid to resist any longer. Since the night he had betrayed Molly, he had been so desperate, so reckless, that, for fear, she had made this concession. But she was angry with him for having forced her to change her plans, and she sent him from

her, making him promise not to come near her for three days.

It was the night before the wedding. It was now late in February. It had been a long, dreary winter. There was no sign yet of spring in the air. The snow lay thick in the London streets, making it look like an Arctic city. There was little traffic, and the sound of it was muffled. Anne had been out. As she entered the house the dark hall struck cold and chill as a vault. She hastily lighted a lamp she had left close at hand, for her return. The lamp-rays cast Rembrandt lights on her face, which for all its loveliness was evil to see, as through it shone the lurid fire of a soul full of fear and pain. She gathered her skirts close about her, holding the lamp over her head, and peering into the gloom that lay thick before her.

"Oh, those rats!" she muttered, her eyes dilated with dread and loathing. "They come up out of the slimy, noisome sewers; from rotting wharf steps where the cruel, dark waters flow; from graveyards, where they gnaw at the coffins of dead men! Oh, those horrible rats!"

She fled down the hall, and up the black staircase—the lamp in her hand flashing weird, flickering lights into the darkness about her. She did not stop till she reached the room upstairs. As she laid her hand on the door, she turned white as death. The passion of dread and loathing in her face, froze into the horror of an infinite despair. The door she had left locked, was open. The room she had left empty, had a presence. She knew who was awaiting her. She did not attempt to fly. She knew it was useless. Wherever she moved, the fate that had come to her, would await her.

She entered the room. It was lighted only by the Oriental lamp that swung from the centre of the ceiling, and in some strange way, all its radiance seemed concentrated in that one point, and beneath it, in the full brilliance of its light, stood a man. He was tall and slightly built; his face and form emaciated with fasting, or watchings. His face had the pale darkness of the East, and he was dressed in some loose, Oriental robe. An air of indescribable dignity and command emanated from his presence. There was something awful in the severity and calm of the intellectual power of his face. He looked straight at the woman, and she crept forward and fell at his feet, beating her hands on the ground and crying for mercy.

"The mercy you have given to others," he said, in a voice of marvellous sweetness, and yet so passionless, so pitiless, that the woman spoke no more, but lay there, uttering inarticulate moanings; her lithe form writhing in sinuous, shuddering convulsions, which bore a horrible resemblance to some beautiful serpent in mortal anguish. "What use have you made of the gift, you prayed, and laboured, and suffered so infinitely to gain; the power we taught you how to win? You have murdered a human life—no—your hands did not take it, but by this power of reading a soul you knew that your kinsman, bearing that wretched man an undying hate, had at last resolved to avenge himself. It was you who called Molly Carleton away, that the miserable man might be left unprotected. By this same power, reading Jim Balfour's weaknesses, you have broken a good woman's heart. By it, you have, being able to play on its hidden springs of baseness, dragged a man's soul down into unspeakable depths of evil."

"Oh, I loved him! I loved him!" She raised her arms with a wailing cry.

"Love! What do you and he know of love? Your love is a base and hideous thing, cruel as the doom that was to overtake you if you misused this power. What are you and he, and such as you, but human rats, tearing with fierce teeth at the heartstrings of your fellow-creatures? You come up from the deep waters of your black passions, from the slime and the corruption of your selfishness and baseness, to ravage the sanctity of human lives."

She staggered to her feet, and lifting her face to the light above, broke into a peal of laughter—the very ecstasy of horror and desolation.

The man looked at her for a moment; then lifted his hand with a gesture full of awful power, and, without another word, passed from the room, vanishing into the silence and darkness of the night.

The next morning, an hour before the time fixed for his arrival, Jim was at the house in Uxbridge Road. He had always found her waiting to open the door for him. He had never been before, except after the dusk had set in, and he had passed in and out so stealthily, that no one had ever seen him coming or going.

It was still very early in the morning, and the day was little more yet than a grey twilight. He found the front-door open.

It had never been so before. He could scarcely define it; but it seemed as if on the joy and passionate happiness that filled him, a faint chill struck.

But a moment afterwards it had gone. She had already been down to open it for him! In another hour they would be speeding south. He was to take her into the lands of sunshine, and roses, and light, that she loved so well. Away from the ice and the snow, and this cheerless, dark house. That very day she would be his! They were to be married before they left England—it had all been arranged—at a little quiet country church, at which they were to stop. There was not one single thought of Molly in the madness of delight that moved him. In his eagerness, he forgot to close the door behind him, but sprang up the stairs two or three at a time. He reached the landing. He stood at the door. It was then that the fire and joy surging through him suddenly congealed, freezing in his veins. It seemed as if the horror of the room beyond, fell through the closed door on him, as he stood outside on the landing. A piercing blast of wind blowing through the open hall-door below, swept through the great house, choking into angry moanings in empty rooms and corners. But it was not so cold as the fear that was on him. The door was locked, but the key was outside. He knew that she was there—shut in with—what?

He opened the door and entered. The windows, closely shuttered as usual, kept out the daylight dawning for the world outside. The room was full of the sickly fumes of the expiring lamp, which cast a faint flickering light on the floor. In one of the farthest corners, all huddled up in an attitude of mortal fear and agony, was a figure. Jim went over to it. She lay on her face, the golden hair falling about her, the arms outstretched. He lifted the hair and looked. She was dead—cold.

The unspeakable sight!

Had death been there first, or had the rats come and—?

Did the question touch Jim's brain? Did anything stir it except the unutterable horror of that awful sight? The golden hair dropped from his hands, and, with a great shuddering cry, he fell down beside her, senseless.

CHAPTER V.

THAT same day, a few hours later, there was an accident in the crowded streets of the city. An old man was knocked down

and mortally hurt. He was carried to the nearest hospital. There, a very short time later, he had a visitor. It was a tall, dark, Eastern-looking man, who claimed acquaintance with the wounded man. As the latter was dying, he was admitted. The stranger spoke a few words in a low tone to the old man, who was lying apparently insensible. The words had a strange effect: the old man opened his eyes with a look of fear and despair, which gradually vanished as the stranger continued speaking, in a calm, gentle voice, in an unknown language. The wounded man beckoned to one of the doctors near, and said that he desired to make a confession before he died. Paper and ink were brought, and then he confessed that it was he who had murdered Jeremiah Carleton. He told of the hate he bore him, of his long search till he found him. He died as he finished his confession.

The man who had visited him was not seen again; but Molly was set free. Life looked black and hopeless; but she had one faithful friend, and a day came when at last he taught her to believe in love and truth again.

Jim Balfour was found in the empty house. The open street-door attracted the attention of the passers-by. He was still senseless; he was quite alone. Some one had removed the dead woman as he lay insensible. To the end of his days, he believed that she was buried somewhere under the foundations of the house. But he never entered it again to look. When he came out of that swoon, he was in a raging brain-fever, and all his talk of Anne and the rat-haunted house was set down to the ravings of delirium. It was months before he could be pronounced out of danger. He lives still—a mere wreck of his former self. He is a reserved, self-concentrated man, and those who know him best, say he is utterly heartless. No one would ever dream of asking his help or going to him in trouble, for sympathy. They say, too, that he is mad on one point. The mention or the sight of a rat, sends him into a paroxysm of loathing and rage.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IX.

SELF-INFLICTED banishment is a hard fate for any man to accept, hard enough

even when the sacrifice is made for the sake of the woman he loves; but what must it be when all is given up because of a woman one has ceased to love! This was Gaspard Harache's destiny. It was a cheerless prospect; and Thora, outraged and disappointed, cherishing now a strong sense of injury against him for the insult which had befallen her, and the false position in which he had placed her, was not likely to make it brighter. She seemed to be utterly frozen in soul by what had occurred, and Gaspard's care and tenderness—the more constant and strenuous from the tincture of remorse in it—could not move her from her coldness. The sense of wrong was too intense, and though she seemed no longer to have any thought of leaving him—being satisfied with his assurance that it was only in France that she was not his wife—she was utterly cold and indifferent to him. She could not forgive him; she did not try.

So, sadly and dispiritedly, Gaspard Harache collected his few personal belongings, and set out with Thora to seek his fortune—such fortune as is comprised in daily bread eaten in bitterness. The only prospect he had was that conveyed in Sophie Meudon's letter to her English friend—a very slight thing on which to pin his hopes. Yet it served its purpose. Elinor Mason took up the cause of her friend's friend, and as her father chanced to need some workmen at the time, Gaspard was taken on. It was only as a simple labourer at first; all advantages of position, education, and training had to be forfeited with the rest. But he had no longer any ambition, and went through his work in perfunctory fashion, content to obey the orders of men inferior to himself, and not resenting the taunts and coarse jests of his fellow-workmen—narrow-minded, stolid north-countrymen, who regarded Frenchmen with that mixture of fear and contempt which was common to all England eighty years ago.

Hartlepool stands upon a narrow peninsula on the coast of Durham, spreading over it and round a narrow creek to form a branch town, newer and more pretentious, on the mainland. It combines the characteristics of a fishing village with those of a manufacturing town. A mixture of smoke and salt pervades the atmosphere, and seems to rest upon both the minds and bodies of the inhabitants, somewhat to their detriment. They are brave, perse-

vering, and independent; but narrow, prejudiced, and jealous—admitting new ideas of all sorts only after severe investigation, and despising all the minor courtesies of life as tending to untruthfulness. They are true and lovable; but it is not easy to win a place in their esteem, and the preliminaries of friendship are long and severe.

Social lines are drawn in Hartlepool with that clearness and depth which always bears an inverse ratio to the size of the town. Mr. Mason, and even more decidedly his daughter, could not "know" the young Frenchman, though he was a friend of the latter's schoolfellow, and Gaspard had little fellowship with his co-mates in labour. As for Thora, she had never yet needed the art of making acquaintance. In Stromness, every one had known her; in Havre, no one. Here, where for the first time she was placed in a position of some independence, she knew neither how to take an initiative in acquaintance, nor how to accept such advances as she received. These were not many; but near the little house where they lived, on the shore of the old town and just within the wave-beaten sea-wall, there dwelt more than one family of women—widows or spinsters—poor often, yet with some pretensions to gentility, who were interested in the beautiful young woman with the cold, joyless face, and would gladly have made friends with her. But Thora repelled them, not wilfully, but through a shyness which took the form of reserve, and was easily mistaken for pride. She was reticent about her past life, fearing always that some question might betray the invalidity of her marriage in her husband's country; but her silence was misconstrued—not to her disadvantage—by the gossips round, who, seeing her beauty and stateliness, and hearing her sad, musical accent, evolved a story of a "mésalliance," in which she had condescended, and of which she had repented.

As a result of all ideas of her, true or false, Thora was left much to herself. Gaspard and she were still for the most part each other's sole companions. Their pleasures were few, one might say none. Occasionally they walked along the edge of the moor, a large triangular green washed by the sea, which yearly confiscates some portion of its margin, leaving the cliff in isolated pillars and arches in the process. They liked the moor because its coast reminded them of the Orcadian scenery,

and of that brief time when love, or the passion that simulated love, had been sweet to them. In the storms that came with the spring, Thora would come out of her house and lean over the sea-wall, or walk, in spite of the wind, along the utmost edge of the moor, in order that she might delude herself for a moment with the fancy that she was back in Stromness—despised Stromness, which she had been so ready to leave for ever not many months before.

But the life she had led there, though it had seemed so monotonous, had been at least cheerful in its monotony. There had been friends to gossip with; there had been a surrounding atmosphere of affection, which Gaspard's careful observance did not replace; and there had not been a moment in all her life that she need dread the world knowing of. Now, in spite of her conscious innocence, the knowledge that she had been insulted, accused of sin, made her shrink from other women, lest they should know what had befallen her. Such an accusation brings always with it a shadow of guilt.

That was one consequence of Madame Harache's interference. The other and more direct result was equally fatal to the chances of happiness for Gaspard and Thora. Many husbands and wives in whom love is dead or has never existed, find a plea for forbearance that may grow into tenderness in the phrase, "the father—the mother of my child." Thora was one of those women to whom such a title is sacred. Motherhood would have driven the selfishness out of her, and supplied her with a motive for living beyond that disappointed one of her own enjoyment. But the hope that might have beautified her life was destroyed. There was nothing left for her but to endure her dreary existence, doing such domestic duties as she could not evade, in a languid and perfunctory fashion; walking out alone to brood on her unhappiness; and finding such bitter satisfaction as she could in treating Gaspard with anger or contempt. He was the cause of all she suffered, she said to herself, and all the pleasure she knew was to make him pay the penalty. Yet she was not wilfully cruel, only so self-absorbed that she did not see that Gaspard suffered, too; his fashion of suffering was too quiet. The pained look on his face did not strike her, nor the hectic flush on his cheeks when he restrained a retort to her stinging words. She did not know the reason of his patience; she did not guess that his con-

sciousness of the wrong she had suffered was ten times deeper than her own. His tenderness often irritated her, and she felt that she would have respected him more had he answered with anger as hot as her own, or had even added blows to words.

And for months Gaspard toiled and endured, without a hope beyond that of providing daily food for the woman who had caused, however unwittingly, the ruin of his life. He was getting used to his life, accepting the hardness of it with that resignation which can come only from a certain deadness of nature, which exists only when hope, youth's birthright, is slain. Young people are by turns happy or miserable, only the old are contented; and Gaspard's four-and-twenty years were now burdened with most of the mental characteristics of age. He was quietly thankful when he was appointed to somewhat more important work, which brought him higher wages; but it did not occur to him to hope that this might be the prelude to something better still. He never even remembered to wish that he might regain a position better befitting his skill and education. He had wholly lost the trick of hoping.

The dreary winter passed, and the cold spring, and at last came the brief summer, bright, but with a chill reminder of north-eastern winds to temper its sunshine.

One fine morning Gaspard remembered that it was exactly a year since the day he had met Thora by the Vikings' graveyard. He thought of reminding her of the anniversary; but she looked more fretful than usual that day, and he thought that, perhaps, she, too, recalled it, and with no pleasant emotions. So he went off to his work without more than his ordinary parting words, and went through his day's labour mechanically, absorbed in a reverie. In the middle of the afternoon, when he was feeling tired and languid—despair is always weary; hope is the one "staying power" in the universe—he heard his master's voice behind him.

"How are you getting on, Harache? You may stop for a bit and have a talk with these ladies. You've got to thank one for a letter of recommendation, and the other—my daughter—for persuading me to act on it."

The tone of patronage was not unkind, though scarcely delicate; the reminder of gratitude due was hardly needed, and came grotesquely from the lips of Mr. Mason, speaking to a man of finer make than him-

self. But Gaspard hardly heard the words, when, turning round, he saw Miss Mason, whom he had met but once before when he presented Sophie's letter, and, with her, Sophie Meudon herself. He turned pale; for a moment his head whirled, as all the familiar scenes of Havre flashed across his brain, and the greeting he stammered was very inarticulate.

"It's very kind of Mademoiselle Meudon to come and see you at your work, isn't it?" Mr. Mason went on, evidently suspecting no equality of station between his workman and his daughter's friend. He took people as he found them, he was wont to say. So he did, as far as outward appearances went. Had he met Gaspard Harache as Sophie Meudon's husband, and partner in a ship-building firm of greater importance than his own, he would have pronounced him "a thorough gentleman," and anything else he thought flattering. As a workman, to whom he paid weekly wages, he saw in him nothing but "a decentish fellow for a Frenchman." He did not think a man could be a gentleman on thirty shillings a week.

He was surprised, therefore, to see Sophie put out her hand to Gaspard, and begin talking eagerly to him. But, as he knew no French, he went away to his office, leaving the girls to their conversation with the young man. Recovering from his first surprise, Gaspard responded to Sophie's greeting, and met her with eager questions about his mother and sisters. Sophie had plenty of news to give. Madame Harache was well; but her hair had suddenly grown white, and she looked much older than when he went away. Barbe was engaged, and Lucie had suddenly shot up into young womanhood, and was "jolie à ravir." The conversation was eager and rapid; and Miss Mason, who during the last year had conscientiously been forgetting all the knowledge of French she had acquired the year before, could not follow it, so found the scene uninteresting.

"I shall go and have a look through that schooner that is so nearly finished, Sophie," she said. "You can join me when you have ended your talk with your—a—friend."

She walked away, somewhat surprised at the evident intimacy between her guest and the young workman.

"It would never do," she said to herself, "for people to know that Sophie is really acquainted with one of papa's hands."

She resolved, if the fact of the intimacy ever came out, to explain it away by speaking of Sophie's good nature, and alluding to the two being compatriots in a foreign land; but she felt that the explanation was weak. She herself was so English that, if she had met a fellow-countryman in Patagonia, she would not have talked familiarly with him unless she was quite sure that his antecedents were as good as her own. Being good-natured however, she sacrificed her notions of propriety, and left the two friends to the confidential conversation they evidently wanted.

As soon as Miss Mason was out of ear-shot, Sophie stopped her flow of pleasant gossip.

"Gaspard," she said, abruptly, "can you not come home again? Your mother is dying of this estrangement, and you yourself look thin, and old, and tired. Cannot I—I am only a girl, but I am your friend—cannot I in any way help to reconcile you?"

"You are kind," Gaspard replied, with a shake of the head; "but you, of all the world, are least able to reconcile my mother and me."

"Because," she asked, slowly, turning her head aside, "I am in some degree the cause of your quarrel?"

"Yes. Did you know that?"

"I did not exactly know it, for older people do not confide things to me, and my aunt thinks me so stupid that I could not comprehend anything. I am not clever; but, when I am interested in any one, I understand things concerning them without knowing how the comprehension comes; and I guessed that I was the cause of dispute in some way. That is why I want to make peace. I may not see you again while I am here, but will not you send some message by me to your mother? Will you not promise that some time you will return to her?"

"I have no message to send but the one she knows already, that I am willing to return, in spite of all that has passed, as soon as she will receive my wife."

"Your wife, Gaspard!"

"Yes, Sophie, my wife. I chose her without my mother's knowledge, and married her against my mother's will. That is the cause of our alienation. It is more bitter to me than I can tell you, but I cannot change from the position I have taken up. I cannot yield, and if my mother will not—and that is almost certain—I cannot return to France. I must pass my life in exile."

"But you admitted that I had something to do with your quarrel," said the girl, eyeing him with a steady, penetrating glance.

Gaspard looked embarrassed. "Ah! it is true," he stammered, "that—that—I cannot explain to you, mademoiselle."

"But if I understand, Madame Harache would rather you had married me, because—because I am my father's daughter. But if it is impossible, why should she quarrel with you?"

"She—she does not see how impossible it is. Ask me no more, Mademoiselle Sophie. I cannot tell you all."

"Yet I might do something for you. If I could see your wife! Where do you live?"

"On the sea-wall. But you must not go there, you must not visit my wife."

"Why? Would she not receive me?"

"Not that! She would be happy, and you are an angel to think of it; but it is impossible. Your father, your aunt would not permit such a thing."

"I do not understand."

"No, you cannot. It is a thing I should not have spoken of to you; but I am unhappy, and your sympathy loosened my tongue. But you may know this, that my wife is a deeply-wronged woman—wronged by my mother, alas!—and for that very reason I owe her double loyalty. While she is true to me, I must be true to her."

"It is all very strange, Gaspard," said Sophie, with a sigh; "but of one thing I am sure, that whatever you have done is right and noble."

With this little bit of flattery she left him. She was, on the whole, disappointed with the interview; but there were two things that cheered her. She knew where Thora was to be found, and she had discovered a given limit to Gaspard's loyalty. He would be true to his wife while she was, or seemed to be, true to him—no longer, thought Mademoiselle Meudon, and was not discouraged.

"You and that young man seem to be great friends," said Miss Mason, when Sophie rejoined her. "I had the impression he was a sort of protégé of yours."

"Not exactly," answered Sophie, with a laugh, "though I was able to help him when I asked you to make of him a protégé of yours. But he was to have been my father's partner and—my husband."

"Oh, Sophie! And why hasn't it come off? Wouldn't you take him?"

"Quite the contrary, it was he who would not take me."

"And don't you hate him?"

"No, certainly. One cannot hate every married man in the universe for having chosen his wife before he knew oneself. It was a romance, quite in your English fashion. Gaspard met a beautiful girl in a lonely and savage island, loved her, and married her. His mother was angry, my father offended, and the two poor lovers could not live in Havre. My sympathies, as you will believe, went with the young people. I sought to help them, so I appealed to you."

"It's awfully noble of you," said Elinor, admiringly.

Sophie smiled in a deprecating manner. "It was noble of you to help him only because I asked you," she answered; "it showed that you English are indeed true friends. And I am so glad that this visit, which I have so long desired to make, gives me the opportunity of thanking you, and also of seeing Gaspard and assuring him of my unalterable friendship. He is grateful for it, I think, or he would not have asked me to visit his wife."

"Has he done so? And—and are you going?"

"Assuredly. It would be unkind not to do so when he asks it as a favour; and I have promised."

Miss Mason looked embarrassed. "I say, you won't mind my not going with you to see Madame What's-her-name, will you, Sophie? You know, it isn't like talking to one of the workmen in the yard. I couldn't visit the workmen's wives, except in a charitable way; it wouldn't do; you see that, do you not?"

"Certainly," answered Sophie, who did not see it at all. But she did not in the least want Miss Mason's companionship in her projected visit to Thora, and would have assented to any suggestion that saved her the trouble of scheming to evade it.

Next day she went to the little house on the sea-wall. She carried with her something that had been her chief treasure for six months, and had caused her all the anxiety and care—agony lest she should lose it, terror lest she should be known to possess it—that a possession of unique value inflicts on its owner. Yet it was only a letter, written in stiff and inaccurate French, and the soiled envelope which enclosed it bore the post-mark of Stromness.

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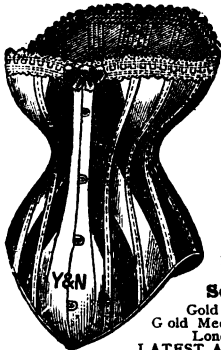
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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XLII.

"AH, a fine, handsome young fellow! Doesn't look the villain we've believed him to be—perhaps things have been a trifle exaggerated. But I must be discreet—very!" said Sir Peter to himself, as Count Palliardini crossed the room, and gave him for greeting the most courtly of bows.

The Count was tall, and slight in figure. His carriage was good, his dress was faultless. He had driven nine miles across country in a blustering gale, yet not a hair of his head seemed blown astray. The solution of this mystery lay in the fact that on arriving at the Castle, he had stopped for a good five minutes in front of a mirror in the hall to arrange his hair with a pocket-comb.

"Of the lazy, effeminate, Italian type," was Sir Peter's second thought, as he noted the young man's slow and languid movements.

And "his hand is the hand for the guitar, not the sword; depend upon it his prowess has been exaggerated," was his third and last thought as he looked at the slender, white hand which, for a moment, touched his, in response to his essentially English acknowledgement of the courtly bow.

"Now how shall I begin? I've a good deal to say," Sir Peter thought. Then a sudden fear seized him: "What if he doesn't understand English! The idea never struck me before."

The Count speedily set his mind at rest

by saying in excellent English, that he must beg Sir Peter to accept his apologies for his sudden and unceremonious arrival. He could only plead the extreme urgency of his business as his excuse.

Save for the roll of his R's, and the distinctness with which he spoke his final syllables, one might have set down English as his mother-tongue.

"No excuse is necessary, my dear sir," said Sir Peter, immensely relieved at the Count's linguistic capabilities. "Your name is not unknown to me. Only yesterday I was expressing a wish to make your acquaintance."

The Count for a moment let his large, black eyes rest on Sir Peter's face. "Now what is behind all this?" those eyes seemed to say.

He would have been greatly surprised if he had been told that nothing beyond a benevolent wish to deliver a homily on the duty of kindness and unselfishness lay behind the old gentleman's friendly speeches.

He acknowledged the friendliness with another courtly bow. Then he went on to explain the object of his visit, mentioning Miss McIvor by name, and speaking of her dead mother as a valued friend of his own.

"I have had some little difficulty in tracing the young lady to your house," he added. "If it had not been for her striking personal appearance, I don't suppose I should have succeeded in doing so through the many breaks in her journey."

"Ah, what made you fancy she had come to England?" queried Sir Peter, desirous to get a little time for himself in which to arrange the opening sentences of his lecture.

"I knew that Miss McIvor had relatives

in Scotland, and when she suddenly disappeared from her home I naturally concluded that she had gone on a visit to them. I had some little difficulty in discovering to which of the McIvors her father had belonged—there are so many of that name in Scotland—when, however, I succeeded in finding his people, and heard that she had not been near them, I set the police in Edinburgh, and in London, to work. It is thanks to their efforts that I am here."

Sir Peter was perplexed. He knew well enough what the Count's next question would be. He wished he had had time to consult Madge on the matter before rushing into so momentous an interview.

"Miss McIvor left us some little time back," he said, presently. "There, that tells him nothing," he added, to himself.

"Yes, I know," answered the Count. "It was the stir which her sudden departure from your house caused in the neighbourhood which enabled the police to trace her to Upton—but you have had news of her since she left?"

"Ah, yes—very satisfactory news, I'm glad to say."

"There, that tells him nothing," once more he added, to himself.

The Count looked at the old gentleman steadily. "I shall be much obliged if you will tell me where she is at the present moment, and the quickest way of getting to the place," he said, after a moment's pause.

Sir Peter pushed back his chair, rose from the table, and commenced a quick march round the room. Now or never for his homily, he thought; but really his ideas wanted a little arranging. "Let me see," he said to himself. "First, there's this gentleman to be reconciled to Miss McIvor—no, by-the-bye, he's in love with her already, it's the other way! Miss McIvor is to be reconciled to the Count. Ah, but we don't want her to fall in love with him—there's Lance to be thought of. Well, I must put in a good word for Lance somehow—I can't have these two young men quarrelling over the girl—and I must give this young man a little bit of good advice—what a blessing it is he speaks and understands English. Yes, I've a good deal to say, and before anything else I must be discreet—very!"

The Count kept his seat; his eyes following Sir Peter in his quick march.

"Is he a lunatic?" he thought, "or does he suffer from rheumatism? He seems a little jerky about the joints."

Sir Peter came to a stand-still in front of the Count's chair.

He laid his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder.

"My young friend, look at me. I'm an old man—old enough to be your father," he said.

The Count turned and looked at him. "No, it isn't rheumatism—flighty—but harmless—that's what he is!" he thought.

He bowed acquiescence in Sir Peter's remark.

Sir Peter went on briskly:

"I'm sure you'll agree with me that young men are sometimes the better for a little fatherly advice."

"A little fatherly advice!" repeated the Count, slowly, with just the faintest curl of his upper lip.

"Exactly. A little fatherly advice. Now, I have an adopted son of my own. He is about your own age; a fine young fellow like you; and what I say to you this morning I am going to say to him. 'Lance,' I shall say to him, 'the only way to get happily through life is to give and take.'"

"Ah, and this Signor Lance, this 'fine young fellow,' will listen to you, and do as you tell him—'Give and take'?"

Sir Peter shirked the question.

"I've a great deal to say," he began.

The Count pulled out his watch.

"Pardon me," he said, "if I say that my business is urgent and I have a train to save. I shall be greatly obliged to you if you will tell me where Miss McIvor is at the present moment, and allow me as quickly as possible to continue my journey."

Sir Peter was disconcerted.

"What I have to say is of great importance. It concerns you, it concerns Miss McIvor, and it concerns my adopted son, Lance."

There came a sudden change of expression to the Count's face.

"How can what concerns Miss McIvor and me concern also this Signor Lance?" he asked.

He was prepared to listen now, not a doubt, to what Sir Peter had to say.

Sir Peter shirked this question also. He made an apparently irrelevant remark.

"If we would be happy we must make others happy."

"Must we?"

"Now—pardon my saying so—it occurs to me that it is in your power to make two people very happy. Those two people are Miss McIvor and my boy Lance."

All the languor, in a moment, had gone out of those large Southern eyes upturned to Sir Peter's face.

"Miss McIvor's happiness is of importance to me. Your boy, Lance, I do not know."

"I shall be delighted to introduce you; we're expecting him back by every train. Ah! I ought to have told you that when Miss McIvor left us so suddenly, he went in search of her. Then, when he heard—ah! well, it's a long story. At any rate, he returned, and then set off again intending to go to Corsica."

"Ah, I would have welcomed him, this Signor Lance, if I had been there!" murmured the Count.

"I'm sure you would," said Sir Peter, heartily. "Now, where was I—I've lost myself somehow. I was going to say—ah, what was it?"

The old gentleman looked "very much mixed," and once more set off on a trot to the farther end of the room. A question from the Count, asked in a voice which Sir Peter had not heard before, brought him back.

"Tell me," he said: "this Signor Lance, did he take a very great interest in Miss McIvor?"

"A deep interest is no name for it, my dear sir, he fell desperately in love with her," answered the guileless Sir Peter; "and I'm bound to say that at first I was a little disconcerted at it—I had other views for him——"

"You had other views for him?"

"Yes—all this is in strict confidence, my dear sir—a marriage was as good as arranged between him and a lady—my ward, Mrs. Cohen—but bless me, I'm running on; this can't interest you in the slightest degree."

"I am deeply interested," said the Count, in the same voice as before. "The lady whom you wished the Signor Lance to marry, did she take a deep interest in Miss McIvor?"

"She did not at first, in fact I am sorry to say she took a most unaccountable dislike to the young lady; but afterwards, in a most noble, most unselfish way, she gave up all thought of her own happiness——"

He broke off abruptly.

"Ah, that's it," he cried, delightedly, "that brings me back to what I was going to say."

"Such sad news from the coast," said Madge, coming into the room at that

moment, all unconscious of Sir Peter's visitor. "A barque ran ashore last night, about three miles below St. Cuthbert's Church— Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought you were alone."

"A barque ashore!" cried Sir Peter, excitedly. Then he bethought him of the courtesies of life. "Madge, may I introduce to you the Count Palliardini?" He turned to the Count. "This is my ward, Mrs. Cohen."

Madge almost started in her amazement. She knew in a flash of thought that here was a crisis to be faced. She looked at the Count's slender, white hand, and thought of the stain of blood on it; she looked at his dark, handsome face, and said to herself: "An Iago with the face of an Adonis."

And the Count, as he bowed in acknowledgement of the introduction, took a slow, steady survey of Madge, and said to himself:

"She has no beauty; it is her lot to love better than she is loved. She is white and worn to a shadow; she has suffered. The little Marietta who broke her heart for me had much such a look in her eyes when I said to her: 'My child, we must part.'"

A DESPISED VALLEY.

IN autumn, whilst in Wharfedale, Wensleydale, and Swaledale, every wayside inn is crowded, you may wander for hours up the valley of the Aire and never meet a tourist. Yet this little dale, although perhaps less regularly beautiful than its neighbours, has a quaint charm which they do not possess, and is far richer than they in historic associations.

Even in its origin the Aire differs from the other Yorkshire rivers: they all begin their course as tiny rills or streamlets, and gradually increase in size as they advance; but the Aire is a full-blown river when it springs forth from under Malham Cove, a huge limestone cliff, some three hundred feet in height. Malham Tarn, too—the source whence the river derives most of its water—is itself an anomaly which, for centuries, puzzled the brains of geologists. It is a lake, apparently lying at the top of a fissured limestone rock, which, from its nature, can hold no water. A few years ago, however, it was discovered that, by some disturbance in the natural order of the strata, a great layer of slate and non-

issured conglomerate had been brought to the surface, and that this forms the bed of the Tarn.

The scenery around Malham, although possessing undoubted beauty of outline, is hard and cold, for the grey limestone gleaming through the scanty turf casts an air of desolation on the scene, which recalls, in some subtle fashion, the memory of the moorlands when covered with half-melted snow. About a mile from the Dove is Gordale, a piece of the finest rock-scenery in England. Before it reaches Gordale, the valley between the high cliffs has become very narrow, and, as it advances, it contracts more and more, until at last it seems as if one great rock barred all further passage. To the left of it, however, there winds a tiny water-worn ravine, which leads into a little circular space enclosed by huge cliffs. Opposite the entrance, a stream of considerable volume rushes forth from the side of the rock, and dashing from peak to peak, forms a thousand fairy cascades as it falls. On the left, the cliff rises almost sheer; but, on the right, it is an immense overhanging crag, which, stretching nearly across the cave, seems to threaten with destruction those who enter. In all England we have not such an ideal Pythian dwelling as Gordale, with its foaming waters, thrilling echoes, and eternal gloom.

From Gordale, the Aire winds its way amongst great moss-covered stones; from time to time the rocks form a rugged gorge through which it rushes; then again these rocks recede, and leave it to wander through rich green meadows, where tall reeds grow by its banks, and bend over its waters with tender caresses. But the rocks seem to be attracted by the stream, for they never leave it for long; sometimes, even, they cut across its course, and the river rushes down the cliff-side in one vast torrent. On the river goes, leaving behind the rounded hills of Craven. The valley becomes rough and narrow towards Hawk-liff, but it opens again with a wide sweep to Freighley; Rumeley's Moor towers one thousand three hundred feet above the river-bed; nor does the landscape change the rugged boldness of its character, until the Aire has passed through the gorge of Bramley; there the valley widens, and the thick plantations grow down to the water's edge. Soon, however, mills and dye-works make their power for evil to be felt, and the silvery waters of

the Aire become black and noxious; but, when once it has left Leeds behind, it is again a pleasant river, and flows through well-wooded regions. Then it is joined by the Calder, a woodland stream as its name informs us, and the two flow on together through flat fertile meadows, which owe their being to the deposits made by fresh-water inundations. By this time the river has lost all claim to beauty, and sluggishly drags on its course until it reaches the Ouse, with which it travels down to the Humber, and thence to the North Sea.

Wharfe is clear, and Aire is lithe,
Where Aire drowns one, the Wharfe drowns five,
is still a favourite saying amongst the dalesmen; but, though the river itself may be free from reproach, in no valley in England has more blood been shed than in Airedale.

Calton, an unpretending village, a few miles from the head of the dale, was the birthplace of John Lambert, first Cromwell's most devoted friend, and then his bitterest enemy. When Lambert was fourteen, by the death of his father, he became the owner of a small estate near Calton; and, before he was twenty, he married an Airedale beauty, the daughter of Sir William Lister. He and his father-in-law warmly espoused the popular cause during the struggle between King Charles and his Parliament.

At length, as the crowning honour of his life, and a fitting reward for his stern devotion to the cause of freedom, he was sent down to his old home as Major-General—in other words supreme ruler—of the North. But, not even for the sake of retaining this exalted position would he hold parley with his conscience; and, when it began to be whispered abroad that his own nearest friend, the being on earth whom he most loved, was bent upon betraying the cause for which they had fought side by side, he would have sacrificed him as ruthlessly as Brutus sacrificed Cæsar. But, although the will was there the power was lacking, and the only result of Lambert's violent attack upon the Lord Protector, was that he himself was deprived of all his offices and power. Hard, stern man, as he was, there must have been a little touch of humanity in his nature, or he would not have sought a solace for his grief in the cultivation of flowers.

At some distance from the river, is Rylstone Hall, the home of Emily Norton, whose gentle spirit, according to a favourite dale tradition, passed at her death into a

doe of snowy whiteness, which used to haunt the Moorlands between Rylstone and Bolton Priory.

Gargrave, the most lovely village in Airedale, lies in a sheltered valley, with the North Craven range stretching before it and the great Flasby Moor behind. The monks of Sawley built a church here which, in its day, was regarded as an architectural marvel, but no trace of the edifice now remains, and only a few stones mark the site of the historic Roman villa, although, one hundred and fifty years ago, its beautiful tessellated pavement was still there in good condition.

A little further down the river is Skipton Castle, one of our strongest Feudal fortresses. It was built soon after the Conquest, by Robert de Romillé, to whom the Norman King gave the Craven district. It is an irregular building, consisting of five towers of immense strength, connected by means of long narrow corridors. The walls are from ten to twelve feet in thickness, and, as it is partially built into the side of a rock, it is only vulnerable on one side, and this, in the olden days, was surrounded by a moat.

The De Romillés must soon have forfeited their castle to the Crown, for Edward the Second presented it to his favourite, Piers Gaveston, after whose execution it passed into the hands of the Mortons' old enemies, the Cliffords—a family, even in the ruthless middle ages, distinguished for its ruthlessness.

The first Baron Clifford of Skipton was slain at Bannockburn; the second was taken prisoner at the battle of Boroughbridge, and condemned to death, but afterwards pardoned. Elizabeth, the daughter and heiress of another Baron, was married at the age of six, and her husband dying, she was married for the second time before she was twelve. The Cliffords were staunch Lancastrians, and Thomas, the eighth Baron, was killed at St. Albans, fighting against the Yorkists. His son, Black-faced Clifford—the most merciless of his merciless race though he was—loved his father with passionate devotion, and swore to avenge his death. And he kept his vow, when the victory at Wakefield gave him the power, for, in cold blood, he murdered the boy Earl of Rutland, and, by his ferocious cruelty to the other Yorkist prisoners, he gained for himself the title of the Butcher. He himself was slain a few months later in a skirmish not far from the banks of the Aire.

As soon as Edward of York was made King, Skipton was confiscated, and the Black-faced's only son, the Shepherd-Earl, as he was called, was forced to gain his livelihood as a peasant. He seems to have been a gentle, inoffensive being, with a strong taste for astronomy and alchemy; and although Henry the Seventh restored to him the family estates, he always lived at Barden Towers, in the most humble fashion. The little room in which he used to make his chemical experiments, is still in existence. Turner had it for his studio when he was making his Wharfedale sketches.

The Cliffords were firm in their allegiance to the Tudor sovereigns, and steadily grew in wealth and power whilst they were reigning, Henry the Eighth conferring on the then Baron Clifford the title of Earl of Cumberland.

Robert Aske, the leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, was the cousin of the new Earl; but relationship did not prevent the bitterest enmity between the two, and, when the rebellion broke out, Skipton Castle was the first place to be attacked. There were chivalrous deeds done even in that dark age. The rebels, whilst besieging the Castle, sent word to the Earl that, if he did not surrender within three days, they would seize his wife and three little children, who were lodged in the Priory at Bolton; at the same time, they uttered some brutal jest as to the treatment these precious hostages would be subjected to. Robert Aske was away when this threatening message was sent; but as soon as he returned and heard what had been done, he despatched his brother to fetch the lady and her children, and had them secretly conveyed into the Castle before any one suspected what he was doing: thus preferring to risk, not only his popularity with his followers, but his very life, rather than that the wife of his bitterest enemy should be exposed to insult.

The eldest of the children thus saved commanded the "Elizabeth Bonaventura," one of the war-ships sent against the Armada; he distinguished himself by his bravery in action, and died from the effects of the wounds he received. But in spite of his gallantry and devotion to his country, in the judgement of his contemporaries he was "an indifferent and unfaithful husband, and a negligent and thoughtless parent." He left an only child, the Lady Anne, who

married the Earl of Dorset; and, after his death, the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. It was she who erected the monument to the memory of Edmund Spenser, which still stands in Westminster Abbey. She seems to have been a woman of considerable literary taste, for Sir Matthew Hale was her greatest friend, and for some years the poet Daniel was her tutor. The chronicles of the day speak of her as "an ornament to her sex and country"; but, if one may judge by her portrait, however great her virtues may have been, they did not prevent her possessing to the full the fierce passions of her race. Both she and her cousin, the Earl of Cumberland, were staunch Royalists; and, during the civil wars, Skipton Castle was besieged for three years by a Parliamentary army. It surrendered on December the twenty-second, 1645; but, in 1648, the Duke of Hamilton and his Scottish forces re-took it for the King. General Lambert, with a strong force, at once marched to the rescue, defeated the Duke, stormed the Castle, and dismantled it.

The Countess Anne was, at that time, the owner of the Castles of Brough, Brougham, Pendragon, Appleby, Barden, and Skipton, all of which had been more or less injured by the Parliamentary army; but nothing daunted by her misfortunes, no sooner did hostilities cease, than the sturdy dame set to work to rebuild her ruined fortresses, thus openly defying Major-General Lambert, whom she seems to have inspired with a most wholesome awe.

A characteristic little note written by this lady, is still extant. Charles the Second's Secretary of State had written to tell her that he wished a certain gentleman—a Court favourite—to be returned as member for Appleby, one of her pocket-boroughs. This is her reply:

"SIR,—I have been bullied by an usurper; I have been neglected by a Court; but I will not be dictated to by a subject. Your man shan't stand.

"ANNE DORSET, PEMBROKE AND MONTGOMERY."

By the marriage of the Countess Anne's daughter, Skipton passed into the hands of the Tuftons, its present owners.

A little below Skipton, at the bend of the Aire, is Kildwick Hall, an old gabled mansion surrounded by shady woods. A quarter of a mile distant is Farnhill Hall, a strong tower built at the top of a grassy knoll as a defence against the attacks of the Scots, who, in the olden days, liked

nothing better than a raid through the dales. Then comes Keighley, with its great chimneys, reminding us that the industrial region is near; but no one lingers there, nor at Shipley either, unless, indeed, he wishes to visit the Druid's Altar.

The Aire then, just opposite the fine old Hall of Riddlesden, makes a sharp bend, and completely deserts its original bed. The local gossips maintain that the river thus changed its course in the seventeenth century, to mark its indignation at the infamous treachery by which the lawyers of York contrived to despoil John Murgatroyd, the master of Riddlesden, of his inheritance.

Calverley Hall, at the next curve of the river, is a charming old homestead, stained, though, by the memory of a ghastly tragedy. It has suffered little by the wear and tear of time, and is now used as a farmhouse. But, in the days of the Tudors, it was a mansion of importance, and the home of a well-known family of Yorkshire gentlesfolk. Walter Calverley, the owner of the Hall at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was a man much respected in the county; he was the husband of a gentle, loving wife, and the father of three children. One day, returning home from the hunt in a state of wild fury, he murdered two of his children, stabbed his wife, and, leaving her for dead, started off in search of his youngest child, that it might share the fate of the others. He was seized, however, before he could accomplish his fourth crime, and was brought to trial at York, where he coolly defended what he had done, maintaining that the law of God, if not of man, allowed him to punish in his own way an unfaithful wife, and to rid himself, as seemed to him best, of children that were none of his. The judges, however, refused to admit this interpretation of the rights of a husband and father, and Walter Calverley was executed in the Castle at York. This episode furnished the subject of the "Yorkshire Tragedy," a play which was very popular during the reign of Elizabeth. Shakespeare's name was attached to the first edition that was printed; but, judging by its language, it was written before his time.

Within an easy walk of Calverley is Kirkstall Abbey, which, like most of our mediæval buildings, owes its foundation to the feeling expressed by the old adage: "When the devil was sick, the devil a

saint would be." Henry de Lacy, Baron of Pontefract, one of the worst men of his lawless age, was, about the middle of the twelfth century, seized with a severe illness; and, in his abject fear of the death that seemed to be at hand, he vowed that if he recovered he would build an Abbey for the Cistercian monks. He did recover, and, for a wonder, kept his vow. Kirkstall Abbey is built just below the rocky gorge of Bramley, in one of those little cloughs that shoot off from the side of the Aire. It is beautifully placed, the high hills behind it, and the river in front, cutting it from the noise and confusion of the manufacturing town that lies so near. The monks of Kirkstall were never favourites with their neighbours, who took a keen delight in destroying the fish, and burning the granaries of the hated De Lacy's protégés. When Ralph Hageth was abbot, the feeling against the order ran so high that the Abbey was kept in a state of semi-siege. Nor was it only with the people of his county that Ralph Hageth was unpopular; by his indiscreet championship of Queen Eleanor's wrongs, he excited the wrath of Henry the Second, and was obliged to steal a golden chalice and a text of the Gospels from the Abbey treasury, as a bribe to gain the pardon of the King.

The monks from the first seem to have led a luxurious, lawless existence, carrying on a petty warfare with all who were less powerful than themselves; so there was open rejoicing in the neighbourhood when, one dark November day, in 1540, Royal Commissioners appeared and drove them from the Abbey. Kirkstall was given to Archbishop Cranmer, but it has changed hands several times since his day, and was again offered for sale last autumn.

The mills and dye-works, four miles down the stream, effectually destroy the silvery brightness of the "lithe Aire." Was ever river so black and noisome as that which flows past Leeds? Malham Tarn would scorn to own its offspring if it could see it here. The Aire, however, soon shakes off its diabolic hue and, by the time it reaches Templenewsam, has again assumed a Christian-like appearance.

Templenewsam was, for years, the home of the Knights-Templars; and, if all tales be true, strange scenes of fiendish revelry have been enacted there. The original building was one of great beauty; but, it having fallen into decay, unfortunately a modern mansion, of no great architectural

charm, has been built upon the old site. A little further to the south is Swillington Hall, the home of the Lowthers. Then comes Castleford, with its Roman remains, where the Calder joins the Aire. Wakefield stands on the Calder. Its old church, or rather cathedral, is the most perfect specimen we have of the Perpendicular style. It was built to commemorate the memory of the Duke of York, and those of his followers who were slain at Wakefield, in that most fatal of all the battles in the great struggle of the Roses. Quite close to the town is the ruin of Sandal Castle, which preserves the memory of a devoted, though illicit, attachment. The last Earl of Warren was, when quite a boy, betrothed to Maud de Nerford, but Edward the First forbade the marriage, and forced him to take another bride, Joan de Barr, a member of the Royal family. This union proved a most unhappy one, and the Earl sought consolation for the coldness and ill-temper of his wife in the society of Maud de Nerford, whom he still passionately loved. He built Sandal Castle, and gave it to Maud as a provision for her and her two sons. As they both died without issue, the Castle lapsed to the Crown.

Pontefract is the next place of interest in the valley of the Aire. Even in the Saxon days Pontefract, then called Kirby, was a town of importance; up to the Conquest it was a Royal manor; but William gave it to Hildebert de Lacy, who at once built on an elevated rock at the side of the town, a castle, so impregnable by its position, and the strength of its walls, that, in the middle ages, it was counted one of the strongest castles in England, and could only be taken by blockade. By the marriage of its heiress, Pontefract passed into the hands of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, the man who seized Piers Gaveston and put him to death. Whilst attempting to do the same for the De Spencers, Earl Thomas was himself taken prisoner at Boroughbridge, and, by order of Edward the Second, put to a cruel and ignominious death. The northern peasantry venerated him as a saint and a martyr; they even pretended that miracles were wrought on his tomb, and so worked upon the feelings of Edward the Third, the son of the man who had put him to death, that he induced the Pope to canonise the popular hero.

Richard the Second, the one King, perhaps, who suffered rather for his virtues than his vices—although the name of these

was legion—met with his death at Pontefract.

Here the Court was held which, casting aside all superstitious reverence for episcopal consecration, condemned Archbishop Scroop to a traitor's death; here, too, the Earl of Rivers, Lord Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan were murdered, that the third Richard might reign. The Castle was the scene of the fiercest struggle during the Civil Wars. It was besieged by Sir Thomas Fairfax, in August, 1644; in January, 1645, the siege was raised in consequence of the defeat of the Parliamentarians by the Royalists. Then it was besieged for the second time, and the town was taken by storm; and, some two months later, the Castle was forced by famine to capitulate. The Royalists were allowed to withdraw with all the honours of war, and the Castle was left in the charge of a Colonel Cotterell, with a guard of only one hundred men. Before a week had passed, some Royalists, disguising themselves as workmen, gained admittance into the citadel under the pretence of fitting up beds for the soldiers; and, after a hard fight, won back the Castle for the King. Little wonder the Parliamentarians were wroth, for their work had to be done over again. Cromwell, himself, came to direct the siege in October, 1648; but, finding the task too tedious for his taste, he left it to Lambert.

The brave little garrison in the Castle met the announcement of the King's death by promptly proclaiming Charles the Second; but, after making unheard-of efforts to cut their way through the army that surrounded them, on March the twenty-fifth, 1649, the Royalists were obliged to capitulate, not, however, before they had won the hearty admiration of their foes by their heroic defence. By order of the Parliament, Pontefract Castle was completely dismantled.

The Aire, by this time, has ceased to exist as a separate river, and flows on with the Calder past Ferry Bridge—the scene of more than one hard fight—and Frystone, where the late Lord Houghton stored his precious collection of books and manuscripts; and then it joins the Ouse.

You can scarcely wander for a mile on the banks of the Aire without passing some pleasant homestead, stately castle, or ruined Abbey, each with its own quaint legend or historic record. Why, then, is Airedale so neglected and despised?

SOMETHING ABOUT THE KARENS.

THERE have been so many unfortunate, and disagreeable, and regrettable things in connection with our annexation of Upper Burmah, that whatever pleasant features there are should have full prominence. And one of the most pleasant features has been the remarkable loyalty to the British Crown of the little nation of Karens. It is a nation almost unknown at home here, and is frequently misunderstood and misrepresented, even in India; but it is one with such marked idiosyncrasies and of such peculiar suggestiveness, that we have thought it would be of interest to our readers to set before them a few facts which we have collected from various sources, and especially from a little book published, not very long ago, by Mr. D. M. Smeaton, of the Bengal Civil Service.

In Sir Roper Lethbridge's excellent short "History of India," the Karens are disposed of in a couple of lines, as a "distinct tribe, interesting on account of the remarkable progress Christianity has made among them."

In Dr. (now Sir W. W.) Hunter's "Indian Empire," they are mentioned as a tribe "whose traditions have a singularly Jewish tinge," and who numbered, in 1872, about three hundred and thirty thousand, and in 1881, five hundred and eighteen thousand three hundred. If these numbers are at all approximating the facts, they represent a wonderful amount of vitality in the small nation. Their loyalty and courage have been in refreshing contrast to the dacoity and unfaithfulness of the Burmese, with whom they will not assimilate on any terms. Organised and led by missionaries they have rendered signal service to the British Government, which, there is reason to fear, has received only scurvy acknowledgement in official quarters, and is not even known at all at home.

To understand the devotion of the Karens to the Government of the Empress-Queen, we must understand their religion, and to do that we must inquire a little into their origin. They are a people who cling most tenaciously to their national traditions, and who have a deeply-rooted antipathy to the Burmese—the product of long and grievous oppression.

It has been sometimes supposed that the Karens are the aborigines of Burmah; but to this supposition their traditions are

wholly opposed. These tell of a "river of running sand," which they had to cross with much tribulation before they reached their present habitats.

Now, a Chinese traveller, who visited India in the fifth century, described the great desert in the north of Burmah, and between China and Thibet, as a "river of sand," and in the Chinese map of India to this day, this large tract is still marked "quicksands."

Karen tradition describes this same region as "a fearful trackless region, where the sands roll before the wind like the waves of the sea."

From these and other evidences, then, it is supposed that the Karens are a people who dwelt originally on the borders of Thibet, who crossed the Gobi Desert into China, and thence found their way gradually down into Burmah. Why they migrated, and when they first came to Burmah, remains a mystery. The first mention of them by European travellers is about 1740, when an Italian missionary found "wild populations called Cariani, living separate from others and in full liberty." But they had been there for many generations before that, and were commonly looked upon as savages.

Savages, however, they were not, for they had imbibed from the Jewish colony in Western China, all the "traditions of their elders," and a wonderful faith in a coming Messiah, of which more anon. There are three branches of the Karen nation: the Chghaws (pronounced Sgaws), or male branch; the Pghos (pronounced Pwoes), or female branch; and the Bghai, or Red Karens. The Pghos were the first to enter Burmah, driven out of China by a feud with their kinsmen the Chghaws, and wandered down the Salween River to settle finally on the deltas of the great rivers, and along the seaboard from Mergui to Moulmein, near which last place, at Dongyan, they still have their headquarters and stronghold. The Chghaws, after driving the Pghos to the sea, themselves occupied the Pegu Joma hills, and afterwards the hills and jungles of the Irrawaddy district. There are also offshoots of both branches in Siam, about the valleys of Cambodia. The Bghai branch came last, and settled along the Toungoo hills. These are the Red Karens, the most warlike of the whole, and the only tribe which was able to resist Burmese aggression, and to preserve its independence. This they still retain, paying a

small annual tribute to the British Government, and living under the rule of their own chiefs. There is an offshoot of the Bghai branch in Lower Burmah, known to the hillmen as the "trouser-wearing Bghai." Intermarriage between the three tribes is not frequent; but there is perfect friendship and freedom of intercourse between them.

Their language is monosyllabic, with open syllables and no final consonants. It belongs to the "Tonal family" of languages, and has no affinity with that of the Burmese. Indeed, it belongs to the same family as the Chinese, but must have separated ages ago. It has no written characters, and the Karens have no written literature; but they have a rich "bard literature" which has been transmitted orally from generation to generation, and which perpetuates traditions, legends, folklore, heroic songs, and moral precepts.

The most important of their traditions, preserved with the greatest exactitude of narration, is the story of God's dealings with the nation. Their accounts of the Creation, the Fall, the Curse, and the dispersion of men, are startling in their resemblance to the Mosaic records.

The Karens believe that the sun, moon, and stars revolve round the earth, over and under. Underneath, there is another world, to which people go when they die. It has the same sun and moon as we have, but the day and night are reversed; and here, in a sort of intermediate state, live the dead, employed much as they were on earth. It is not difficult in this to see the Jewish idea of Sheol; and again, they have a tradition that after the world is burned up, God will come and raise men to life again, when "the lazy shall become dogs, but the industrious, men." Something of the future state, and the Great Promise, is also revealed in the following song:

Good persons, the good,
Shall go to the silver town, the silver city;
Righteous persons, the righteous,
Shall go to the new town, the new city;
Persons that believe their father and mother
Shall enjoy the golden palace.
When the Karen King arrives,
There will be only one monarch;
When the Karen King comes,
There will be neither rich nor poor;
When the Karen King shall arrive,
There will be neither rich man nor poor;
When the Karen King shall come,
Rich and poor will not exist,

and the animals will all be at peace, and shall cease to fight with and devour each other.

The religion of the Karens is essentially monotheistic; they abhor idolatry, and hold Buddhism in contempt. But God, they say, deserted them long ago because of their sins, and left them to the persecution of the demons, who are invisible, but who fill the world and cause sickness, death, and all manner of misfortune; every living thing has its spirit (La), and every inanimate object its "lord," so that all nature is full of mischief and danger. They say, illustrating the position by a parable of some children appeasing a tiger with little pigs while anxiously looking for their father with his bow and arrow to deliver them: "We must throw sops to the foul demons who afflict us, but our hearts are ever looking for God."

But now we come to the most remarkable tradition of all, held absolutely identical by each tribe of the Karens, and enabling us to understand the success which the American missionaries have had among them, and their devotion to the British alliance. After the Fall, they say, God gave His "Word" (the Bible) to the Karens first, as the elder branch of the human race; but they neglected it, and God, in anger, took it away and gave it to their younger brother, the white man, who was placed under a promise to restore it to the Karens, and teach them the true religion after their sins had been sufficiently expiated by long oppression of other races. For some hundreds of years the Karens have been longing for the fulfilment of this prophecy, and therefore they hailed the advent of the white missionaries with joy. The whole nation is becoming gradually, nay rapidly, Christianised, and yet without losing its individuality. A Karen who becomes a Christian does not cease to be a Karen—does not lose his place and influence in the clan; he still submits to the ruling of the Elders. Hence it is probable that a distinct Karen-Christian Church may be the outcome of the movement now in progress. At any rate, it is sufficiently significant that the cause of Christianity should have among the Karens this altogether peculiar advantage, that those still remaining "heathen" (and they are yet of course the majority) dwell in perfect amity with, and even approve and encourage the converts, though themselves held back chiefly by their lingering demon-worship. In such conditions—if they are correctly reported—it seems only a matter of time till the whole Karen nation embraces Christianity; and with

proper protection under the British Government, that little nation will assuredly grow apace, and take a high, possibly a commanding, place among the polyglot races which are already replacing the effete Burmese, and may conceivably form the nucleus of a one-day powerful Christian force in the East.

We should mention that the Red Karen tribe claims superiority over the others from their possession of certain metal plates containing part of the original Word given to them by God. They acknowledge that they sinned equally with the other tribes in losing the knowledge of reading and writing; but that because they have preserved and treat with reverence these plates, God will be more merciful to them than to the others. The Red Karens, as we have said, have always preserved their independence, and attribute their ability to have done so to the possession of these plates, which they guard with jealous care. Copies have been taken of the inscriptions and shown to Oriental scholars; but no one, we believe, has yet succeeded in deciphering them.

To account for the curious religious traditions of the Karens, a theory has been started that they are one of "the lost tribes;" but then, as this theory has been applied to almost every race under the sun, it is not of much value. Of more probability is the belief that before coming to Burmah, the Karens had lived in active intercourse with, and had imbibed the traditions of, the Nestorian Jews, who found their way from Armenia to Western China early in the Middle Ages, and must have settled there before the quarrels and separation of the Karen tribes began.

As to their national customs, these are undergoing some change. Infant marriage, for instance, is becoming much less frequent, and polygamy is not permitted. The Red Karens have a curious marriage ceremony:

"The two young people having made up their minds to marry, and the parents having given their consent, the bridegroom makes a feast in his house, to which the bride and some female companions come. During the feast, the bridegroom presents a cup of spirits to the bride, saying, 'Is it agreeable?' This she takes, replying, 'It is agreeable.' She and her companions remain all night, and returning home next morning, prepare a feast, to which the bridegroom and his friends come, and the ceremony of presenting the cup of spirits

is again gone through, this time the bride being the questioner. Occasionally the reply given playfully is, 'Not agreeable,' when the spirits must be offered and the question repeated till a favourable answer is received. The feast in the bride's house completes the whole ceremony."

The children are sometimes named after their ancestors; but the names given are often descriptive only of the parents' feelings, as "Joy" and "Hope;" or commemorative of a period, as "Harvest;" or marking an event, as "Father returned;" or noting some physical peculiarity, as "White," or "Black;" or sometimes after a bird, or beast, or material, as "Heron," "Tiger," "Tin," and "Cotton." The parents frequently change their own names on the birth of a child.

In ordinary cases of sickness, the Karens are kind and attentive enough to those afflicted; but in the case of an infectious disease, they are very rigorous, holding the person supposed to have introduced small-pox or cholera into a village responsible for all the deaths, and liable to pay the money-value of them. If he cannot do it himself, the debt descends upon his children and grandchildren until wiped out.

In the old days they never declared war. They sought rather to take their enemy unawares.

When an expedition began, it was held to have closed the door to peaceful mediation or explanation, and it was equally invariable for the conquerors to exterminate the vanquished with barbaric cruelty:

"All the men were killed, whether armed or unarmed. Such women as were thought likely to be useful or profitable as slaves were taken and bound. All the rest were killed. Infants were always killed, and children were often barbarously massacred. Their hands and feet were cut off, and their bodies hacked into small pieces."

Nor is this the only trait of cruelty in the national character. Slavery still exists among some of the tribes, and one of the Bghai clans is said even to sell their relatives. Defaulting debtors, captives in forays, confirmed thieves, widows and widowers who cannot pay the price of the deceased, were invariably, and are still, we understand, occasionally sold into slavery. For old men and women, there is no "market," but middle-aged men and women are or were valued at from two to three hundred rupees, and boys and girls

at from three to four hundred rupees each.

The Karens are not traders like the Burmese, but essentially agriculturists. When they settle on the plains their paddy-fields always surpass those of the Burmese, and their villages always have a greater look of prosperity. In the hill settlements, they cut down and burn the trees, and sow their crops on the mixed soil and ashes. The following year they move on to another hillside and repeat the operation, leaving the first clearing for six or seven years to recover its natural vegetation, when they return to it. Thus they are continually moving from hill to hill, the period of migration being usually seven years, when they come back to the starting-point and begin afresh. After the first rain-falls in May or June, rice is sown by dropping seed into holes dibbled in the ground, and when the rice is well up, cotton, maize, and capsicum are sown between the ridges. Sugar-cane, yams, and betel are planted near the house, and in the middle of the cultivated patch, called the "tomagya," a little hut is built, in which a boy or girl is placed, to frighten away the birds and wild pigs.

Threshing is done by beating the ears against a beam of wood, or by treading out the grains with the feet. The Karens have no cattle, and while the crops are growing the men and women fish and hunt, and gather forest produce for subsistence.

After the harvest is gathered, the "paddy" is stored in a granary, and paterfamilias goes down with his wife to the plains to sell his betel, and fowls, and what wild honey, beeswax, etc., he may have gathered, to obtain money wherewith to buy clothes and pay taxes. In some parts tobacco is extensively grown, and is a profitable crop.

Some of the folk-tales of the Karens are very racy, but the best of them are hardly suited for these pages. Animals figure largely in them, and the hare appears usually as the embodiment of wisdom and cunning. But the hare gets circumvented at last. The following is suggestive of an Old-World fable:

THE HARE AND THE SNAIL.

"The hare was rendered so vain by his many victories over the beasts of the forest, that he began to tyrannise over the weaker animals. Thence began to date

his defeat. He specially abused the snails, until they laid a complaint before their King, and asked relief. The snail-king was very angry, and asked the hare what he meant by so injuring his subjects.

"What are you good for, that you should challenge my right?" asked the hare.

"I'm good at running races," said the snail-king.

"And forthwith a race was arranged, much to the amusement of the hare.

"The snail stipulated that, as he was an aquatic animal, he should run in the creek, while the hare ran along the shore to the mouth, which was to be the goal. The course was fixed, and the match arranged for the next morning. In the night the snail-king stationed one of his subjects at each bend of the river, and had another at the goal. Then at the proper time he went himself to the starting-place. The word 'Go!' was given; the snail-king jumped into the river, and the hare trotted off at a gentle pace, cock-sure of victory. At the first bend of the river he shouted, 'Halloa, snail!' and far ahead the reply came back: 'Here!'

"Well, that fellow runs well," thought the hare, and redoubled his exertions. But at each bend, when he called out, always a voice far ahead responded, 'Here!' And when he arrived at the goal, a snail was quietly nibbling away at the flowers which marked the spot. The hare never doubted that the snail he saw at the finish was the one with whom he started, not remembering that all snails are very much alike. But the hare was never beaten until he began to oppress the poor; so long as he cheated tigers and elephants he was all right."

But here is an instance of Master Hare's wisdom:

THE HARE AND THE KING.

"A certain King was so proud, that he became almost unendurable to his subjects. So the hare went to rebuke him. He went into the Court, and called out:

"Hey, you fellow! who are you, anyway?"

"I am the King," was the answer.

"Well," said the hare, "I am only a jungle beast and don't know what King means."

"A King is one who has nothing above him," was the reply.

"Well, I declare," said the hare. "Is there nothing above you?"

"Nothing," replied the King.

"Well, I never saw a man with nothing above him before, and I want to take a good look at you."

"Look your fill," replied the King.

"The hare stared at the King for hours, until the King became so hungry that he could not sit longer and got up to leave the Court quietly. But the hare called out: 'Hey, you King, where are you going to?'

"The King, ashamed, sat down again and resumed his business. This went on several times until the King could hold out no longer, and shouted: 'If you must know, I am going to get something to eat.'

"Ah! you're no King," said the hare. 'Your own stomach is your master. It demands food and you are powerless to resist.'

"Then he went on to show the King that sickness, old age, and death, were all above him, and that he must obey them, and that therefore by his own definition only God is King.

"But the hare came to grief at last. One day he saw a black and a white buffalo grazing peacefully together in a large plain. He went to the black one and told him that the white one had said: 'That black buffalo eats so much, I shall be starved.' He then went to the white one and reported that the black buffalo had said: 'That white buffalo eats so much that I shall be starved.'

"In this way he raised a fight, and while the beasts were goring each other, he kept skipping from the head of one to the other urging them to greater fury. But in his excitement, the hare missed his footing just as the two heads were meeting in a grand crash, and he was crushed to death.

"And thus," says the story, "even wisdom and cunning, like that of the hare, will not save a mischief-maker."

The hares, it is said, multiplied so rapidly at one time, that they filled all Pegu, and such was the dread of the marvellous cunning of their progenitor, that neither animals nor men dared to live in the district. But when the descendants of Taw-mai-pah—the mythical ancestor of all the Karen clans—began to find the Toungoo hills too confined for them, a proposal was made that they should colonise Pegu. A wise man undertook to get rid of the hares. He went to Pegu on a pretended visit, and in the course of conversation with the hares, said:

"It's strange that you should all hang together so well. Your progenitor, single-handed, conquered all the beasts by his cunning; are you less wise, that you are forced to unite yourselves so closely? Why don't you live each by his own plot of grass, and each trust to his own individual cunning?"

This roused the pride of the hares, and they set up their own separate circles. Then the men and beasts came and attacked them, and lived for years on their flesh until not a hare remains to-day in Pegu. Moral: "Disunion means defeat."

Now disunion means a great deal among the Karens, who have been rendered both reticent and suspicious by long ages of oppression. They are excessively clannish, but when once their confidence is won, they yield implicit trust.

The Hill Karens will obey only one man, whether their chief or their official superior, if they are in the police or other service, and will not receive orders except directly from him. This little peculiarity sometimes leads to a great deal of trouble. And when a Karen does break away from his tribe to lead a roving life, he is rather a dangerous fellow; and if he becomes a dacoit, is much more to be dreaded than a Burman dacoit. For he has a perfect knowledge of jungle life, and can follow a trail, or conceal his own, with as much skill and cunning as an American Indian. Indeed, as a race, the Karens are rather given to concealment than to display, by which, however, we do not mean that deceit is a natural characteristic. They are exceedingly hospitable, and will entertain strangers with courtesy and lavish generosity, which seems curious considering the general suspiciousness of their character.

The Karens are not openly passionate; but they carry resentment for long, and their quarrels are much more irreconcilable than if they were more open. If a Government officer offends them, they say nothing to him, but pass the word round the tribes that So-and-So is "no friend" to Karen. This is never forgotten, and the officer will never again get any help from the clan.

To the Burmans, however, they are always hostile, and Karen mothers will silence their children by saying: "A Burman is coming," just as foolish nurses do among us with the "boggy-man."

The chieftainship of a Karen village is usually hereditary; but is often decided by personal merit. The village is the

"federate unit," and among some of the clans it may be simply a big barrack capable of accommodating up to a hundred families. In such a case there will be one long central hall, with separate suites of rooms opening off it—two rooms and an open verandah for each family. In the plains, however, each family has its separate dwelling.

In stature, the Karens are small, but they are broad and muscular, and strangely enough, the dwellers on the plains are more robust than the hillmen. Their skin is fair, like that of the Chinese; their hair is straight and long; their eyes usually black; and the features Circassian in type. Their dress varies. Striped tunics are worn by some of the clans; some wear handsomely embroidered trousers, and some wear none at all; a few go almost naked.

The Red Karens wear short red trousers, with narrow black or white stripes; black bands of twisted thread round the legs; a white wrapper with red or black stripes round the body; and a bright red turban on the head. The female dress of the Red Karens is also very picturesque, consisting mainly of a cloth worn like a Roman toga, falling over a coloured petticoat, and with a high red or black turban, twisted up in the form of a small tower. They are all fond of music, and sing beautifully, wild plaintive airs which are said to resemble those of the Scotch and Welsh Highlanders.

The American missionaries have been at work among the Karens for nearly sixty years, and the secret of their remarkable success is said to be that the movement of the Karens towards Christianity has been a national one—a general uprising of the people themselves to realise the tradition of ages. It is very curious altogether, and probably in no other part of the world have Christian missions been so quickly and uniformly successful. The idea is gaining ground through all the tribes that the day of hope for their race has dawned; and they are making wonderful pecuniary sacrifices in the cause of religion and education. As regards this last, it is related that when some of the Hill Karens lately captured a Burmese rebel, for whom the Government had offered a reward of five thousand rupees, it was put to the vote among the villagers what should be done with the money, and without a dissentient voice it was resolved to give it to the schools which they said, "had made men of them."

Well, now, we do not wish it to be supposed that the whole of the Karen nation have yet reached this high standard. But a large proportion have, and the tendency of the whole of the clans is in the same direction. It is clear, then, that a nation with such characteristics as we have shown, with such traditions, and with such aspirations, is destined to take a high place in the future of our Indian Empire.

Unfortunately, if Mr. Smeaton and others are to be believed, our Government have not been fully alive to the quality and potentiality of these people.

It is often said of the European residents in India, that their loyalty to the British Crown is beyond question, because their very existence in the country depends on the maintenance of the British Government; and so, in a lesser degree, it may be said the loyalty of the Karens, aliens like ourselves in the midst of a hostile and cruel people, may be relied on, since self-interest, to take no higher view, binds them to the British Government. This, and the manner in which they have stood by us in our recent operations in Burmah, will, it is to be hoped, be now fully recognised; and we trust that, in the future, more consideration may be shown to them. Their principal grievance, and it is one which calls for immediate redress, is that they are practically governed by subordinate officials of the hated Burmese race; and they demand, and Mr. Smeaton and the American missionaries urge with perhaps rather injudicious warmth: firstly, that recruits from the Karen people themselves should be more largely admitted to the subordinate Government service, and that Karen officials should be posted to Karen districts; secondly, that the superior officials, European or Burmese, employed in Karen districts, should be compelled to acquire the Karen language; and lastly and chiefly, that the Karens should be accorded some measure of local self-government. The first two of these demands are so reasonable as to be imperative; and, as to the last, this is hardly the place to discuss it. If it be the case that the Karens believe that the British Government, while just to all, does not care for them, and prefers the Burmans, then every effort should surely be made to remove such an impression, and to ally with us in heart, as they are in sympathy, the very remarkable people of whom we have endeavoured to give a brief, but inadequate description.

THE SECRET OF MADDON.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

EVERY one who saw it for the first time said that it was a lovely place; and even those, to whom it was a familiar landmark in the scene, owned that a more charming country seat than Maddon Court could hardly be found among the southern counties of England.

It was not so much the house as its situation; in fact, take away from it its wooded background and surroundings of magnificent trees, or its position on the green sloping hillside, and you had nothing but a long, low, irregular, white building, with many chimney-pots, in which successive generations had added a window here, thrown out a wing there, and committed the crowning incongruity of erecting an Italian portico in front of the old Tudor mansion.

In the foreground, a green undulating glade, marked here and there by a few scattered giants of oak and elm, left the view of the house open to the roadway, which on leaving its gates wound on for another half-mile or so, until it reached the village of Maddon, which derived its name from the Court, and in whose ancient church of Saint Mary, the founders of the family, the knights and dames of the house of Halliwell, lay in sculptured state. For the Halliwells had been lords of Maddon for centuries; and to the bucolic mind the possibility of there ever being a time when there should cease to be a Halliwell at the Court, was one of those things which it was impossible to conceive.

It was reported by those who pretended to familiarity with the family archives, that once the family possessions had been in imminent danger of passing away from them altogether in the time of Sir Jonas.

For the Halliwells were one of those fine old families who had been all things to all men. They had been to the Crusades in the earlier portion of their history; had been burnt at Smithfield as heretics, later on under Mary the Sanguineous; had melted their plate, to the last mustard-pot, for King and country, during the Civil War, and had gambled recklessly with what remained of their property under the Restoration.

Sir Jonas Halliwell had been one of the wildest and wickedest spirits of the Second Charles's Court—a boon companion of Rochester and De Gramont—and it was

said, that, having lost all his available possessions at the gaming-table, he had been about to stake his inheritance on the fortunes of the dice-box, when, as he raised his hand to make the cast, he was stricken by the plague in its most malignant form, and died hideously in less than two hours, forsaken by all, alternately cursing his luck and uttering horrible blasphemies among the ruins of overturned card-tables and broken wine flasks, with the smoky light of guttering tallow candles to illumine his death agony.

His picture, painted by Sir Peter Lely, hangs among the rest of the family portraits in the picture gallery of Maddon Court, and shows a dark, handsome, but sinister-looking individual of elegant figure, arrayed with all the costly magnificence of the time, in a suit of carnation-coloured velvet, with a cloak of the same embroidered in gold and lined with white satin, hanging from one shoulder, ruffles of the finest Mechlin, and a plumed hat, looped with an emerald clasp upon his head.

This portrait, which was completed but a short time before his death, and bears the date "1665," represents him as wearing an evil-looking smile on his countenance, and standing in a negligent attitude, with one hand on his silver-hilted sword, and it is reported that it was thus attired in this identical costume that he met his death, and was overtaken by his awful end.

There is no tomb or tablet to his memory in the church at Maddon, for his body, denuded of its rich trappings, was cast into the great pit at Finsbury Fields. The ruthless and inhuman robbers, who were one of the most terrible pests of that dreadful time, had not feared to strip the scarcely cold corpse of its bravery of apparel; but, being disturbed in their impious task by the watch, they fled, leaving their booty behind them. What became of the gold-embroidered suit of carnation-coloured velvet, the satin-lined laced cloak, and the jewel-clasped feathered hat, was not known—whether it was taken possession of by the myrmidons of the law, or became the property of the dead man's servant—but there was a certain heavily-carved, iron-bound chest in a dusty, disused upper chamber in the oldest portion of Maddon Court, the secret of whose spring was unknown, and which had never been opened since it had been brought there by Sir Reginald Halliwell, brother and successor of Sir Jonas.

What it contained no one knew;

perhaps the evidences of some hidden crime—some horrible, grisly tokens of a cruel murder—something which, had it been known, would have blasted the fair fame of Maddon, and perhaps—for there were many surmises—nothing at all; but on the lid was carved, in old English characters, the following distich:

Who opes this cheste,
Shall curse hys queste.

The door of the chamber was always locked, and the heavy, rusty old key bore a parchment label, on which was inscribed "The Closed Room." Strange to say, no Halliwell had ever been found sufficiently curious to brave the curse and raise the lid. One reason was that they were a superstitious race, and guarded jealously all their family traditions—another, that, hidden away in an otherwise empty cobweb-hung and seldom-entered chamber, it proved the truth of the old adage, "Out of sight is out of mind," and probably, from one year's end to another, its mysterious presence was scarcely remembered; but, no doubt, its chief safeguard lay in the secret of its lock, which was sufficient of itself, without the aid of superstition, to baffle all would-be sacrilegious hands, the boldest of which would have shrunk from the employment of force in such a case. And so the old oak chest kept its secret—if it had one—well!

It was universally admitted, that, to view Maddon at its best, you must visit it in the autumn, when the September sun was setting behind its background of hills, and the first finger of decay was passing over its woods and copses, touching them lightly, and painting them crimson, and brown, and golden, with the inimitable tints taken from Nature's own palette. If ever Maddon Court was beautiful—and all allowed that it was so—it was beautiful then; more beautiful even than in the early spring-time, when buds were shooting and leaves unfolding day by day, or in the winter, when snow covered and hid the green slopes, and icicles hung from the branches. And it was on a September day, early in the present century, when the place was fairest to look upon, that Sir Hugh Halliwell brought home his bride.

She was, it had been reported, of Spanish lineage, and Sir Hugh had met her, and fallen a victim to her charms while seeking distraction and forgetfulness, after the death of his first wife, in foreign travel. But who she was and whence she came,

beyond the mere circumstance of her being of foreign extraction—though she spoke English well enough—was not and never was known.

People, who had pitied the bereaved man in the first flush and outbreak of his grief, exclaimed in wonder and contempt when they heard of the brevity of its duration. That is, they wondered until they saw the new Lady Halliwell, and then they, or at any rate the masculine portion of the community, wondered no more, but attested their conviction as to the bridegroom's good fortune and taste, and confirmed it with the many oaths of the period. Their wives and daughters certainly deemed it only becoming on their part to throw up their hands in scandalised amazement at the fickleness of men generally, and the unseemliness of a widower, whose tears should scarcely have dried upon his cheeks, marrying again in less than three months; yet even they—though grudgingly and with a sigh and shake of their head as a token of respect, on their part, at any rate, to the departed—allowed that Lady Isabella was vastly handsome, with a most elegant shape, and the manners of a Princess of the Royal blood—but—

Somehow, there was always a "but" when her own sex spoke of the second Lady Halliwell. Female prejudice, of course—what else could it be, seeing that there was not one of their number in the whole county who could hold a candle to her in respect of personal appearance or elegance of manner?

But on that same September day, when Lady Halliwell saw her future home for the first time, bathed in sunshine and standing proudly on its wooded eminence, the expression which crossed her face, after her first exclamation of pleasure, was but a gloomy one, suggestive of envy and discontent with her lot; for there was already an heir to this fair domain. The first wife, who had died, had left behind her a son, and, consequently, no child of hers might hope to inherit the estate and reign at Maddon in the time to come.

She was only the second wife, and, with all her pride and beauty, of less consequence than a sickly baby. "And those sickly babies so seldom die!" she reflected bitterly.

For the young heir was a weakly child, though, thanks to the care of his faithful nurse and the pure country air, he grew to be a stout enough youth. It was scarcely

to be wondered at, that this trusty nurse, Deborah Brand, who had been his father's nurse before his, should nourish unfavourable and hostile thoughts towards the "New Madame," after the manner of most old retainers, who consider it their duty to look upon a step-mother, whatever her character or conduct, as a supplanter and intruder—particularly one with such black brows and haughty airs, who was known to be a "Papisher."

She watched over her young charge with a vigilance which was practically unsleeping, and which she never relaxed until he was of sufficient age to be deemed capable of taking heed to his own ways. Never, unless it was impossible to avoid so doing, would she leave the young heir alone with his step-mother, and never—after the time when, as a mere baby, he narrowly escaped being drowned in the old fish-pond, through, as Deborah declared and maintained, that lady's negligence—would she let him out of her sight.

The sweetmeats, too, which Lady Isabella, no doubt desirous of winning his childish confidence and infantile affections, gave him from her own "bonbonnière," were, if possible, ruthlessly confiscated, notwithstanding the prolonged and anguished howls of the despoiled one. She declared the "nasty foreign muck" made the child ill; and, indeed, on one occasion, the child was very sick after having partaken of his step-mother's bounty.

In vain the latter carried complaints of the nurse's insolence and overbearing conduct to Sir Hugh, and demanded that she should be dismissed, and one of her ladyship's own choosing installed in her stead. In this matter, and in this only, Sir Hugh was adamant, and equally impervious to smiles or tears, caresses or vituperation. He had promised the child's dead mother that the faithful Deborah, to whose arms she had committed him, as her own grew too feeble, should never be sent away or deprived of her post, so long as the boy required her services.

This he had sworn, and would abide by his oath, come what would, though in every other matter his lady might and should have her undisputed way.

So Deborah remained, and the young Reginald grew apace, and thrived amazingly under her fostering care. In course of time a baby-brother was born to him, who soon became the one object of his mother's existence, and the centre and sole possessor of her affections; though, with his birth,

the growing expression of envious discontent, which sullied her handsome features, increased and culminated.

By this time the "young master," as the old servants of the household delighted to call him, was a sturdy young urchin of some three or four years. It was this last expression which, when she heard it, made his step-mother's eyes flash fire, and caused her to bite her full red lips until they bled. "He!" she would mutter fiercely to herself; "that little interloper!"—which was hard on Reginald, and, to say the least, unreasonable, seeing that he was the firstborn—"who is not to be named with my son, my Anthony. But he shall never lord it over me and mine when his father dies. Poor weak fool! but for him and his pitiful vow, I could have sent away that hateful woman, with her prying eyes and insolent speeches, and then who knows but that things might even then have come right!"

He was a handsome child, this second son of Sir Hugh, but as dark as a gipsy; and his father was proud enough of him, though his affection was as nothing when compared with the strength and fierceness of the passion which his mother bore to him. Even jealous old Deborah admitted that he was a "likely enough child, but as dark as a nigger, and, Heaven knows, no more to be compared to my young master, with his bonny blue eyes, and good English face, than I am with her leddyship! Still, it's a bonny boy, too, if he wasna so black; and his mother knows better than to ruin his stomach with the nasty, foreign confections and messes she used to carry about with her in her silver box, and which always made my young master so qulmish when he eat them!"

The little heir was very fond of his small brother, and the latter, though he inherited the hot Southern blood, and fiery, uncontrolled temper of his mother, returned his affection in full; and, in spite of occasional, inevitable jealousies and disputes which ensued from time to time, the two were much attached to each other, and almost inseparable.

When both boys were considered old enough to learn to ride, each received from his father the gift of a pony. Charming little animals they were, though one of the two was credited with a spice of temper, but warranted free from vice. Naturally, the quietest pony was adjudged to the youngest lad, and "Red Rollo" became the property of Reginald. A groom, of

Lady Halliwell's own choosing, was engaged to ride out with the boys, and see that they came to no harm. Much to the disgust of the old servitors, and particularly of Deborah Brand, who was still a power in the household, in spite of all Lady Isabella could do to depose her, the man turned out to be a foreigner—a dark, sallow, sinister-looking individual; but for all that, Deborah declared, "as like my lady as two peas," and in high favour, too, with his mistress, from whose lips he received his orders every day, though from his fellow-servants he got nothing but scant courtesy and sidelong glances of suspicion. "What maggot was this," they asked each other, "that must needs set a garlic-eating, vinegar-drinking papisher like herself, behind the two young masters, as though an honest, beef-fed English lad were not good enow? Mark my words," with many a mysterious wag of the head on the part of the speaker, "something will come o't, and with such an outlandish and heathenish name, too, as Miguel—when plain Michael served the purpose of his betters!"

And something did come of it, for the new groom had not been in office a full month, when the young heir of Maddon was thrown from his pony one day, and brought home stunned and senseless. Red Rollo had taken fright at the stump of a tree or a stone in the road, the man explained in his broken English, and with his eyes fixed on his mistress's stony features, while Sir Hugh hung in speechless anguish over his son's inanimate form. But the boy, on the application of restoratives, soon revived, and proved the superior hardness of his British skull to that of the average country road; and the Lady Isabella, with old Deborah's keen, watchful, suspicious glance fixed upon her, smiled a pale, ghastly smile as he opened his eyes and looked about him; and then turning aside, she hid her face in her laced handkerchief. Kindly Sir Hugh, touched by so much emotion shown on behalf of one who was not of her own flesh and blood, spoke cheering words to her, and bade her dry her tears, "for the young rascal would yet live to lord it at the Court!"

Her maid, afterwards sent to search for the handkerchief, which her mistress had dropped, expressed her surprise to Deborah at finding it, with its cobweb lace and filmy cambric all torn and jagged as though some wild animal or "boggart" had bitten and rent it in pieces!

Red Rollo was sold, and, notwithstanding his lady's intercession on his behalf, the groom, Miguel, was discharged from his post, and bidden to take himself off the premises and return to his own place from whence he came, as he was held to blame—particularly after the discovery of the marks of heavy lashes across the pony's flanks, and which could only have come by his hand—for the accident which had occurred; which discovery would have made it hardly safe for him to have shown his swarthy face inside the stable yard. But Deborah, always on the look-out, for what she hardly knew or dared admit even in her own heart, declared that Miguel had been hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood for some time after the event thus recorded, and that my lady herself, wrapped from head to foot in one of her long cloaks and muffled about the face with a lace veil, had met him at dusk in the hazel copse "No longer ago than Wednesday sennight," and given him money—which same she could vouch for as gospel truth, as she heard the chink of it with her own ears—and had spoken to him in some foreign lingo, in which he had also replied, and then, kissing her ladyship's jewelled hand, had departed in great haste on hearing a twig snap, through a hasty movement of the listener. Deborah owned that she had followed the lady and acted as eavesdropper on this occasion, and the few trusty souls to whom she imparted the revelation, so far from condemning her for it, considered her action as deserving of the highest commendation.

CURIOSITIES OF SUICIDE.

WHAT is the most popular form of suicide? In France, drowning seems the commonest method, possibly because it is the handiest. Professor Morselli, of Turin University, tells us that drunkards and people who are tired of life and worn out with its miseries take to hanging; those to whom family misfortunes have made life unendurable choose drowning. It is perhaps not so wonderful that crossed or jealous lovers should resort to poison or the revolver. Protestants are more apt to fly to suicide than Catholics; who, again, are less impatient of life than Jews, inclined as that race is to mental alienation.

Another writer on this subject has observed that a man will, by preference, hang

himself, and a woman drown herself; and, as a national peculiarity, it may be mentioned that the percentage of those who select sharp instruments, as a means of death, is so great in England that it may be said that the English people are the greatest "cut-throats" in Europe.

Many persons, who had never before displayed great originality, have distinguished themselves by inventing novel forms of suicide. We have all heard of the Roman lady who swallowed red-hot coals; the foreign gentleman who put an end to himself with a small private guillotine also acquired posthumous renown. But perhaps the most original, though unsuccessful, would-be suicide on record is the young lady who knelt down, like a votary of Juggernaut, in front of an omnibus. A young lady "deliberately went in front of the horses of an omnibus and knelt down," according to a policeman who observed her singular conduct. On being rescued, she stated that "she wanted to be killed"; but she might have selected some method at once less prosaic and less original of gratifying her desire. Many hansom cabmen would have executed the business without even being requested to do so.

In a fiery furnace an iron-worker, at Low Moor, preferred to meet death. His fellow workmen saw him pitch himself headlong into the flames of a raging furnace; in which, no doubt, he was, before many moments had elapsed, utterly consumed. The natural question is—Why did he do it? Probably he could not tell the reason himself, if he were alive.

A pleasanter way of quitting the world was that adopted by a Parisian grisette, who filled her small bedroom with flowers; and when her mother went to call her in the morning, she found her dead. This young creature understood vegetable physiology and chemistry sufficiently to be able to adapt them to fatal ends.

At Plymouth, a man named Jolly tied his feet and hands together, and then threw himself into the water, having previously announced his intention of committing suicide in that particular way.

November is generally believed to be the month of suicides. It is certainly a melancholy month. As Tom Hood says:

No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease—
No comfortable feel in any member—
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees—
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds—
No—vember.

But Professor Morselli, who has made

a special study of this subject, says it is not true that suicide is more frequent "in damp, cloudy, and dark weather, such as helps the developement of melancholy passions." August is the month in which the greatest number of suicides takes place in Paris, one hundred and six occurring in that month, as against forty-one in February, the slackest month. Last year, July was the suicidal month in Paris, and it is considered a noteworthy fact that the suicides have increased since the establishment of the fête on the fourteenth of that month.

In America, "the flowery month" of June is the favourite time, the three months of summer showing two thousand three hundred and eighty-six suicides, as against one thousand seven hundred and thirty-six in winter.

Suicide is so common in London that it does not excite public feeling; there is so much misery in a great metropolis that it is only wonderful that human beings can endure it at all. Some men and women plunge into the river in order to arrest attention to the condition of their families.

"Policeman," said a respectably-dressed man, "why did you not let me do it? I have a wife and eight children. I went home last night and found my wife fainting at her needlework, and the children crying for bread. I could see nothing in front of me but death."

To his wife he had written:

"My dear little wife, we must part. But where? At the workhouse gate? No, little darling, 'till death us do part' was the promise we made, and death is the kindest and best."

Fortunately, he was seized before disappearing for the last time, and publicity given to the case by the newspapers resulted in upwards of one hundred pounds being forwarded to the Mansion House for the benefit of the man's wife and family.

"Nature intended me to be a man; fate made me a grocer," were the words written on a piece of paper, left by a young Frenchman, who blew out his brains with a pistol. That young man had mistaken his calling; but it would be a serious thing for society if all grocers were to think and act in like manner.

A spice of humour attaches to the valedictory address of a Paris cabman, who strangled himself. He wrote: "I leave this world because it pleases me to do so. I have had enough of driving people about

in this world. I am going to see if, in the other world, people drive differently. All I ask is that no fuss may be made about me." And with the view of ensuring that the letter should not go astray, he wrote upon the envelope: "To Anyone." One would like to have the reflections of Mr. Weller, senior, upon this untoward event. But, probably, he would conclude that the Paris cabmen came under the same heading as "Camberwell coachmen," and "didn't count."

"I am no longer able to support my parents," was the reason assigned by an octogenarian in Buda-Pesth, for attempting to commit suicide. This man's name was Janos Meryessi. He had for the last few years been a beggar, and was eighty-four years old. His father and mother were said to be aged one hundred and fifteen and one hundred and ten respectively. Meryessi was rescued by a Hungarian Member of Parliament, as he was about to jump into the Danube off the suspension bridge. His story has since been investigated by the police, and is declared to be true.

The Salford tragedy was unique in the annals of suicide. For a mother, half mad or wholly mad with grief and misery, to murder her children, and then kill herself, is not an event without a precedent. But for a father, who appeared to his neighbours, to his intimates, and to the doctor who examined his brain after death, to be entirely sane, to slaughter his whole family—a wife and six children, one of them a well-grown lad—to do this out of affection, and with the most anxious avoidance of any pain or violence, and then, with his victims just dead, to write letter after letter explaining his motives and his means, to draft a sensible will, to pass out among his friends in order to secure witnesses to the document, and then return to the charnel-house and execute himself—this might have interested De Quincey as much as any mob.

Yet this is what a druggist's assistant did. Owing to various pecuniary troubles, he could not bear to desert his wife and children, and decided that the whole family should go away to the next world together. He explained his plan to his wife, a noble-hearted woman, he says, who did not wish to survive him, and she agreed to it, provided only that all should go at once as an undivided household. He therefore mixed some prussic acid with half-a-pound of treacle, and gave the first dose to his

wife, in bed with her two youngest children. She took it, he says, quite consciously, and as easily "as if it had been beer or tea," or, as he again says, "like a lamb." All died easily, he wrote, and without pain, and then the father wrote four letters, drew up a will, and then went out to have his signature witnessed. Returning, he lay on the sofa and swallowed the poison.

France holds the records for suicides, for only seventy-four persons per million in this country laid violent hands upon themselves; the number in France is two hundred and sixteen, which is the highest average in all Europe. In Prussia again, a very large number of persons seem to be tired of a world afflicted with pessimism and compulsory military service. In Austria the number of suicides is nearly double that of England, but both Italy and Russia are lower on the list. The increase in most European countries has been considerable during the last eight years, but in France it has been enormous.

The total for the past twelve months is seven thousand five hundred and seventy-two, one-fifth of these being in and around Paris. It is remarkable that poverty has only caused four hundred and eighty-three suicides in all France, and this figure includes a morbid fear of impending misery without actual privation; one thousand nine hundred and seventy-five cases may be traced to mental aberration, and one thousand two hundred and twenty-eight to physical suffering. Among the moral causes domestic trouble stands first, and alcoholism next. There are two hundred cases of disappointed love, and only twenty-seven from jealousy, dislike of military service giving twenty-five. The increase is attributed by one party to secular education. "Another ten years of atheist teaching in our schools, and the number of suicides will be ten times as large," is the prediction of the Catholics.

What is suicide? The medical department of one American Insurance Company defines it as the result of disease or bodily infirmity, and pays all such claims without dispute. A few of the English companies still stipulate in their policies that if the assured commits suicide, the policy shall be void; but this clause is held by law to be no longer binding in New York. As a rule, the British companies insert a clause to the effect that "if the insured commits suicide within five years, the policy shall be void."

Upon this matter a Scotch manager writes:

"What should be desired by the managers of an office is protection against the taking out of a policy with the intention of committing suicide after the completion of the contract. Any suicide not so premeditated, can be covered by a small premium overhead, and, in fact, is covered by the figures of the ordinary tables of mortality. And to show that on this score there is but little selection against the office under any circumstances, I may mention that the policies of the office with which I am connected, have not, for eighteen years past, contained any suicide clause whatever, and yet, during the whole of that time, though many of the assured have committed suicide, there has been no single instance in which it could be alleged, or even suspected, that such a termination to the policy was contemplated when it was first taken out."

As insurance "lives" are carefully selected, it would be interesting to know what proportion die by their own hands. Unfortunately, such information is not available. Only one company, and that the largest in the world, publishes a report of its medical department. From this it appears that during 1887, the suicides numbered twenty-seven, out of a total death record of one thousand four hundred and thirty-eight.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

BY C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER Gaspard left Havre, his mother had broken down utterly. All anger vanished in her desire to have him near her still; she would have consented to anything if he would have returned to be her son again. Not knowing where to seek him, she had acted on Madame Reyer's suggestion that Gaspard and Thors might have returned to Stromness. Therefore she wrote to the landlady of the inn where Gaspard had stayed in the summer. Needless to say, the letter, a long appeal in impassioned and somewhat incoherent French, was, as she said, "Greek and Gaelic" to the landlady. But she guessed from the postmark that it was in some way connected with "that young villain of a Frenchman that carried off the minister's

Thora—the misguidit lassie !” and so took the letter to Mr. Traill. He, aided by the schoolmaster and a dictionary, deciphered it after a fashion; and even succeeded, with the same assistance, in elaborating a reply. It was rather a bewildering epistle, though it was written on the sound basis of being composed in English and translated with great literalness into French; for the minister got confused between his feeling that to a Frenchwoman only courtly phrases should be used, and the passionate anger he felt for all connected with the man who had robbed him of the child he loved.

His life was desolate without Thora. He had regarded her as an inalienable possession of his own, made the more surely his by her lack of kindred. It would have been bitter to him to have parted with her even to give her in honourable marriage; but to feel that she had been stolen from him for a shameful life by a man whom he had liked and encouraged to come to his house, brought him every possible pang of remorse. He did not suspect that he wronged Gaspard in thinking that he had from the first schemed to ruin Thora—pretending to desire a marriage he knew to be impossible in order to lead the girl's thoughts up to an elopement with him. Old Oala's suggestion, founded on the idea she knew she had put into Thora's head, “that maybe da lassie had plighted the troth of Odin wi' her lad,” only infuriated the minister more. The troth of Odin was the object of his strongest aversion. He had spoken against it, preached against it, impressed on his people its uncanonical and illegal nature for nearly half a century, only to find at the end of all, that the girl he had brought up under his own eye was content with such a poor and paltry substitute for lawful marriage. The troth of Odin was worse than nothing in Mr. Traill's opinion.

Therefore, his reply to Madame Harache contained, beyond the simple fact that Gaspard and Thora had not returned to Stromness and that nothing was known of them there, a string of invectives against the former as a subtle and unprincipled man, who had deceived a foolish girl by a form of marriage which he knew to be of no account either in his country or hers. This gave Madame Harache a piece of information she had not looked for—that Thora's own friends did not look upon her as Gaspard's wife. But though she

would not long before have regarded this as an additional justification of her course of action, it hardly moved her now. If Gaspard would only come back, he might wed whom he would, live in lawful or unlawful bonds; she would never question the fitness or reason of his action.

“This explanation from the man who seems to have been the girl's guardian, makes Gaspard's conduct seem all the more wilful,” she said to Monsieur Meudon, to whom she brought the letter. “If she is not regarded as his wife, even by her own people, why should he demand my recognition of her as such? My refusal could not matter much; neither could my acceptance of her; it would not, of itself, legalise her position. But I do not understand my son now; and he is gone from me. I shall never see him again.”

“Do not despair; he is almost certain to go to this place sooner or later, if he does not come back and make peace with you. The world is not kind to men as poor and friendless as he. Poverty will soon drive him to make some appeal to either his own people or the girl's.”

“If he only would! But he will not come back to me, his anger is too great. He will beg from strangers sooner than from his own mother.”

“Then we must remain in communication with these strangers. You must ask this somewhat hot-tempered priest to let you know if Gaspard and the young person whom, for some inexplicable reason, he chooses to call his wife, return to Stromness, or make any communication to him.”

“I will not write again to a man who insults my son—my Gaspard, whose only fault is that he is nobler than other men. I could not do it without telling him what I feel, that all the trouble is his doing,” exclaimed Madame Harache. “I am sure that he tried to entrap my son into marrying this penniless girl—penniless and friendless, he says, without a relation in the world. Having failed in his scheme, he turns round and maligns my boy. If I write to him I shall tell him all that!”

Monsieur Meudon being a wise man within his limits, he did not combat the assertions Madame Harache had evolved from her prejudices.

“You are right, ma pauvre amie,” he answered, courteously. “A mother could not write of her son's misfortunes without a tone of bitterness, which in this case would be inadvisable. Leave this letter

with me; I will answer it. I can speak to this respectable monsieur as one man of the world to another. Besides," he could not refrain from adding, "I shall keep only to facts. I shall express no opinion as to his acts or intentions. I always avoid opinions—they are highly dangerous things."

Madame Harache, whose belief in Monsieur Meudon's wisdom had not been destroyed by his failure to conquer Gaspard—that fiasco being balanced by her own yet more disastrous failure to move Thora—agreed to entrust her friend with this mission. She left the letter with him, and Monsieur Meudon wrote a reply of such a diplomatic texture, couched in such magnificently courteous language, that he was delighted with it as a piece of literature; and innocent old Mr. Traill, bewildered at being described as the morning-star of religion in heathen lands, and indignant at being alluded to as a priest—"does he think I am a Papist like himself"—came to the conclusion that these French folk wanted to do him some further injury, and that their anxiety to learn where Gaspard and Thora had now gone, was due to a desire to immure the latter in a convent, convert her to Romanism, or do her some mischief greater still, in order to detach her from her lover.

As usual, Monsieur Meudon's finesse had been too fine. He really was a simple man, however shrewd he was in his business, and never more simple than when he tried to be subtle.

He was so delighted with his epistle, so fatigued in brain, too, with its composition, that he determined as a reward to take it himself to the post, and smoke a cigar on the way. It was a pleasant Sunday morning; Madame Reyer and Sophie were at church, and would not be home for some time. Monsieur Meudon prolonged his walk beyond his original intention, and when he returned his sister and daughter had been at home for nearly half an hour.

"It was quite a surprise to us to find you gone out," said Madame Reyer. "It is so rarely that you leave the house before the afternoon on Sundays. I could scarcely believe it when Sophie said she had looked for you in your cabinet, and not found you."

"Did you go into my cabinet, Sophie?" asked Monsieur Meudon, sharply, overcome by a fear that he might have left Mr. Traill's letter open on his desk, and that it might have caught Sophie's eye.

With all his lax views, Monsieur Meudon had a tender regard for his daughter's innocence, and did not want her to learn the tragedies of life too soon.

"I looked in, but as I saw you were not there, I did not go beyond the door," answered Sophie.

Monsieur Meudon felt relieved; but he determined to return the letter to Madame Harache as soon as possible. When he looked for it, however, he could not find it; and, having searched his desk and his pockets in vain, he came to the conclusion that he must have, unthinkingly, lit his cigar with it and thrown the remainder in the fire. He told Madame Harache that he had considered it advisable to destroy the letter, and, as she accepted the statement without criticism, he concluded that all further trouble was at an end, and dismissed Gaspard from his mind without more than a brief execration on his stupidity.

But that letter was in Sophie's hands when she prepared to visit Thora in Hartlepool, and when she put it in her pocket it was with the feeling that in it she had a weapon which must either crush her rival or recoil fatally on herself. She had suffered so much for that letter! Her nerves were good; her placidity was not assumed if her innocence was; though she looked so pale and fragile, she could pass unmoved through a crisis that would have worn out a stronger-seeming woman; but the possession, the concealment of Mr. Traill's letter for six months had tried her a little. She had no lockfast place in which to place it; Madame Reyer, independent woman as she was, would have been shocked at her niece's claiming the right to have a private repository. She had worn it about her person by day, and kept it under her pillow by night, and had been afraid of every unexpected glance or touch that might betray its presence. She was not sure yet that it would ever profit her; but Sophie Meudon believed that it was always better to have too much ammunition than too little; it was time enough to throw away a weapon when its uselessness had been proved.

To-day the value of that stolen sheet of note-paper was to be put to the test.

Thora had finished her household work, and was gazing listlessly out of her window at the glittering sea and the noisy urchins who were paddling at its verge, when she saw the strange lady approach her door. She had been speculating

wearily whether it was worth while to go out that afternoon—whether it would be better to walk along the moor, and looking at the pillars and arches of rock with the sea seething round them even when it was calmest, there to dream of Stromness, and to wish herself home again; or to stay indoors, and brooding in loneliness over the friendly companionship of old days, still wish herself back in Stromness. But when she saw Sophie coming up the steps, one moment of curiosity was succeeded by the conviction that this was one of Gaspard's French friends, and, therefore, one of her enemies. Mademoiselle Meudon's dress and air betrayed her nationality; and Thora felt that she was in some way hostile to her. Her first instinct was to ignore the knock which, though not loud, set all her nerves on edge; but she was not a coward; and with the memory of Madame Harache's cruelty still stinging her, she determined not to blanch before any of these people who hated and slandered her, and twisted right to wrong in order to ruin her.

It was Sophie who paled when Thora opened the door and stood before her, tall and proud, and evidently angry, with a smouldering sullenness of anger which Mademoiselle Meudon felt to be dangerous. The little courteous smile she had worn disappeared from her face; but with a second glance at Thora she tried to recover herself.

"Poor Gaspard!" she said to herself. "She is beautiful, it is true, but cold and ill-tempered. How tired he must be of her!" Then—for she was no coward either, and would not yield without fighting—she said amiably: "You must be Madame —, the lady I have come to see. I am a friend of Gaspard's, and am therefore interested in every one whom he loves."

As she spoke she slipped subtly over the threshold, leaving Thora no alternative but to take her into the little parlour she herself had just left, if she did not wish to turn her out of the house by main force.

The two women entered the room and then faced each other. For a few moments neither spoke; Thora had nothing to say, and was never guilty of making unnecessary remarks; Sophie felt that, in the character of hostess after a fashion, Thora should take what initiative was required after her words on the doorstep. After a second or two the silence became embarrassing—to Sophie at least. As for Thora, to one

who is, or is held to be, a criminal, the silence that precedes an accusation may be painful to the point of agony, but it is no longer embarrassing.

At last, seeing that Thora would give her no opening, Mademoiselle Meudon made one for herself.

"You are not courteous; you do not bid Gaspard's friend welcome, Madame—or should I say Mademoiselle?" she said at last, with frank insolence. She had not meant to begin her attack thus; but Thora's composure and evident enmity made any other method useless and unnecessary. Now she had begun with this first insult, moreover, she rather enjoyed the situation. For the first and last time in her life Sophie Meudon had an opportunity of being thoroughly natural.

Thora's cheeks flushed and paled again as the taunt fell on her ear; but she said nothing. The words brought back the memory of Madame Harache's visit to her in Havre, and recalled something of the old faintness and horror. But she was stronger and braver now, and she knew, as she thought, the worst. In France a foolish law wronged her; but here in England she was assured of her rights; she could let this spiteful woman—she knew as well as if Sophie had told her, that this girl had wished herself to be Gaspard's wife—she could let her say all that disappointment and anger brought to her lips, and then, as Gaspard's British wife, standing on British soil, command her to leave the house. So, for the present, she did not speak.

Having elicited nothing to help her in her utterances, Sophie went on as her temper directed.

"You do not tell me how I should address you. Perhaps you are wise. We can do without titles, you and I. We know each other; or at least we shall do so soon. Do you guess who I am?"

Thora answered now, slowly and contemptuously:

"I guess you to be a woman who is in love with my husband."

Sophie smiled.

"Your guess is correct, after a fashion; but you do not state the matter rightly. I am a woman who loves Gaspard Harache. True! More than that—I am his future wife."

Thora replied at once; but yet had time before she spoke for a mental exclamation of wonder at herself. She felt neither

shame nor hot anger at words which ignored so utterly her claim to Gaspard's love; only a cold contempt for this woman, who had neither shame nor mercy in her. She felt that she could hold her own against mere insolence, which had not the excuse Madame Harache's anger had possessed, of disappointed mother-pride.

"Gaspard's future wife!" she repeated. "It is a pity to predict one's lot in life too long before the event. I am as young as you, I think, and every whit as strong. You may not outlive me."

"No need for that! I have only to outlive his love for you, and that will not take long."

"That's a boast. It may mean much or little; but I am confident of my husband's loyalty." She wilfully called Gaspard her husband, to bring out the disclaimer from the Frenchwoman.

Sophie thought that she saw her opportunity.

"Gaspard is not your husband; I thought you knew that," she said, promptly.

Thora did not quail; she even smiled a little. "You are quoting the law of France, I suppose," she answered. "I know all that you can say on that point; it was made clear to me six months ago. But Gaspard has left France, and on English soil our marriage holds good. I am his wife here. Supposing he were tired of me, supposing he were to marry you in France, according to French law, here, in England, you would not be his wife; my claim stands before yours. Here, at least, I—I—am the lawful wife."

Thora stood erect, with dilated eyes and flushed cheeks, looking at her rival, hating herself for having stooped to such a counter-argument; yet glad that she had possessed a truthful defence to foil Sophie's malicious lies.

But Sophie remained calm, and answered her. "You would be right if any marriage had ever taken place here, in Britain; but when there is none—what then?"

"What!" exclaimed Thora, roused at last, "are you so foolish, as well as so base, as to deny that? Happily it is a certainty beyond your doubting."

"Are you mad?" cried the other, with a cruel light of triumph in her eyes. "You must know that neither here nor elsewhere—nowhere in the wide world—not even in the village you left to go with him, are you Gaspard Harache's wife."

"You lie!" gasped Thora, moved beyond even the semblance of patience.

"And do your own friends lie? Does this lie?" asked Sophie, taking out Mr. Traill's letter and flinging it to Thora.

Gaspard's Orcadian wife read it—read the words of bitter reproach and sorrow that had come from the pen of the old man who had loved her; read his statement that all the town was ringing with the disgrace of her flight; read the explanation the minister gave of the invalidity of that Troth of Odin on which she had pinned her faith. It did not matter that her old guardian put all the blame on Gaspard. The sin may be the man's, but the shame falls on the woman.

Her brain reeled; for a moment she felt sick and blind, and her limbs seemed to fail her. But, even now, the brave Norse blood in her forbade her breaking down in presence of her enemy. Wildly enough there flashed across her memory the picture of the Vikings' graveyard as it looked on the day she had first met Gaspard there, and with it came the story of the Vikings who had thrown themselves into the sea, to drown under the weight of their armour, rather than own themselves vanquished. For one minute more she would seem strong.

"You have done well," she said, with passionate bitterness. "It must have cost you many a sin to secure this, in order to have the power to stab me with a depth of wrong I had not guessed before. You have the world on your side; I have only Heaven on mine. But do what you like; bring me to shame or starvation; corrupt Gaspard as best you can till you own, first his love, and then his honour for your prey; I would not change places with you for all the world. Leave my house."

And Sophie, cowed by a sorrow beyond her comprehension, frightened but not ashamed, turned and fled.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE news of the stranded barque set Sir Peter ringing the bell and ordering his dog-cart to be brought round immediately. He was equipped and out of the house in a little over five minutes. During that five minutes, however, he managed to get through a good deal.

Madge wandered after him into the hall, trying to whisper a question as to what information he had or had not imparted to Count Palliardini, for it was of first importance to her to know on what footing affairs stood now. But no! before she had time to get her question to her lips, Sir Peter was back again in the library, going through a series of polite apologies and explanations to the Count.

"So sorry to have to run away like this; but I'm sure you'll understand my anxiety to be at the scene of disaster. Now, may I have the pleasure of putting you up for the night?"

The Count rose from his chair. "I would rather you should have the pleasure of dismissing me," he said. "I am anxious to continue my journey, and if you will be good enough to tell me where Miss Melvor is to be found, and how to get to the place, I will start at once."

Sir Peter waved his hand towards Madge, who stood in the hall just outside the library door.

"Mrs. Cohen will answer all your questions, I am sure, with a great deal of pleasure."

Then he fitted into the hall again.

"Madge, my dear," he whispered, "I leave the matter in your hands; you will know exactly what to do for the best."

"What have you told him?" asked Madge anxiously.

"Nothing, my dear, absolutely nothing; I have used the utmost discretion."

Then he was back again in the library, ringing the bell to countermand some order already transmitted to the stables.

"Now, you won't hurry away; you'll have some refreshment before you go? It seems so uncourteous for me to start off in this fashion; but I'm sure you'll understand. I've a big scheme in my head—"

This was said to the Count.

"Ah, yes!"—this to the servant—"have Leah put to, she gets along faster in the wind than Havelock—"

Then again to the Count.

"A big scheme, yes—I shall telegraph to the Mayor of Carstairs and some of the clergy to meet me this afternoon, so that we can at once form a Vigilance Committee to watch this part of the coast while the gale lasts. Now I'm off!"

Naturally, very little of this information was of the slightest interest to the Count. He slightly smiled.

"Mrs. Cohen, you say, will answer my questions?" he asked.

But Sir Peter was now in the hall, talking to Mrs. Cohen. "Madge, my dear," he was saying, "you have before you a grand opportunity! By the exercise of a little tact and discretion, you may succeed in effecting a vast amount of good. You must speak plainly to the Count—The cart's at the door!"—this to a servant who approached at that moment. "Ah, by the way, I must get some more telegraph forms," and back into the library he went,

to provide himself with these from one of the writing-tables.

The Count had another "passing word" from him.

It was:

"I'm delighted to have had this opportunity of speaking to you in my boy Lance's interests—as I said before, 'give and take' is a golden rule."

Madge started aghast. Had he absolutely flourished in the face of this man the fact that Lance wished to figure as his rival?

"Madge, my dear," said the old gentleman, hurrying towards the door, and stuffing telegraph forms into his pocket as he went along, "don't forget there lies before you the grand opportunity of making three people very happy; that is, of course, if you can manage to make the Count see matters in the right light. I've paved the way for you. Between ourselves, I don't think he's half such a bad fellow as has been made out; but be discreet above everything else—remember I've told him nothing. Now I'm off!"

Madge knew by experience that he wasn't yet!

He got his foot on the step of his dog-cart, then ran up the hall steps in a great hurry to give an order that blankets were to be sent after him in bundles, all that could be got together, as quickly as possible—and brandy—and rum—also as quickly as possible.

Then Madge had another word whispered into her ear: "Not half such a bad fellow; but be discreet, my dear. Now I'm off!"

And this time he really was "off." With his foot once more on the step of the dog-cart, he waved his hand to her; the wind carried his voice away, but she could see that his lips formed to the words: "Be discreet!"

The old gentleman's anxiety to escape from what threatened to be an embarrassing situation was easy enough to read, and, at any other time, Madge would have laughed at it. The crisis, however, which this anxiety of his compelled her to face without a moment's preparation, was no laughing matter.

She strove to collect her thoughts. One thing only seemed clear to her—that there was no use in attempting to shirk an interview with Count Palliardini; whatever danger threatened must be met and faced, alike in Lance's interests and in Miss McIvor's.

Of course the Count's one and only

object in coming to the house was to discover Miss McIvor's hiding-place. Supposing that she refused to give him any information concerning it, two dangers seemed to threaten; one that he would stimulate the energies of the police by pressing the criminal charge against the girl; the other that he would seek an interview with Lance, or dog and follow his footsteps, and in this way obtain the information which he sought.

Now how was she to face two such momentous difficulties as these?

She might have studied this question for days, and not have arrived at any satisfactory conclusion on the matter. To arrive at any conclusion satisfactory or otherwise in a mere flash of thought was an impossibility. She could only hope that as she met or parried the inevitable questions, her good angel might whisper a timely suggestion in her ear.

She went back to the library to find the Count standing in the window recess, looking after Sir Peter's vanishing dog-cart.

"Is he always like this?" he queried, a little contemptuously Madge thought.

To gain time for herself, she began a series of apologies for Sir Peter's sudden departure.

"It is an amazing benevolence," he answered, the contemptuousness of his manner becoming even more pronounced. "A few fishermen, more or less! A few more or less of the canaille to annoy and get in one's way! What does it matter?"

The words unpleasantly recalled the story of the boy Giovanni's death.

He gave her no time, however, to express her indignation, but went straight to the object of his visit.

"Sir Peter has referred me to you, madame, for an answer to my enquiries respecting Miss McIvor?"

Madge seated herself in the window recess, thereby turning her back to the light. He took a chair facing her, the full light falling upon his handsome, well-cut features, and bold, black eyes.

He went on:

"Miss McIvor, I believe, was staying some little time in this house. Will you be good enough to tell me where she is at the present moment?"

Madge felt that she must speak.

"I scarcely think I am justified in doing so," she answered, slowly.

The Count smiled, and looked hand-

somer than ever. His smile, however, was not a genial one; but was caused by the thought at how great a disadvantage these Englishwomen were whose consciences would not let them tell lies. Now, an Italian woman, if she had not felt inclined to answer his questions, would have vowed readily enough that she knew nothing whatever on the matter.

But he said only:

"Will you be good enough to tell me why you hesitate to give me this young lady's address?"

And Madge answered slowly, as before:

"I do not know that I am justified in doing even that."

For a moment he let his black eyes rest full on her face.

"She is not so much like Marietta as I fancied, about the eyes," he thought to himself. "She is lovelorn; yes, but she is something else beside. Ah, it is that stupid thing called conscience which makes her unlike Marietta. Marietta knew nothing about that."

Again he smiled and said lightly:

"You have scruples! Ah! Englishwomen are always scrupulous—it is their charm. But to whom shall I go if you will not answer my question? Sir Peter has departed; the Signor Lance is not here. Shall I wait till the Signor Lance comes back, and put my question to him?"

And the way in which he spoke those words, "the Signor Lance," told Madge that her worst fears were realised, and that Sir Peter had surpassed himself in indiscretion.

In addition, it sounded a note of alarm. Lance, most probably, was at that very moment on his way back to Upton. At any cost, a meeting between the two men must be prevented, or at least deferred.

She answered calmly, although she felt that her face betrayed her.

"I suppose you mean Mr. Clive. I do not know that he would feel any more inclined than I do to answer your question."

But, so soon as she had said the words, it occurred to her that there was in them an undernote of defiance which, in the circumstances, was scarcely prudent. So she added, in a more conciliatory tone:

"You will understand, I am sure, that the fact of a person staying in one's house, and eating at one's table, lays obligations of friendship upon one."

"Ah, you and Miss McIvor were the greatest of friends while she stayed in

your house," he said, in a tone which, to Madge's fancy, bordered on the insolent.

She flushed scarlet. What did he, or did he not know? Had Sir Peter revealed her feelings as well as Lance's towards Miss McIvor?

"I did not say that," she cried indignantly. Then she broke off abruptly, fearing where her candour might lead her.

She took a moment or two to recover herself.

"Why should I say anything at all?" she began, and stopped herself again, feeling as one might feel on boggy ground, when every step lands one farther in the mire.

"Why should you, indeed," he answered, calmly; "and why should I ask questions which make you speak against your will, when I can so easily get them answered in another quarter?"

Madge guessed in a moment which was that other quarter.

"You would not—could not surely—" she began.

"I would—I could surely," he answered, "apply to the police for information I want, if I could procure it from no other quarter. Your English police are immaculate. I should simply say to them: 'This young lady, whom you have traced for me so far, once attempted to take my life by poison,' and, before a week was over my head, her hiding-place would be found out."

Madge rose to her feet impetuously. The words she had dreaded to hear were spoken now.

"I will not believe it," she cried. "I do not believe there lives a man who would—could—act in so despicable a manner!"

He rose also and bowed low. "Madame," he said, "you see that man before you now!"

For a moment neither spoke; they simply stood facing each other.

Madge, with her weakened health, her want of confidence in her own powers of persuasion or argument, dreaded to open her lips; the words, "It would be cruel—atrosciously cruel!" escaped her against her will.

He bowed again. "I do not contradict you, madame; do you not know that men are often cruel—'atrosciously cruel'—to the women they love? They will kill a woman rather than let a rival win her."

And, as he said this, his dark eyes flashed with an evil light, which made her once more look at his slender white hand, and

say to herself: "It ought to be red—red as the blood it has shed."

The Count suddenly changed his tone to his former courtly suavity.

"Why do I tell you this?" he said, softly. "Why do I distress a tender-hearted Englishwoman with stories of what men can, or cannot do, when they love or hate? Let us sit down, madame, and talk this matter over. This young lady is a friend of yours?"

The sudden, upward look which Madge gave him might have been taken to express dissent, but her lips said nothing.

"Well, at least," he went on, "she is a friend of a friend of yours!" Here to Madge's fancy his insolence in suavity surpassed his former unmasked insolence.

"And, being a friend of this friend of yours, you wish her well," he continued. "Now tell me, do you not think the young lady would be happier in Corsica, in her own home, among her own people, than among strangers in a foreign land hiding in terror from your police? Sit down, madame, sit down and let us talk the matter over!"

But Madge would not sit down. She stood leaning her elbow against the window recess, looking far away over the Castle grounds and the valley beyond, to the road along which Lance would come riding on his way home.

Suddenly she turned and faced the Count with the question:

"Why must it be one thing or the other? Why will you pursue her in this way? Why will you not let her alone to live in England, or in Corsica, as she pleases?"

He laughed a low, scornful laugh.

"Ask the rivers why they flow to the sea; ask the sea why it follows the moon," he answered, "before you ask a man, who loves, why he follows the woman he means to get possession of." Here he broke off a moment, then added, with a sudden, furious energy: "I tell you, madame, if that girl Etelka were shut up in the heart of the earth, I would dig her out of it, although I had nothing but these hands to do it with!" Here he extended towards her his slender, white hands. "And I tell you, moreover"—here his voice lost its fury, and fell to a low, sullen, resolute tone, that held even more of menace in it—"I tell you that if I were lying on my deathbed, and I felt that that girl were slipping away from my grasp, I would take a knife and shed her blood, drop by

drop, rather than let another man win her."

All the lazy effeminacy, which Sir Peter had fancied he had detected in the man, had disappeared now. His eyes flashed, he set his teeth over his last word. Madge, as she stood silently facing him, took the measure of a man relentless, cruel, and of iron purpose, and said to herself that he might well figure as the embodiment of the forlorn girl's pursuing destiny. Her indignation would find voice for itself:

"You call that love!" she cried. "A selfish, cruel passion, that would sacrifice everything to the desire of possession!"

He bowed low.

"In England you may call it by another name; but, believe me, in Italy it is what is known by the name of love!"

"And you think that such love as that would bring happiness to you—to Miss McIvor?" she queried impetuously.

He eyed her keenly for a moment. Then a slight smile curled his lip, and he met her question with another:

"Tell me, madame, are you very much interested in procuring happiness for Etelka, or is it the happiness of the Signor Lance you are thinking of, that you thus refuse to tell me where my affianced wife is to be found?"

Madge was staggered by this directly personal appeal; also, she did not feel inclined to admit his right to make it.

"I decline to answer that question," she replied coldly.

He was in no way disconcerted.

"If you wish the Signor Lance to marry Etelka," he went on, "no doubt you do well to keep her hiding-place a secret from me. But supposing"—here his voice sank to an insinuating tone—"that you did not wish the Signor Lance to marry my affianced wife, all you would have to do would be to tell me where she is to be found, and the Signor Lance would never hear of her more."

He said the last words with a slow emphasis.

Madge felt as if the pulses of her heart for a moment ceased beating. So, then, she was to be called upon to fight all over again the battle which had nearly cost her her life and Lance his happiness.

The continued gaze of his bold, black eyes became insupportable. She pressed her hand to her forehead, shutting it out; shutting out everything, in fact, except the voice of her own heart, which seemed to tell once more from beginning to end, the

story of her shattered hopes and deathless love.

It seemed as if he read the turmoil of her thoughts. He went on mercilessly:

"But of course, since you wish the Signor Lance to marry her—my affianced wife—you will not do this. No, you say to yourself, 'the Signor Lance is my friend, I will do my best to give him the wish of his heart.'"

He broke off for a moment, then added contemptuously:

"Ah, these cold-blooded fools of Englishmen, who will marry with the hot-blooded daughters of the South! Let them catch a wild bird on the wing, and make it what they call 'respectable' before they try to tame a Corsican girl with a wedding-ring!"

Madge felt as if she must go down on her knees, and pray to be delivered from evil. Was this Count Palliardini speaking? she wondered. In very truth she could have believed that that poor, reckless, passionate Madge, who had loved and hated so desperately, had suddenly taken separate bodily form, and stood whispering her evil suggestions with the Count's voice.

She withdrew her hands from her eyes. In the brief moment that she had hidden them, she had fought as mighty a battle with her own heart as ever saint had fought in cloistered cell.

She looked him full in the face.

"I have given you my answer," she said slowly, decisively. "I cannot—will not give you the information you ask for."

He bowed low.

"Then I must seek it elsewhere," he said. "If you will allow me, I will ring your bell and have that thing—'Fly' do you call it?—which carried me here from your station, brought to the door."

Madge laid her hand impetuously on his arm.

"Oh, why—why will you do this," she cried, passionately, "why are you so hard-hearted and cruel? If you hunt her down in this way, persecute her, make her miserable for life, you will be none the better for it; it won't bring happiness to you."

The look in his cruel, relentless eyes, had convinced her that the only plea likely to prevail with him must be based upon purely personal, selfish grounds.

"Madame," he answered, again bowing low, "I have the honour to wish you good-morning. If you will allow me, I will continue my journey at once. I will prefer to discuss my chances of happiness with the Signor Lance."

A SKETCHER'S NOTES.

A GREAT authority affirms that the love of the picturesque is not more than a hundred years old, and that, till its birth, men were unconscious of natural beauty, or at least unmoved thereby. Buckle refers the slow progress of civilisation, in countries where nature wears her grandest features, to the servile terror they inspired. We see a wonderful and widespread change in all this. Now, crowds of enthusiasts flock to every beautiful spot, many possibly with little intelligent appreciation of what they see, but with pleasure enough, at any rate, to draw them thither. Nature is now being questioned with persistent keenness from her highest pinnacle to her lowest deeps, and generally with the reward of success. As is very natural, those who see wonderful or beautiful things wish to prolong, and at will to revive the pleasurable sensations they give. Both science and art are in an amicable league to render this practicable, and any one ordinarily deft-handed can secure and carry home accurate impressions of what he sees. Photographers at every turn are setting up their cameras and taking dry-plate impressions to be developed on reaching home; and the process is so facilitated by portable apparatus, that there is no wonder its devotees multiply and are grown practically ubiquitous.

But the sketcher carries the palm against all comers; and, if he is only moderately skilful, photographers are out of court altogether when his work appears. Not only does he add colour to the picture—an immeasurable gain—but he has all the resources of selection, of effect, and of atmosphere at command. Whilst the photographer must take everything as it stands, be it good or bad, the artist ignores all that is objectionable, paints only what is essential or pleasing, and, above all, calls to his aid all atmospheric influences, all the blendings and oppositions of light and shadow—the secret of picturesque treatment. Of course such sketching is difficult; no one knows how difficult till he has tried a hundred times, and, failing but trying once more, succeeds at last to his infinite delight and ample reward.

One morning, on my way to my sketching ground, I encountered a very pleasant-looking gentleman, who was bent on a chat, and, as I was accoutred for a day's painting, the talk naturally flowed in that direction. "Turner was an old friend of mine,"

said my interlocutor, "and one day, as my niece, who is an ardent sketcher, had got into what artists call a mess with her drawing, and vainly struggled to get out of it, I said, 'My dear, Turner's annual present of game is due; John shall drive you over to his house, and you shall ask him to help you out of your difficulty.' 'Ah, madam,' said Turner, on the case being put to him, 'I see, you want to get at my secret. Well, I'll tell you what it is—it's d—d hard work!'"

My first serious attempts at sketching were made at the then headquarters of painters, Bettws-y-Coed. "But ah, for the change 'twixt now and then!"—in those days the "Oak Inn," our headquarters, was a little roadside public, with one original sitting-room, to which a second had been added for the special use of the artists, who, following David Cox, began to visit the place in numbers. This inner room was called the artists' room, and was kept strictly for their use, any daring interloper being speedily warned off.

I had the good fortune to be at once made free of the craft; was most kindly aided in all my difficulties; was initiated into all sketching mysteries; and my work was patiently and generously examined and advised on; indeed, I "got on" capitally with my artist friends, and found great encouragement in my work. But Bettws then, redolent as it was of David Cox, and sparsely visited, except by artists, was certainly a very different place from what it has since become. The original "David Cox" sign then swung over the humble entrance of the inn; his cartoon of Catherine Douglas ornamented the artists' room wall; the chimney-piece was decorated by other hands—Pettit's principally, I fancy; even the cars of the inn had the royal oak painted on them by the latter artist, who, by a few clever strokes of colour, had also transmuted a stone in the river by the bridge into a dolphin.

The Lledwr had fish in it in those days, and our table was plentifully supplied with salmon daily therefrom, and from the inn's own salmon-trap. Of course, everything was done in homely style; but it was thoroughly comfortable, and as the charge for artists was a guinea a week, we came off very well. Those of the men who worked near home came in to a midday dinner, to which they were summoned by the blowing of a big conch at the inn door.

One of the most popular home subjects, for the newly-arrived sketchers, was a

little stone structure devoted to spinning Welsh wool. It stood some three hundred yards from the inn door, its power was supplied by a water-wheel, and it was called Jarvis's Mill. The scene was at its best when the wheel, in motion, threw its spray all round, a fact well known to "Old Jarvis," with his keen eye for approaching sketchers, who always found the water-wheel splashing away on their approach, and continuing until they had commenced operations. It then had an invariable tendency to stop, and it was discovered that sixpence was the lowest motive power to set it going again.

I had an introduction to that much-respected artist, Bond, who was just then building his house overlooking the Conway, and commanding a magnificent view of the Lledwr valley. Few painted Welsh cottages so characteristically as this able artist, to whose kindness I was much indebted. Only a few days ago I was surprised and delighted to find, in the collection of a Cheshire magnate, a really very beautiful coast scene with shipping full of the richest colour, and every way a most charming picture, from the easel of my old friend Bond. Near this picture were hanging two other reminders of those times and men, in the form of two lovely birch-wood scenes by Du Val, then a very dignified visitor to Bettws.

The "Conway Falls Inn," a little farther up the Holyhead Road than Bond's house, was then an important hostel, almost on an equality with the "Oak." Its artists' room was also gaily decorated by resident men, who thus beguiled wet days, days by no means infrequent there; indeed, I conclude abundance of rain contributes largely to the picturesque in these quarters.

Pettit had just then painted a large view of Foss Novin—now christened the Fairy Glen—done under moonlight effects and peopled with fairies, which probably gave rise to the new name of that wonderful place. Of course, like all young painters, I must try my hand at this most difficult of subjects, and I, too, painted Foss Novin; indeed, I did it twice—once in oil and once in water colour—taking a fortnight to each, intent on detail and finish.

This wonderful ravine was difficult of access in those days. One could only descend its precipitous sides by seizing the young trees and swinging one's self down from point to point, and even that would have seemed impossible had not Bond first showed me the way. And this journey

had to be accomplished at twice, for it was impossible to get one's traps down at a single trip.

The wonderful tumble and hurly-burly of rocks upwards from Foss Novin, passing the Conway Falls and approaching Pandy Mill, is said to be unparalleled in Europe for wildness and rugged grandeur. The scene is too difficult of approach for many to see it, and, as for painting there, that is a very serious matter.

I remember Pettit mysteriously wending his way thitherward day after day for weeks, and nobody could make out what he was doing. At last the murder was out, and he brought home a grand picture, some five feet long, of a scene surpassingly wild and striking. He then made his confession. He had clambered down the boughs and trunk of an oak, to an otherwise inaccessible spot in this wild region, let down his unmounted canvas and separate stretcher by a rope, put them together on the spot, and daily went to his work in this fashion—of course necessarily leaving his picture on the ground—and so plodding on till it was complete. He then had to take the canvas off the stretcher again, once more make a roll of it, hoist it up by his rope, remount it, and carry it off—really a feat new to painting from Nature. The transaction threw the whole community into a ferment, and was the absorbing theme of wonder and conversation for days thereafter.

Every Bettws visitor knows how suddenly the waters of the Llugwy rise after a storm on Moel Siabod, or in the Capel Curig valley, and I remember a great sensation at the village bridge being caused in this way. The bare rocks under and below the bridge are a favourite sketching ground, especially in wet weather, as one of the arches of the bridge is generally dry, and affords capital views both up and down stream. The river, when not in flood, is easily crossed above bridge by stepping over the deep, narrow chasm formed by the shelving rocks in which the stream is ordinarily confined. A painting party were busy on this mid-stream site, and, absorbed in their work, did not notice the rapid rise of the waters till it was too late to recross the pent-up water, now become a raging flood. A sudden cry was raised, the villagers were alarmed, ladders were hoisted over the parapets of the bridge to the rocks below and the imperilled painters happily emerged just in the nick of time. A few moments more, and all would have been inevitably swept away

On another occasion I remember a young enthusiast was painting on a gravel bank in mid river near Jervis's mill, and, absorbed in his work, took no note of the rise of the stream. He suddenly awoke to the situation, but too late to do more than rush through the rising waters to land, leaving his picture to be carried away, whither no one ever knew. Hereby hangs a singular story. The hero of the above incident was a near-sighted and very young man, the son of a manufacturer in a mid-land town, who was bitten by a love for Art, and inclined to make it his profession. He was also an expert musician, and enlivened our evenings by his pleasant songs and clever pianoforte playing. Twenty years afterwards I was staying at the "Belle Vue" at Trefriw, on my summer sketching holiday, when two strangers joined our evening party, and contributed very much to our enjoyment by their unusually excellent music. In the morning I noticed that they were off early sketching. Quite by accident I learnt afterwards that the chief musician, now a bearded man in middle life, was the identical student who so many years before had lost his picture in the flood by Jervis's mill. The father died not long after this loss in the river, and this, his only son, wisely determined to keep on the business as his chief calling, and paint for amusement. He amassed a fortune by trade, and then enjoyed and adorned his leisure by his practice of the sister arts of painting and music to his heart's content.

But the presiding genius of the "Oak" had capacity; its visitors increased; and ere long the little roadside inn had an important addition made to it, and became, as its new importance demanded, the "Royal Oak Hotel." Resident artists still made it their home through the year, and the summer sketchers came again when the fine weather invited them; but the tourists now far outnumbered and outweighed them, and they had to take the second place in official regard. Again the place was enlarged and remodelled, and the coffee-room dinner was thereafter only accessible in a dress-coat, whilst the original guinea a week would not cover more than a day. Meantime the genius of the place had grown into an important and wealthy personage, and retired to enjoy well-earned repose and dignity in the metropolis, and the "Oak" knows me and my kind no more.

Dolwydellan, the station next higher up the Lledwr valley, with a modest and

comfortable hotel, is even richer in picturesque material than Bettws itself. Here river, wood, rocks, mountain, castle, and moor, offer variety enough for every taste, all within easy reach, in exhaustless variety.

Festiniog above, with its matchless river scenery, is within a few minutes by rail, as is Bettws below, whilst Bethgellert is accessible to the west on foot, and Capel Curig to the north-east, Siabod serving as a grand background to the scene from many a beautiful point of view. Then, only an easy walk below Bettws, still on the Conway, lies Trefriw, again a lovely centre for the sketcher, with a comfortable hotel, the "Belle Vue." The Conway here is exhaustlessly picturesque, but occasionally alarmingly wild and overwhelming; in a few hours changing the rich valley into a roaring sea. The little quay here, the goal of the Conway steamer, and the port for two or three coasters, had a strange experience a few years ago during one of these sudden floods. One of the accustomed coasters was at anchor by the quay wall, lying some twenty feet below, when the storm waters began to come down about four o'clock on the summer afternoon. The farmers ran excitedly to drive their cattle home out of the meadows before they were swept off by the flood. Soon all the valley was covered, the hedges disappeared, and still the waters rose as the gloomiest of nights closed in. In the morning the waters had gone down almost to their accustomed level, but the little coaster had been lifted over the quay wall, half on the land and half hanging over the water, though twenty feet above it. There proved no way of getting the vessel off again except by building launching ways and floating her as a new ship, which was done. That, however, was Trefriw in her heroic mood; she is generally very gentle and bland.

The popular features here are Lake Gerioneth, two miles up the mountain to the south-west, and Llyn Crafnant, still higher up the mountain and more to the west, depicted on the wall before me as I write by a fortnight's work on the spot. The Crafnant river, which brings down the waters of both these lakes to the Conway, is the most picturesque of streams, and abounds with falls, those in and just above the village being very fine and having marked features.

The road to Conway from Trefriw possesses inexhaustible material for the sketcher, but it is possible here only to note its most remarkable features. Two miles down is

Dolgarrog mill, a favourite subject with Müller. The stream the now unused mill is built on, is the overflow from Llyn Cwlyd, a very wild and rather inaccessible piece of water, with rocks too precipitous even for mountain sheep, and mostly pastured by Welsh ponies. My presentment of this mill, made famous by Müller, hangs on the wall near my present seat.

A mile and a half further is the grander stream, Porth Lwyd, the outflow of Llyn Eigion, which for vast mossy boulders is very remarkable, and to me memorable, as the scene of my largest outdoor effort which was done mostly under an umbrella, as it rained the greater part of the time—indeed one portion of the work had to be covered by a macintosh sheet to prevent it being rained out, whilst the other was progressing. This work forms my principal mural decoration, and shows no mark of the hazards of its birth. Indeed, these little difficulties are the sketcher's accidents which test his ingenuity and perseverance, and give zest to his work.

Next in order comes Talybont, with a considerable local colony of artists, their doyen Mr. Peter Ghent, who has been painting here for a good number of years, and still finds novel scenes and effects, as the Liverpool exhibitions yearly witness. Hence is a grand excursion to Llyn Dulyn, a gloomy mountain lake which supplies Llandudno with stintless quantities of beautiful water at an enormous pressure. The expedition to Llyn Dulyn is fairly laborious, but it is labour well bestowed. This, too, is the boundary line of the Trefriw circle.

Arthog, two miles up the Mawddach valley, above Barmouth, is another excellent sketching stand. The little brawling river here brings down the waters from the bogs at the north-west foot of Cader Idris, and tumbles over at least twenty picturesque falls before it finds rest in the Mawddach below. There is a very extensive bog lower down the valley, nearly opposite Barmouth, having not only the richest of bog colour, but being also very picturesque with turf-cutters and their huts. Dolgelly above, and the neighbourhood of Llanelydd, on towards the celebrated precipice walk, is capital sketching ground. Some celebrated pictures of Cader have been painted from the neighbourhood of Llanelydd; the most noted one by Wilson. But enough of Wales, where I have lingered too long already.

I do not know a better way of becoming

acquainted with the English Lake District than walking through it; and if that is practicable with two such companions as I had—one a sketcher, and the other a rambler—the tour will be an enjoyable one indeed. Starting from Windermere, Low Wood is within easy walking distance from “Rigg’s Hotel,” an excellent stopping-place at the beginning of the journey. There is a capital view across the lake here, the “Low Wood Hotel” landing-stage making a good foreground, and Langdale Pikes a fine distance. The second day’s journey would be across the ferry, by Esthwaite Water to Hawshead and Coniston, stopping there at the “Waterhead Inn” for a midday rest and a sketch, then by Langdale Tarn and Elter Water, over Red Bank to Grasmere, and to the “Swan Hotel,” if you are not ambitious; if you are, then to the “Prince of Wales.” Grasmere Lake is lovely, and a perfect picture may be had with the boating stage and boats at its head in the foreground, and Loughrigg Fell in the distance. The very opposite view, with Helm Crag as the chief feature, is perhaps almost equal. But we were attracted up Easdale, by Sour Milk Gill to Easdale Tarn, having fixed on a sketch below on our return.

Dr. M., our walking friend, determined on a mountain ramble, and to come to us on his descent not later than five o’clock, when the sketches were expected to be quite done. To our surprise he did not come to us at five, or even at six, and we went working on, but wondering at our friend’s absence more and more. Later still, we were relieved to see a figure we took to be his, and correctly, coming down the shoulder of Silver How; but on his near approach we were alarmed at his condition. His dress was all in disorder, the perspiration had run down his face in dark lines and burst through his dress in great patches, and he had scarcely strength left to crawl further. To our amazement we found he had climbed to the top of Silver How—not at all a formidable climb from the Tarn side—and then had determined to come down the southern face of the mountain, which seemed easy enough from the top. But he soon got entangled in bogs, and then had to clamber down steep rocks, till at last he could get no further, and found it impossible to return. But the case had become desperate, and what appeared impassable precipices must be attempted, for night was coming on, and he was some two difficult, if possible, miles

from the rendezvous. Half desperate, he set forward, scrambling down as best he could, every now and again seizing some twig to steady his descent, and then catching a sapling; swung himself forward, not knowing what was below, whether death or escape. By good fortune, however, and with the most desperate exertion, he did get down all safe and sound, but in the condition described.

After enquiry revealed the fact that this course was really a most dangerous one, and that our friend’s escape was little short of a miracle. The “Swan,” and a comfortable dinner which awaited us there, were more than welcome after the day’s adventures and escapes.

Derwentwater is the queen of the lakes, and my companions enjoyed it to the full, whilst I was cursing “potted char” for, as I believed, my incapacity to care much for a lovely lake, or for anything else in the world. But I had my revenge fifteen years after, by fixing myself for a month at the “Lodore Hotel,” and rifling Watendleth, Lodore, the Boulderstone, Grange, Honister Crag, and Buttermere.

Said Crag has two wonders: an endless crop of parsley fern, and the most dashing, rattling, smoking, breakneck descent of a sleigh, slate-laden, and steered down the perilous track by the legs of the man astride it, from the mine at the top to the level at the bottom; its goal the coach side, and its reward a “pour boire,” from the passengers who are halted to witness the strange and most exciting feat.

But, going back now fifteen years, and resuming our walking tour, after a day at Derwentwater, we returned to Thirlmere, thence crossed the shoulder of Helvellyn, and, descending by the lead mine to Patterdale, we found refuge at the “Patterdale Hotel,” a charming hostelry, and in a lovely situation. This is a paradise of sketchers, for not only is Ulleswater here beautiful, but its banks all around Patterdale are lovely. I sketched the lake head with what I was told was Airey Force in the distance, but which I now doubt. The stream connecting Brotherswater with Ulleswater is well worth the sketcher’s attention, and here I made my last sketch on this most agreeable walking tour. The coach conveyed us to the railway at Penrith, and the day saw us home again.

There is a charm in contrasts, as I found more recently by a visit to Exeter Cathedral, with its singular construction, and its most attractive west front; and

journeying thence I landed at Okehampton, on the borders of Dartmoor. Okehampton contains the most picturesque group of old houses I have ever come across, with sundry other attractions for the sketcher. Dartmoor, I confess, disappointed me, but, like the olive before the wine, it served to give zest to Clovelly, whither I next strayed. And this is certainly the most wonderful old place I have seen or heard of. You drop upon it from a bleak, bare table-land, without an attractive feature, and know nothing about it till you are in the place. And such a place! At least eight hundred years—possibly much more—ago, fishermen squatted here to enjoy the only shelter to be had, landward or seaward, between Padstow and Barnstaple. Their huts multiplied, their numbers grew, and ultimately the oddest of piers rose out of the boulders on the shore, built of those boulders themselves, making safety doubly sure by shutting out the north and north-east winds. The narrow comb in which these contemporaries or predecessors of the Norman Conqueror planted themselves is of very limited extent, and the site was no doubt soon filled with home-grown dwellings, all done in the same style, just adapted to the abrupt declivities and break-neck slopes—slopes steep enough to make the upper side of the structure as much higher than the lower as its foundation is from the roof-tree. So terraces become a necessity at every front, and to make the terraces safe balustrades become indispensable.

This unique medley grew, and has gone on with scarce a trace of modern change for the past thousand years or so; and, no wonder, the village has now no counterpart, much less any rival.

Here I set to work with new zest; but I soon found a curious languor steal over me, and became so limp that I could hardly get along. A little reflection showed the cause and the cure. Clovelly is stirred by no breeze, unless it blows from the east or south-east, which is very seldom, whilst the table-land above is swept by every wind that stirs, and specially by the ocean winds, which have free course over its shelterless face. So the ailment and the antidote were again side by side, and a day spent in the breezy upland corrected one in the pulseless village.

A prosaic, but really important, matter is worthy a few words—the sketcher's outfit. I made great mistakes at first, to my

discomfort and hindrance; but, by frequent revisions, have some time found ease and efficiency in the following arrangements: Easel, three-legged, folding, ash, heaped together when closed, one and three-eighths inches broad over all, three-quarters inch deep, four feet three inches high, made rigid when open by a folding brass clamp; easel-pegs of strong wire, L shaped; a well-made camp-stool, with canvas seat; nine or twelve moist-cake colour-box; a wide-necked, half-pint glass bottle, as water store and dipper, suspended by a string from the easel-peg, with a small sponge attached; the old-fashioned pinboard for stretching paper—sizes, quarter and half-sheet imperial—with a sheet of American cloth outside, as cover; paper, Whatman's "Not," seventy pounds to imperial ream; waterproof shoulder-bag, easily holding imperial octavo sketching-block; white umbrella, second size, with revolving top; a ball of strong string for anchorage of easel and umbrella to stones, as needed; thick soles, and a waterproof coat. This outfit is of the lightest, very portable, durable, and equal to any work to half imperial size. For antiquarian size, or for oil sketches up to thirty-six inches by twenty-four inches, the easel must be a trifle thicker and six feet long. A pair of coat-straps renders all portable.

And, now, I close with a confession. My sketching, and the constant home-painting to which it leads, whilst incidentally filling my house with pleasant memorials of my wanderings, has proved my one unflinching sedative to the inevitable worries of life common, I suppose, to all men. Let me escape to my studio, and I at once enter a region of unruffled calm and peace. Nor are days spent on mountain and river-side less agreeable, for

I love not man the less, but nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the universe and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

ON LYING.

I HOPE the readers of this paper may not misunderstand its motive. To make sure that they do not, it were better to say at the outset that the light reflections which it embodies are wrought in a foreign city, under conditions which predispose to mild cynicism. Nor must one be frightened at the term "cynic," as if it were, in fact, what to some of us it may seem to be—the

curt definition of a person who sees poison in every viand of "the banquet of life." The consistent cynic is a rare individual; almost, indeed, a mythological monster. And in the humour of cynicism which now and then gets hold of ninety men in every hundred of us, there is a core of nobility which saves us at such a time from feeling as depraved and despondent as the honest and unmitigated cynic ought to feel. With us, the cloud does but precede another glorious glow of sunshine. But the consistent cynic never acknowledges the sun, and finds his largest satisfaction in the gloom of a November day, which he does not fail to exaggerate.

I write this paper, therefore, as the expression of a mood merely, not as suggestive of the sober conviction of a lifetime. To-morrow, I shall see nothing but beauty in the broad river, turbid with melted snow, which careers in swift force beneath my windows; nothing but charm in the spring green of the sycamores and vines, in the crimson and white of the blossoms of the fruit-trees, and in the dark stripling cypresses of the gay hill-sides on the other bank of the stream. To-day, however, the dead cats on the shore-shingle are more to me than these graces of living nature.

An Italian has just left me, with an airy lie upon his lips. The stake for which he lied was rather less than threepence, though more than twopence-halfpenny. How should human nature resist the temptation of agreeable and advantageous sins, when the tempted sinner knows as well as he knows anything that he has compounded with his conscience for ninety-nine years or more—that by a politic sacrifice of time in the utterance of Ave Marias at certain altars, or by a judicious investment of "centesimi" on certain occasions when his Church was in pressing need of "centesimi," he has received from the Holy Father of Rome unquestionable indulgence or remission from sin for all the years he is likely to live on this trivial sphere, and with a balance to carry forward for the softening of his spell in purgatory into the bargain?

Of course I have no intention of opening an argument on the question of indulgences. To me, it seems no more susceptible of argument than any other confessedly inequitable human institution. Martin Luther, centuries ago, said what was and is to be said on the subject. Odd that men should so dull their reason when personal

interests are at stake! For one would suppose that even an Italian must now and then think upon the matter, and discern the absurdity of it. It is really no more sensible than would be the offer to a schoolboy, young in his teens, of a large bribe if he will eat an ounce of delectable comfits, or half a pot of jam.

But from the mendacity of Italians let us revert to the kindred characteristic of another people, with whom, too, we ourselves have much more in common.

Is it not a singular fact that the nation which never wearies of eulogising the peculiar truthfulness of its first great man, is also the nation which makes wooden nutmegs, chalk sweetmeats, butter without the aid of cows, deceitful clocks and watches, politicians to whom their country's well-being is of no account, and which has begotten myriads of quacks, or false professors of the divine art of healing?

In his essay on "Heroism," Emerson says: "It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person, 'Always do what you are afraid to do.'" Contrast this with the mode of influence upon the mind of the Italian or the Spaniard, and by different paths one may trace the devourers of indulgences and the literal accepters of sophistical philosophy to the same goal. For one could almost believe that the majority of his fellow-countrymen, and many of our own, have found these words of Emerson's so much to their taste, that they have persistently determined to do what their consciences have impolitically whispered to them that they ought to be afraid of doing; even as the superstitious Catholic gets license to do what he ought not to do by "squaring" his Church and gagging his conscience.

But sooner or later, perhaps, the tide of custom in this respect will turn. The unscrupulous Anglo-Saxon will have learnt to be afraid to be truthful. He will, therefore—if he continue to esteem Emerson—methodically cultivate the habit of truth, and wonder at the misconduct of his forefathers, and their gross ideas of right and wrong. In such odd fashion do virtue and vice cherish each other unwittingly.

Of all the evil inclinations of our youth, surely none seems so easy to combat as that of lying. Yet it is for speaking the truth and shaming the devil that so many of us have had birchings and impositions—cruel thorns to mind and body. Having

been punished for refusing to lie, and being but novices in the casuistry of human life, we, not unnaturally, are led to weigh truth and untruth, and to hesitate about being truthful in the future. The thought of this may well sadden the moralist. But, in fact, such early discipline in the ways of human life is well adapted to wean us from our unprofitable innocence into successful men of the world, if not to make us citizens of thoroughly unblemished conduct.

Viewing the world through cynical spectacles, may it not seriously be asked: "Is there a single profession or trade in which lying, in one or other of its forms, is not, I will not say essential, but habitual?" Indeed, the mere word "profession" smacks of insincerity. A man professes to be this or that. He is not necessarily, therefore, this or that. Hence, "professing Christian" is the stock synonym for a man who prays in church with his lips alone—who is a religious liar, a hypocrite. And, by deduction, we arrive at the sad inference that the conspicuousness of a person's religious profession may even be regarded as the measure of that person's insincerity.

To many people—and, at times, to all of us—the question, "Is all lying culpable?" will, in theory, admit of no uncertain answer. Of course it is, they say. Yet we all know how difficult it is now and then to speak the truth; and that often conscience herself stammers when she ought to advise, and so seems to shirk the responsibility of decision, and leave us to act according to instinct. Perhaps the difficulty may appear evasible by silence. That, however, is often prevarication in one or other of its stages, and does not, therefore, free us from our dilemma.

Imagine, for instance, a House of Commons in which it was compulsory for the various Secretaries of State to give "straight" answers to straight questions!

The rôle of the diplomatist would be eliminated from life were the practice of "double-speaking," which is the essence of it, to be condemned as inexcusably criminal.

It is the same with nations, considered impersonally, as with the chief men or rulers of those nations. To be sure, we may take credit to ourselves for our ancient reputation as a truthful people. Witness the words of Father Paul, that shrewd Venetian diplomatist of the seventeenth century, when he says:

"There is no nation in the world that is a stricter observer of the public faith than the English. And the Kings of Great Britain have not as yet learned this modern lesson of politics—that it is no dishonour to lie for a crown."

But Father Paul, with all his genius, did not know so very much about our internal affairs; nor did he live to diagnose in reality the characters of our luckless Stuart sovereigns.

Again, what physician has not lied repeatedly to his patients' friends and relations? True, his intention is of the kindest, and La Bruyère's dictum, that in the motive alone lies the worth and interpretation of an act, would hold him guiltless in any equitable court of morality. But the untruth is not the less a lie.

Lawyers, we know, are popularly supposed to be, like the poets, "liars by profession," and although this is, perhaps, too sweeping, it is undeniable that the theory is not without some foundation.

Nor does the clerical order of men come off altogether scathless from the test of enquiry into their public service. They sometimes affirm theological dogmas which they do not believe. And, like their medical brethren, they are not slow to utter amiable falsehoods when truth itself seems cruel and cold.

In the career of commerce, a man must be upright indeed who, throughout his course, speaks none but honest words. How the city would dwindle in its numbers, were all they who live in it by chicanery and lying to be precipitated away from it! It may almost be said that the very principle of barter which underlies all commerce, and, therefore, all the wealth and activity of human beings, is suspicious—if not a lie, the first cousin to a lie. The shopkeeper dismisses with ignominy the one assistant, who speaks the truth about his inferior goods; and doubles the wages of the other, who successfully adulterates his tea and sugar, or sells ten ounces of cheese as a pound. The poulterer swears his old fowls are young, and that their plump breasts are naturally plump, instead of the result of ingenious inflation. The fishmonger will try to convince any but the keenest nose that the dull-eyed mackerel on his marble slab was sporting off the Yarmouth coast less than twenty-four hours ago.

Lastly, to turn to the scenes at my door. Can anything be more jarring to reason, more incompatible with truthful conduct,

than the pleading for alms in which so many cosily-clad, smooth-faced, and corpulent Italians, men and women, find their profession, and lightly pass their days?

All this is deplorable; but where is the remedy? Preachers may preach until they melt the very stones of their churches into tears of sorrow; yet, even then, I fear poor human nature will remain human nature. And the preacher himself, exhausted to the marrow with his Herculean efforts, will return, perchance, to his parsonage, and, in answer to his wife's tender questionings, reply that he is not in the least fatigued. That also is a lie, though, of course, not a heinous one.

The truth seems to be this—if one may venture to proffer anything as truth—that even as our existence is mysterious and full of illusion, so it is vain to expect that we ourselves shall stand the test of perfect, crystalline integrity. The circumstances of our life are as harassing as our surroundings are mysterious. Our very recreations are largely illusory. We read novels that are lies, and go to theatres to see dramas that are inconsistent with reality. Since, therefore, human life is what it is, it may safely be said, without incurring the opprobrium of Jesuitism, that there is, and always will be, a difference between culpable and excusable lying. Otherwise, the Oriental who embellishes his every speech with florid imagery of a patently mendacious kind, would be a liar every minute of his talking day; and none of us would escape occasional condemnation. The man who has a noble ideal in his heart may be pardoned for distorting the truth rather than give keen pain to his friend.

After all, a man's words are of less consequence than his deeds. The Decalogue includes but one prohibition of speech to nine prohibitions of action. The son in the parable, who went into the vineyard, notwithstanding his refusal to go, was more praiseworthy than the other son, who said: "I go," and went not. Lord Bacon, who wrote: "There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious," was false to his friend, and perfidious towards his country. Machiavelli, on the contrary, whose "public conduct was upright and honourable," laid down the maxim that "A prudent Prince cannot and ought not to keep his word, except when he can do it without injury to himself, or when the circumstances are as they were when he contracted the engagement."

AT STAITHES.

Oh, beautiful and treacherous! with bright blue,
laughing eyes,
Looking up to the paler blue of northern autumn
skies,
Flinging light foam flakes to the winds, that, chal-
lenged so to play,
Whirl them along the weed-bound rocks that fringe
the lovely bay.

Oh, beautiful and treacherous! great sea I love so
well,
It is but twelve short hours ago, that in tumultuous
swell,
Thy mighty breakers curved and crashed upon the
golden sand,
Thy thunder-music rolled for leagues along the
hollow strand;

And, even now, the crisping waves that rippled to
the shore,
Leaping and laughing, as they loved the helpless
load they bore,
Left 'mid the dark brown tangle, sad tokens, fiercely
won
From the scene of wreck and ruin their last night's
work had done.

The bonnie boats that, taut and trim, sailed out
from Whitby town,
With the sunlight on their net-heaped decks, their
broad sails deepening brown,
Bronzed faces pale to-day to see tossed 'mid the
silvery foam,
Dumb things that say to keen, skilled eyes, those
boats will ne'er come home.

Oh, beautiful and treacherous! this noontide, chil-
dren find
Dear playmates in thy tiny waves, fanned by the
soft south wind.
Ere eve, strong hands and hearts in vain may battle
with thy might;
God guard the fearless mariners who sail the sea
to-night!

THE SECRET OF MADDON.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

It was some time after this, that it was found that the key of "The Closed Room," as it was called, was missing from the nail on which it had hung with others as rusty and disused as itself. When or how it had disappeared could not be ascertained, and its loss was only discovered by accident.

Deborah Brand remembered well the last time it had been used, which was when she had had the honour assigned her of showing her new mistress over her new domain, shortly after her marriage with Sir Hugh. She remembered, too, how stiff the lock was, and how hard the key turned in it; and how, when the heavy door at last stirred on its rusty hinges, and they entered, the dust lay so thick upon the floor that her ladyship's small feet left their imprint on the old oak boards. And how she had looked with great curiosity at the old, iron-bound chest

in the corner, and made her read the inscription on its lid, and asked if it was true that it had never been opened once, and that no one knew what was hidden within, and how it came there, and many other questions concerning it. And after that she had inspected the old family portraits in the long gallery, and had paused before the picture of Sir Jonas, and regarded it earnestly with finger on lip, while Deborah related his history, and all that was known of his life and death, not forgetting to mention the legend which reported that it was in that very same suit of carnation-coloured velvet that he had been stricken by the terrible visitation of the time. And the wicked smile on the painted face of the portrait had seemed to deepen and spread while she recounted the tale.

Then she had returned the key to its hook in the dark closet, where it had hung before, but where it now hung no longer. It was gone—missing; but how, and when, and wherefore, it was impossible to discover!

Perhaps the mystery of its disappearance might have been solved if any one could have followed Lady Halliwell about this time, as she mounted the massive staircase and passed through the picture-gallery, where she remained for some moments, silently observing the portrait of Sir Jonas, as he stood carelessly resting his hand upon his sword, and seeming to regard the silent spectator with a mocking smile and curl of his scornful upper lip. And again had followed her as she left the gallery, and, passing through a doorway at one end, and traversing more than one winding passage with closed doors on either side, had paused at last before one, in which she inserted a key.

The lock, which had yielded so unwillingly to old Deborah's gouty fingers, gave way now with but little difficulty, in a manner that suggested witchcraft or the recent application of an oiled feather. The time which had elapsed since the door had last been opened had added an extra thickness to the layers of dust which lay on floor, and wall, and window-ledges. But, gathering up her silken skirt in her hand, she hesitated not to enter, nor forgot to carefully close and lock the door behind her.

And if the same supposititious individual could have peered through the keyhole, or by any means, legitimate or otherwise, have penetrated with his eye the solid oak

door, he would have seen the same haughty dame, kneeling among all the dust and grime of years upon years, regardless of the consequences and the damage done to her satin and brocade, in front of a massively carved chest, and running her delicate, taper fingers in and out and all over its clumsily moulded ornamentations; pressing every knob or projection, and examining every inch of its worm-eaten surface, with the closest scrutiny, and a patience unaccountable and unprecedented. Then, at last, after an hour or so spent in this employment, she rose with a half-weary, half-angry exclamation and muttered: "I must stay no longer or I shall be missed; but I will come again and again, and never rest until I have learnt the secret of the spring, and what lies hidden within!"

The two brothers grew up to manhood, being in their several ways as handsome a pair of young men as one would wish to look upon; and year by year the dark look in the face of Lady Isabella grew deeper and more fixed. She was never in the least degree, outwardly, unkind to her step-son, though she bit her lip and clenched her hand when the country people dropped their curtseys, or pulled their forelocks in salutation to "th' young Squoira." There was nothing in her demeanour towards him to cavil at, except her coldness—but she was as cold as a statue always, unless when under the dominion of one of her sudden outbursts of temper—and to every one, except her son, Anthony. And when her eyes fell upon him, or her hand touched his, the statue became a living, breathing, loving woman, though proud always, as proud as Lucifer, with the pride which cankers the heart!

With regard to Reginald himself, he admired his step-mother exceedingly for her grace and beauty, for she was a beautiful woman still, at more than forty years of age; but there was no particular affection for her on his part, and he eschewed her company at all times in favour of that of old Deb—who was a very old Deb now, and whose one great hope and earnest desire of living to see her young master's coming-of-age, was not destined to be gratified. She died honoured and full of years, but much troubled in her mind, towards the last, by a premonition, that in one shape or other some mischance would befall her "young Lord," as it pleased her to call him, when she was

gone, and could no longer watch over him with her failing sight, and guard him with her palsied hands. It was observed that for some time after the death of Deborah, Lady Halliwell wore a brighter look, and trod with a lighter step than she had been wont. But the festivities in connection with the coming-of-age of the elder son were fated not to take place, for the old, faithful serving woman was followed to the grave in the same year, and within a month of his son's majority, by her old master, Sir Hugh, who died in consequence of an accident in the hunting-field, and Sir Reginald reigned in his stead.

Sir Hugh was deeply regretted by all who knew him, for he was a careless, good-natured soul, with a ready hand and open purse, who, if he accomplished no great actions, committed no mean ones. Nobody, but he himself, knew whether he had been disappointed in his second marriage, or if his wife's undoubted beauty had compensated for her cold and haughty disposition. On his death-bed, his glazing eye sought hers, and his stiffening fingers closed over hers, as he tried feebly to lay them in the hand of his elder son, while his younger knelt in an abandonment of grief beside him. Presently, with a last effort, he raised his head from the pillow, and gazing on the two he loved best, exclaimed: "Isabella—Reginald—my son! your mother!" as though he would commit each to the other's charge, and then fell back and died.

This, at any rate, was the meaning the new baronet attached to the action, and the courtesy and consideration with which he considered it his duty to treat the widowed Lady Halliwell, was the subject of admiring comment to all who came in contact with them.

A year passed, during which time, every day at a certain hour, Lady Isabella retired to her oratory—which had been fitted up for her according to her traditions, soon after her first arrival—to pray. At least, as she invariably gave orders that on no account was she to be disturbed, such was considered to be her pious occupation; though, strange to say, she often emerged from her retirement with a baffled look upon her face, as though her prayers had given her but little of satisfaction or relief.

But at last, one day, when the first year of mourning for Sir Hugh was over and completed, she appeared, after a longer absence than usual, with a flashing eye and

heightened colour, and an air of hardly-concealed triumph about her, which caused her son Anthony to exclaim with filial pride and affection:

"Why, mother, how handsome you are to-day! But how is this? Your gown is covered with dust, and there is actually a cobweb on your sleeve."

And indeed her black velvet robe was sadly smirched and soiled.

"Ah, yes, true! But what of that?" she replied, pushing him hastily from her with a confused look. "Listen, both of you. I have been looking through the old armoires in the tapestry chamber, and examining their treasures of lace and brocade, such as were worn by your worthy ancestors, and I have had a wonderful thought come to me"—the turning of her sentences, when excited by any cause, still occasionally betrayed her foreign blood—"which is, that we give a ball, a ball of fancy dress, a masked ball, in honour of"—here she paused, and her thin nostrils quivered as they did only when she was strongly moved—"Sir Reginald here. A birthday ball," she continued, "for we have done nothing yet to celebrate his accession. Let it be given on the night of his birthday—on New Year's Eve—and let him come of age over again; and you and I, my son," and she laughed softly, "will pay our court to him—to the Master of Maddon!" with a graceful sweeping curtsey and a sidelong glance of half-concealed mockery. "And do you and he both array yourselves bravely in the costumes which I have found for you, belonging to some of those good gentlemen whose portraits hang in the gallery above. As for me," she continued with a gesture of resignation, "as the widow of him who has gone before—may his soul rest in peace—I shall but be a looker-on at your festivities. Only let me," and she smiled a bewildering smile, half of command, half of entreaty, and such as the heart of no man could have resisted, still less the youth who felt the charm of the unaccustomed sweetness of her demeanour penetrate to his very soul, "arrange and select your costumes, and feast my eyes on your finery, and watch the gay doings from a distance, and it will content me."

Who could have refused such a request so put, and from such lips? Not a gay, light-hearted young fellow, who, though sincerely grieved and, as he thought at the time, well-nigh heartbroken, at the loss of an affectionate and indulgent father,

yet found the year of mourning uncommonly long and wearisome, and longed to throw off at least some of the outward trappings of his woe.

"I know who will look like a jay in peacock's plumes," he answered with a laugh; "but you, Anthony," laying his arm affectionately on his brother's shoulder, "you, with your black eyes and hair, will make a noble Sir Wilfred, or Sir Marmaduke, or whoever you undertake to personate for the time being."

Lady Halliwell drew her breath hard, as she knew that her end was gained; then, looking at the two, as they stood together in amity and good fellowship, a spasm passed over her features, and, pressing one hand to her side, she murmured to herself:

"I must not repent—not now, it is too late. I must needs go on for his sake—for Anthony!"

If on this day the unseen watcher could again have followed Lady Isabella to the door of the "Closed Room," when she was supposed to be telling her beads and uttering fervent "Ave Marias," and "Pater Nosters," before the carved ivory crucifix in her private oratory, what would he have beheld on this occasion? The same noble lady again kneeling in the dust of the past, and this time before an open chest! But it would have been necessary to have drawn nearer and looked over her shoulder as she, with bated breath and trembling hand, drew forth its hidden contents to the light. No ghastly human remains, no mouldering bones or blood-stained clothes were they; but a ray of sunlight shining through the small, dusty, and cobweb-draped window-panes, showed the rich bloom of carnation-coloured velvet and the shimmer of white satin!

And so the invitations for the masked ball at the Court were sent out far and wide, causing infinite surprise and almost more gossip than Sir Hugh's second hasty marriage, twenty years ago, had done. A fancy dress ball, and masked, forsooth! Here was a pretty state of affairs in a respectable country house, and only a year since the death of good Sir Hugh; 'twas enough to make him turn in his grave! Be sure that foreign madame was at the bottom of it. Notwithstanding which, those who were loudest in their exclamations of outraged decorum, were the quickest to procure themselves some fanciful attire in which they might betake them to the scene of revelry, and there

disport themselves among the motley throng.

It was New Year's Eve, the young Sir Reginald's birthday.

"Strange," he said to himself, as he rose that morning, "that I should have dreamt of old Deb last night. How plainly I saw her, with what looked like a big key in one hand, and she seemed in terrible trouble, too, and kept glancing over her shoulder at something that looked like one of the old family portraits in the background. Good old soul! I believe she would not be able to rest in her grave if she thought ill were about to befall me in any way. Though, what connection can there be between myself, and an old picture, and a rusty-looking key?"

At nine of the clock on the evening of that day, both brothers, in their different costumes, descended the grand staircase arm-in-arm, and laughing loudly, as at some excellent jest. Both were nearly of the same height, in their broad-toed shoes with large roses on the instep; both wore flowing wigs, and both were closely masked.

"Faith, Anthony, that was a capital joke of yours, that of deceiving our lady mother herself; but we must not let her discover the trick we have played her until supper, and the hour for unmasking comes."

They passed on, and gained the great hall, where they were to receive their guests, who soon began to arrive—and wondered much which of the twain who bade them welcome was Sir Reginald, and which Mr. Anthony, so well disguised were they—excusing the absence of the lady of the house, who would, however, watch the dancers from the old musicians' gallery at the back, unseen but seeing.

Then the music struck up, and the dancing began, though there was no ceremonial or observance of precedent—all was freedom and jollity.

"Good Heavens!" said one of the elder guests, attired as a Venetian Senator of the sixteenth century, to another in the guise of a Capuchin Friar, "do you see him in the velvet and satin, and hat looped with an emerald? Gad! 'tis the very moral of the portrait of the bad Sir Jonas himself, silver-hilted sword, gold-laced cloak, and all."

"That," replied the other, "is either Sir Reginald or Mr. Anthony Halliwell—I know not which, as he is masked—but 'tis one or the other; and, as you say, the likeness in every detail is remarkable, and

almost makes one shudder, as though the dead man were himself present among us ; for it might be his very portrait without the frame, and with the addition of a mask to hide the features !”

They passed on, and were lost in the crowd ; but the remarks thus made were taken up by others, and repeated from one to another, until all were made acquainted with the fact of the remarkable resemblance borne by one of the two young men to that least worthy member of the house of Halliwell, who had died more than one hundred and fifty years before.

It was within a few minutes of midnight, when the unmasking was to take place, that the lonely watcher in the minstrels' gallery noticed a slight disturbance in the hall below. The dance which was in progress gradually came to a stop, and the dancers began to congregate round a little knot of figures in gay attire, near the lofty, old-fashioned fireplace.

“It works—surely it works !” she hissed between her teeth, in fierce excitement ; then, leaving her post in the gallery, she quickly, but with a tremulous step she in vain tried to make firm, descended the narrow stairs and found herself in the ball-room. Suddenly, from the midst of the group by the hearth, there came an awful cry of agony. “Anthony's voice !” she whispered to herself ; and thrusting aside all who obstructed her way, and who instantly gave place on recognising the tall, stately figure in black, she reached what appeared to be the centre of attraction, and where a gentleman in an Elizabethan costume of blue and silver, was supporting the prostrate figure of another in rich, carnation-coloured velvet, and white satin. The former's mask was off, showing the countenance of Reginald Halliwell, pale with anxiety, and bending over the other, whose mask he was also endeavouring to remove, though much hindered by his convulsive writhings and struggles.

“Reginald !” she shrieked, in a tone of voice, which those who heard it never forgot, while her face became like that of a corpse, and her eyes blazed with an awful fire. “Reginald in the blue and silver ! Then who is this ?”

A terrible groan from the sick man made the answer she received half-inaudible.

“It is Anthony, who insisted on changing the dresses and wearing the carnation and white you selected for me, and——” The

mask he had been fumbling, at dropped off, and Lady Halliwell beheld in the prostrate figure her beloved—her only son, with his features contorted with an unutterable agony.

“Mother,” he cried, “I am dying, and I know not why, but my very heart is on fire——”

With a wild, hardly human cry, she threw up her arms. “Stricken ! stricken !” and fell beside him, senseless.

Three hours later, when the last guest had departed, shuddering, from the scene, Anthony Halliwell breathed his last, after suffering torments which no human aid seemed able to alleviate. His mother—after hanging over his dying form, and listening to his long-drawn sighs as they gradually became fainter—when they gently told her that he was dead, flung herself upon the corpse and embraced it in her arms ; and after vainly striving to separate the living from the dead, they left her there.

The physicians, who had been summoned in haste from all the country round, found their skill and knowledge utterly at fault, either to understand the symptoms, or account for the final catastrophe and awful death of one, who, a few hours before, was evidently in perfect health. Examination had shown nothing beyond a green spot under the left arm, and a hardening of the flesh round about it.

“Gentlemen,” said the oldest of the three doctors present, and one who had the credit of having studied profoundly in the oldest and most legendary branches of his profession, “if Mr. Anthony Halliwell had died a century and a half ago, or more, I should probably have known to what to have ascribed his death ; as it is, I can only say he died by the visitation of God !”

When they came at last to take away Lady Isabella from the dead body of her son, she laughed in their faces, and went willingly, a hopeless and incurable maniac, who knew nothing and recognised nobody, and stared when they spoke to her of Anthony.

“Anthony,” she repeated. “Who is Anthony ? I know no Anthony—let us go and feed the ducks !”

Sir Reginald, after engaging suitable attendants for her sad state, and assigning her a set of apartments for her use, shut up the rest of the Court and went abroad for some years, until the memory of the terrible events which had happened there

had, in some sort, lost its freshness and reality.

One day, the mad woman managed to escape the vigilance of her attendants. They sought her trembling, high and low, when at last chance led them to a low-ceiled, ancient room, where the dust and cobwebs lay thick and slab, in the oldest portion of the Court. There they found her, lying dead before a large oak chest. It was quite empty, and on the lid was carved in Gothic characters :

Who opes this cheste,
Shall curse hys queste.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS.

AMONG the cheerful things which help to brighten the proverbial dark, dull days before Christmas, are the glowing pictures that adorn every hoarding, and announce the forthcoming crackers of Christmas. When you see a huge poster, depicting a laughing Cupid shot forth from a huge cracker, while harmless lightning plays about the scene of the explosion, the sight may awaken recollections that go to justify the truth of the allegory. Did not your flirtation with the fairy Paulina somehow hang fire till that fortunate moment when, with charming trepidation, she consented to pull a cracker with you after supper? No matter that the affair after all ended in smoke; that was not the fault of the cracker.

Or it is some venerable greybeard, who stands and regards an equally familiar picture of the youth and maiden of a period that may be roughly placed between the Battle of Waterloo and the accession of her present Majesty. "Just such a frill I wore to my shirt," he may say; "such ambrosial curls were mine, such pumps and silk stockings, and thus I pulled a cracker with that charming Amelia, the belle of the season, by Jove, at the county ball. Ah, there are no such girls nowadays, either for sense or sensibility."

Perhaps not, indeed; but the crackers are better, it must be allowed.

Yes, there must have been crackers in the days of the Regency. Florizel must have pulled crackers with Perdita. Were not the "Cosaques" in Paris just then? Those rude warriors from the banks of the Don had watered their shaggy steeds in the Seine, and the Parisians, taking them not quite seriously, packed them up into

crackers and discharged them at dances and banquets in a harmless fusillade.

Truly the cracker is not an affair of yesterday. Its origin may be sought in the mists of antiquity, and, in pulling a cracker, we perform one of those charming little Pagan rites that belong to the cult of youth and love, and of banquets crowned with roses. And, as we hear the crackle of the festive cracker about the tables, where the young people are feasting, with cries of feigned alarm, the merriment and mummery that follows, who can say that the cracker has not its own considerable rôle in the world?

But the cracker of other days was but a small affair after all, wrapped up in what seemed like scraps of coloured wall-paper. It often missed fire, and there was nothing within but a bonbon—"pas trop bon"—and a scrap of doggerel, whose eccentric spelling bespoke a foreign origin. At the present day the cracker is an "article de luxe." Above all, it must please the eye; the boxes that contain it, the manifold wrappings of the firework itself—all must be rich yet harmonious in colouring, so as to enhance and complete the decorations of a luxurious table. And in this way art is brought into the field; and young artists, not yet known to fame, may find a useful patron in the manufacturer of crackers. Nor is the literary part of the matter altogether neglected. If gems of poetry are not to be bought by the gross, at any rate we may have the sparkle of ready wit, and pleasant vagaries in rhyme and nonsense to vary the conventional method.

And yet, while acknowledging the important development of the modern cracker, it is something of a surprise to come upon a great manufactory of crackers, a building of many floors, rising high above the neighbouring roofs, with counting-houses filled with busy clerks; with show-rooms, work-rooms, engine-rooms; with hoists, and lifts, and cranes outside swinging great bales of crackers into carts and railway vans. We are among "the sweet walks of Moorfields," and not far from that causeway that once crossed the watery waste of Finsbury—a region once noticeable for its three windmills, which have given a name to Windmill Street hard by, and for the isolated chapel, where worthy Mr. Samuel Wealey first held forth—a chapel built upon the site, and, as it were, out of the ruins of the old cannon foundry of Moorfields. Nowadays the region has become the site of ware-

houses and factories, and commercial establishments of various kinds, and such as are left of the solid red-brick houses of the substantial citizens of other days are turned into coffee-houses, lodging-houses, or workshops.

Of the present era, entirely, is the manufactory we have come to visit, with long, well-lighted, and well-ventilated rooms running from end to end of the building. In all there are thirty-five floors to be visited—that is, seven distinct buildings, each of five floors. But a portion of these is devoted to general confectionery, with which we are not at present concerned. There is enough to give us a good breathing in the part devoted exclusively to crackers and their belongings.

Down beneath the level of the street the steam-engine is at work, and shafts and drums revolve with a continuous hum, and endless bands convey the engine-power from one floor to another. Here is a complete printing establishment, with lithographic colour-printing, where huge cylinders revolve, and pictured sheets are evolved, tint after tint, by the patient machine. The coloured pictures are chiefly for the boxes which contain the crackers, boxes destined to heighten the Christmas decorations of shop-windows all over the world, and to grace as well the tables of the opulent as the Christmas treat of the poor workhouse children. And under this last head it may be noted that the benevolent contribution of our firm of cracker manufacturers for the forthcoming treat to the children of the poor in London, is a handsome parcel of some twenty-five thousand crackers.

Amongst the machinery for cutting and fringing the outer cases of the crackers, is a clever, simple device of a couple of steel rollers, which fringe the ends of the sheets of coloured gelatine that so gaily adorn the outside of the crackers. Many other labour-saving contrivances present themselves, but still the greater part of the actual business of putting together the crackers is performed by hand; and some three hundred people are at work in various departments of the factory, of whom the chief part are young women. Indeed, one of the most pleasing sights in the establishment is the immense work-room, with its long tables stretching from one end to the other, where circulation is difficult from the great piles of materials and boxes of finished work. And seated at these work-tables—standing if they

please—or moving about from place to place, is a throng of girls, nicely dressed, and by no means wanting in personal attractions, who are all busily making crackers.

Here for the first time we come upon the central feature of the affair, the cracker itself; that is, the thing that cracks, or the cartridge, it might be called, to avoid confusion; the two slips of cardboard, with an infinitesimal morsel of fulminating powder between, the pulling asunder of which brings about the mimic explosion, with the thunder and lightning on the same diminutive scale. Now this manufacture belongs to "fireworks," and is conducted elsewhere; the finished article alone finds its place here, and one of the first processes in the evolution of a cracker, conducted by a portion of the swift and neat-handed young women already alluded to, is to paste the ends of the cartridge to the inside of the wrapper. If the cracker misses fire now, it will be for want of a straightforward pull. Girls used to have the way of shutting their eyes, turning aside their heads, and giving a kind of desperate circular wrench to the affair that often caused a misfire. But the latest improvement is a linen-faced material for the ends of the cartridge, which will resist transverse pulls, and may be trusted to bring off a shot, if anything will.

The loaded wrappers are passed into the hands of other young women, each of whom, with piles of such papers before her, as well as of the glittering outer shells of gelatine, arranges them deftly with one hand, while in the other she wields a brass tube upon which the cracker is to be moulded. A quick turn of the wrist, and presto! the ornamented wrappers are rolled round the tube, so that they project at one end some inches beyond the tube. Into this projecting roll is thrust a stout wooden cylinder just far enough almost to reach the end of the brass tube, but leaving a little space between, round which with a dextrous twist, the young woman passes the end of a string, which is pulled tight next moment, and behold, the cracker is fairly "choked." Notwithstanding this choking it must be made to swallow its appointed charge, which may be anything in the world almost—a doctor's hood and gown, such as Portia might have worn; a jester's cap and bells; or a terrier pup, in china; or a balloon, or Professor Baldwin's latest parachute; anyhow, whatever the charge may be, toy or trinket, garment or gimerack,

it must go down the throat of that magic tube, and then with another dextrous twist or two of string, the cracker is complete. All this is going on in twenty different directions, and as the piles of glittering trifles increase in volume, so they are carried away, sorted, examined, boxed up, and packed away, to come to light once more—in festive scenes no doubt, but whereabouts within the four corners of the wide world, who can say? For our crackers travel to every part of the globe, and their cheerful fusillade follows the roll of the British drum, as the *réveillé* follows the blush of morning all round the world.

It is a charming employment for young women, this making of crackers—everything is clean, and dainty, and pretty about them; there are no noxious fumes or extremes of temperature to contend with; and it is a labour light and pleasant, to which the nimble fingers alone are wedded, and which leaves the mind free and unruffled. The girls seem happy and light-hearted enough, and knowing that the faster their fingers fly the more satisfactory will be the weekly reckoning, their pretty fingers do fly with a will. Is there fog and gloom without, and darkness brooding over the City? The cheerful rows of lights, the brilliant colours, the smart coquettish costumes, the life and movement of the scene, keep everything in tune here and drive dull care away. In the sludge and mud of the streets, amid reeking omnibuses and dripping umbrellas, who would think that such a pleasant scene were visible behind the plain, substantial walls of this factory of fairy trinkets?

"But there is an immensity of detail about this business," remarks the chief of the establishment, no other than Mr. Tom Smith, a name tolerably familiar to the public in this connection. Yes, there are cares upon cares in catering for the amusement of a volatile public—to keep up the supply of novelties and devise always something fresh and taking to pass within the narrow round of a Christmas cracker.

And a wonderful sight are the stores where are kept an infinite variety of the infinitely little! The toy-shops of all Europe contribute to the stores of these almost microscopic wares, and thousands of gross of tiny objects come from Japan. Here are all kinds of Japanese trifles—real *bric-à-brac* in their way—tiny cups and saucers, jars, and dishes, sweet little

fans, marvellous umbrellas, swarms of grotesque little animals, mostly with a touch of that aly humour with which the Jap can invest the smallest production of his or her patient fingers. Or if it is jewellery that is in question—what wealth of rings, wedding-rings, posy-rings, and others that glitter with diamond, ruby, and emerald; what brooches, what necklaces of pearl and coral; the pretty toys of Nuremberg, the nicknacks of the Black Forest, the trifles from the mountain land of the Switzer!

Now the fancy takes to conjuring business, and thousands of little boxes appear with thousands of yellow half-guineas, which appear and disappear according to the will of the necromancer of the occasion; or jagged nails that seem to pierce the finger and that yet leave no wound behind. Or is it chiromancy that is the question—here you shall find the art and mystery of that fascinating science—dangerous in its way when bright eyes are concerned in telling fortunes beneath the Christmas mistletoe. Or if martial deeds delight, behold in tissue paper all the distinguished head-gear of the British army; the modest infantry shako; the fierce busby of the artillery; the lancer's complicated cap; the helmet and nodding plume of the bold dragoon. For young gamblers there are cards and dice, tops that spin and sing, and little toys of every description. It would be easier, indeed, to set forth what is not, than what is, to be found in these wonderful store-rooms.

But whatever of new or strange may be looked forward to in the Christmas cracker of the future, one thing is and probably ever will be indispensable—the sweetie may, perhaps, eventually disappear as an obsolete survival, but we shall always surely have a motto. No, there is not a poet locked up in the establishment bound to produce so many yards of mottoes per diem. There are poets enough at large to keep up the supply. The simple sentiment of other days is only now brought forward "*pour rire*." There must be a touch of cynic humour, an atmosphere of easy badinage about your Christmas cracker. There have been motto competitions, and there may be more hereafter. The existing stock of appropriate flowers of poesy is by no means a small one, and there is a growing taste for the infinitely little in matters poetic, which promises well for the future literature of the Christmas cracker.

Last scene of all is the gaily-decorated showroom where, in handsome glass cases, repose the pattern crackers of the coming season in all their brilliance and glitter. Would you know what the Christmas novelties are to be? Are they not announced on every hoarding, on the walls of railway stations, in the corridors of hotels and public buildings? Wherever you go you can hardly fail to meet with a reminder of the coming glories of Mr. Tom Smith's famous crackers.

It is something of a disillusionment to leave the scene of all this pretty manufacture, and to come once more into the crowded, muddy streets where all the world is hurrying along with anxious, careworn looks, to which such lovely things as crackers seem as foreign as possible. But Christmas will show another sight. Then the children will be in the ascendant—dainty little figures that might themselves have come out of Christmas crackers, will be driving here and there, where bright scenes await them, the ball, the supper, the feu de joie of crackers, a masquerade of quaint paper costumes. Or it may be a family dinner, slightly heavy from bounteous Christmas fare and the gloom attending the meeting of loving relatives, where the box of crackers infuses a new spirit into the assemblage.

"What a terrible scrape I got into through pulling crackers with you, Maria," observes John; and Maria shakes her head wistfully, as if not quite certain whether to ban or bless the occasion alluded to. But the young people are not to be warned off by the experience of their elders. They, too, must struggle playfully for those dreadful mottoes, that are far from embodying the results of a wise experience. There are still jolly supper parties, too, no doubt, where corks pop, and the girls are full of fun, and laughing eyes and smiling lips look doubly dangerous under the quaint head-dresses that have fallen to them from the Christmas crackers. And, pull away as much as you like, the cracker leaves no headache behind it. The utmost excess in crackers will involve no visit from Dr. Jalap next morning, it will not leave your face as yellow as a guinea and your eyes sunk into the recesses of your forehead. No, such pleasure as the cracker may bring us, is altogether pure and unalloyed, and it may be that you will preserve some little toy or trinket as a souvenir of some of the happiest moments of your life.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

BY C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XL

WHEN her enemy had gone, Thora's strength gave way. It had never occurred to her that the Troth of Odin did not form a valid marriage ceremony. She had grasped the French law which left it unrecognised while Gaspard's mother protested against it, and that knowledge, though it had been only the shadow of a sin, had embittered her life; but it was a different matter from realising that neither in France nor England—nowhere in the wide world—was she Gaspard's wife. Mr. Traill's opinion of the old Pagan bond had been so universally looked upon as a mere eccentricity, that she had never, till she read his letter to Madame Harache, which explained the legal aspect of the question fully, thought for a moment that it had any basis in law or truth. It was the minister's notion that the Troth of Odin should be supplemented by a religious ceremony conducted by himself; but no one whom Thora had ever heard speak of the subject—it is true that these were only old Osla and some of her cronies—had ever regarded this ceremony as more than supplementary. If they in their ignorance did indeed perceive that it was essential in the eyes of the law, their manner of speaking of it had conveyed no such idea to Thora's childlike mind. A girl of quicker wit might have surmised that there was something more than mere prejudice in the minister's aversion; but Thora, in spite of her self-will, took all her notions of life and its relations unquestioningly from the ignorant old Shetland woman. She looked upon the minister as learned, but she held Osla to be the wiser of the two.

There could hardly be a less subtle woman in the world than Thora Sweynson. She accepted the statements of those whom she had the habit of trusting as fixed verities; she would not question the fitness and fundamental right of the world's laws, nor argue the justice of their bearing on herself, as one of a more analytic temper might have done. If she could have put herself sufficiently outside her own situation to have reflected on her innocence, her implicit belief that she had acted virtuously, if she had been able to separate

intention from result, Thora might have been a shade less miserable during the hours that followed Sophie Meudon's departure. But though she had borne a bold front to the Frenchwoman, had flung her back scorn for cruelty, and had for the moment claimed to stand in the better position of the two, now that she was alone she could think only of the fact that her marriage was no marriage; and that, in the world's eyes, she was no better than a castaway.

It might be cruelty of the vilest kind in Sophie to come to her with the evidence of her false, miserable position; but that position was not of Sophie's making, but her own; and however unconscious her error had been, it was to others, and even to herself, as if she had sinned. A woman is married, or she is not; if she lives with a man to whom she is not married, she is living in sin. These were the plain facts which Thora comprehended, facts which could not be made to waver in her vision by any question of ignorance or honest intention. She had kept her self-respect intact through the slights and injuries she had met with at Havre, because she thought the custom of her own country proved her cause just and honourable. When that failed her, it seemed to her that she was indeed a sinner.

The thought sickened her, maddened her. She was vile in her own eyes. It seemed to her that she could not meet even Gaspard's glance again; for even if he were all that Mr. Traill had said, if he had wilfully led her into evil, Thora was too much of an average woman to judge a man as she did herself. His might be the greater sin in the eyes of Heaven; but Heaven does not seem very near to a trouble like Thora's, and the world, which condones everything to a man and listens to no plea for a woman, is very close. Even Gaspard, it seemed to the woman whom Gaspard had brought to this pass, even he had the right to scorn her.

But the thought of Gaspard raised a question in Thora's mind which roused her for a moment to something different, if not apart, from the bare facts of her misery. Did he know that there was no legal tie between them? It would be difficult to say if it was to Gaspard's credit, or discredit, that after the first second of bitter doubt Thora came to the conclusion that, like herself, he had been deceived. His manner to her was not, either in its quiet

patience or in its occasional, almost equally quiet, tokens of irritation, that of a lover who clung to her for passion's sake; and she knew that he had lost so much by cleaving to her, that she thought he would have left her had he been sure that no claim of hers upon him would have held good anywhere. She believed that he looked upon her as his wife; so bound to her that to desert her would be criminal, even though his people ignored and slandered her. Legal claims were supreme in Thora's eyes, as they are in those of most women. Her imagination could not yet grasp a tie beyond the limits of the law.

She thought that Gaspard did not know he was free; and this thought brought her face to face with the question—should she tell him of his liberty? If she did so she gave him power to leave her poor and friendless—a beggar in purse and reputation. It was suicidal to share the knowledge with him; and yet the girl's pride rose against keeping Gaspard bound to her by a lie. And the consciousness that she had as yet sinned only in ignorance, came to tell her that she would touch a new degradation if she now consented to her own shame. And yet—to give up her claim to Gaspard was to condemn herself to starvation, only to be escaped by worse evil than she dared think of yet.

"Oh, Heaven! What can I do!" she cried. "There is nothing but sin and misery for me wherever I look!"

She sat crouched in a corner of the room for hours, till all power of reasoning as to right and wrong passed from her; and she could tell only that she was wretched. She heard the clock strike once or twice without heeding it; but at last it roused her to the remembrance that Gaspard would soon be home, and that she had not prepared his evening meal. She had not much of a housewife's pride in general; but to-day she roused herself with the feeling that "whatever she was"—poor Thora!—he should not have it in his power to say she had neglected his comfort.

She tried, too, to look as like her usual self as possible. She had formed no plan of action; she could not formulate in her mind a single word to utter to him; but this unpreparedness made it the more essential that she should not betray the appearance of any new emotion having come to shake her languid calm.

She might have been changed greatly without attracting any notice from Gaspard. He was tired and worried—angry with

himself for the thoughts and memories which had arisen in him since he had seen Sophie Mendon the day before. A man must be very strong before he can wholly turn his back upon the might-have-beens of life; and Gaspard was no hero—only a man who was trying to do his duty, conscious all the while that it took all hope and gladness from him. He had no rapture of martyrdom to sustain him through the endless round of daily toil—such rapture is for moments only, not for years of working days—and looking forward, as youth must by virtue of its nature do, he could see nothing but more and more—perhaps half a century—of such dreary years.

Youth hopes greatly, therefore it despairs greatly. It is always in extremes, and cannot take account of those little compensations—sadly material most of them, it is true—which comfort the resigned cynicism of middle age. All that Gaspard could do was to keep his eyes fixed firmly upon the dusty track Fate had marked out for his travelling, and keep his soul from being misled by any mirage that rose on the horizon. But this mirage had been brought by Sophie Mendon before his down-bent eyes. He could not choose but see it, and, seeing, he was angry that he could not be blind.

So, being, as I have said, no hero, he was fretful and self-absorbed, and did not notice how pale Thora's cheeks were, nor how hollow her eyes; and when she spoke he answered in irritable tones, and complained of the coffee.

Twenty-four hours before Thora would have answered sharply; nay, would have commenced a quarrel by scolding his gloomy looks; but to-day her eyes were opened. She realised all he had lost by his fidelity to her, and forbore reproach. For, though she knew that to be Sophie Mendon's husband would be no great gain to any man, she could perceive that in the man's eyes it might be otherwise. And noting, as her woman's eyes had done unconsciously, the evidences of wealth judiciously spent in Sophie's dress, she realised, as she had never done before, how she had dragged Gaspard below his natural sphere, and pitied him for it more than he, being a man, would have pitied himself.

Sophie Mendon had succeeded in a task in which Madame Harache had failed. She had roused Thora to conscious life and thought. The girl's soul and in-

tellect had been dormant till now, when Sophie's unscrupulous taunts had roused her. She could already look back, with something betwixt pity and envy, on the ignorant girl she had been that morning. Now girlhood was gone; she was a woman who could think and act for herself, looking back and forward so that she might know which way to go.

While Thora cleared away the cups and plates, Gaspard pretended to read a newspaper, keeping it as guard before his knit brows and set mouth. Thora watched him surreptitiously, as she went to and fro, and afterwards, when she had sat down with some needlework in her hand, trying her best to make this evening pass as so many others had done. But it was impossible. All was so changed to her that she could not keep up a semblance of likeness to past days—to yesterday, when the long June evening had been just as bright, and the ripples of the lazy tide had been reddened by the sunset. Before she had decided how to act, before her mind had willed to ask a question, the question had passed her lips:

"Gaspard, if you had known a year ago, when we first met, all that would come of—of our marrying; would you not have left me in Stromness?"

Gaspard looked up in surprise at the unexpected words which echoed so strangely the thoughts that were tormenting him. He glanced at Thora sharply, but her head was bent over her work; he could just surmise the line between the eyebrows that showed strained attention, and he did not see the needle trembling in her fingers.

"Need you ask?" he answered in a harsh, forced voice. "If either of us had known—if any one ever knew the consequences of a folly, who would be guilty of one? 'Si jeunesse savait!' The story is as old as the world, as old at least as Adam and Eve. What does it matter now, whether with our eyes open we would have gone on the same road we took blindfold? That belongs to the past, and it is better not to think of the past; the present and the future which that past has made, are concern enough for us."

She was silent for a few moments; then she said quietly: "The past need not make the future."

"What do you mean?" he asked bewildered.

"I knew—after a fashion at least—that our marriage was not binding in France; but I don't think I realised it thoroughly.

It seemed to me strange, but I supposed it was the law. Now I think I understand it all; I was stupid not to have guessed it before; but at Stromness we never had anything to think of that was at all hard to grasp, and no one had ever taught me anything of life but old Oala. She was ignorant—I see that now—and so she could not tell me that the Troth of Odin was no marriage at all.”

“Thora! How have you learned that?”

“Does it matter how one learns things? I am sure of it now, and you won’t deny that I am right.”

She spoke with a half hope that he might deny it; that Mr. Traill, Sophie Meudon, everybody, might be wrong, and Gaspard still be able to justify her in her own eyes. But he could not.

“No, Thora, I don’t deny it,” he said; “but don’t think ill of me for what I have done. I hold, as I suppose all men and no women do, that the essence of marriage is simply mutual consent and permanence in the bond. After what fashion these are vowed, and before what witnesses, I do not care; these things do not affect the reality of the matter. So, though I knew the Troth of Odin had no legal value, I thought it might serve to satisfy your principles, and it could not affect mine. But don’t think I meant wilfully to put you in a false position. My mother’s consent was necessary to any legal marriage, and though she had refused it when I wrote to tell her that I loved you, I fancied she would not continue obdurate if once she saw you, and knew that I had brought you home with me as my wife. I did not know my mother, Thora; I did not think a woman lived who would condemn another to misery. I trusted in her womanly tenderness and in her love for me, and both failed me. You know how she acted—within her lawful rights, perhaps—but in a way that made any further communication a treason to you. So I brought you away from Havre, that you might never be insulted again. If, as things are, I have not been able to make your life a happy one, don’t blame me too much. I have done what I could.”

Thora had been sitting silent while Gaspard spoke; but she had not been listening. She had grasped just one idea, one course of action, and clung to it for fear that if she let it go, chaos, madness,

would overwhelm her. Only she recognised that Gaspard’s voice had ceased, and she might speak in her turn.

“I said that the future had nothing to do with the past—at least, for you. You are free—you can leave me, and if you do so, you will regain all that I have cost you.”

Her lips trembled as she spoke. She meant to give advice which, if followed, would leave her desolate beyond endurance; but Gaspard thought she only uttered a fear that he would avail himself of the liberty he possessed, and the idea that the sacrifices he had made for her had not won her trust, angered him.

“You may rely on my never doing that,” he answered, more coldly than he had intended. “We will bear the consequences of our folly together; I will never desert you. I am too conscious that however bad your fate may be with me, it would be worse without.”

Thora made no reply, and Gaspard, thinking he had given her the assurance she wanted, and himself put out of tune by the conversation, came to her side, kissed her head lightly and coldly, and went out, irritated, but not dissatisfied with himself.

Thora’s head only fell a little lower as he left the room. She had learned now all she had sought to know, and though she admitted that Gaspard was a man who, bound by “honour rooted in dishonour,” had acted not ignobly—more nobly than one man in a thousand would act—she was no happier than before. For she saw that he was not bearing the burden of fate with any gladness, and she said to herself: “Though he would not desert me, he would be glad to be free.” And she felt in her inmost soul that he would make use of his freedom to marry Sophie Meudon.

She pictured to herself all that would go with this—“honour, obedience, troops of friends,” a reconciled parent, all needful prosperity—and though she looked on the imaginary scene with some scorn, despising all who took part in it, except Gaspard himself, whom she pitied a little for not seeing how poor and selfish was the regard he had won, she could not but admit that all these things were eminently desirable.

And nothing stood between him and this fortune but herself!

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MADGE for a moment stood like one stupefied, listening to the sound of the wheels, which carried the Count away, dying in the distance. Then she drew a long breath. Yes, he was gone, not a doubt, and there could be no fear that he would ever return to trouble her with his insolent questions and black temptations; but what, she asked herself, would be his next step, what piece of wickedness would he endeavour to set in motion now?

She began to reproach herself, not for what she had done, but for what she had left undone. She had trampled under foot his hideous temptations, she had given a negative to his request—a negative, indeed, so calm and decisive, that any one who heard it might have fancied that she was acting upon a settled plan of action, instead of being at her wits' ends to know what to do for the best. But was the doing of these two things an adequate way of meeting so serious a crisis? Looking back upon her half-hour's interview with the Count, it seemed to her that her pleadings for Etelka had wanted fire and earnestness, and that she had been terribly wanting in common sense to have let him thus depart without getting from him—as she possibly might have done by adroitly-put questions—some definite clue to his movements and destination.

He had threatened to stimulate the energies of the police by the revelation of Etelka's crime; he had said as a parting

word that "he would discuss his chances of happiness with the Signor Lance," and this, of course, was tantamount to a threat of waylaying Lance with hostile intentions. But which of these two threats did he intend to put into execution first? If the former, then he would no doubt go straight from Upton to London or Liverpool, or it might be to Edinburgh—to one of the chief centres of police enquiry, in fact. If the latter, then he would assuredly remain within a short distance of the Castle, on the look-out for Lance.

She rang the bell, thinking that possibly the servant who had shown the Count out of the house might be able to throw some light upon his movements, or, at least, upon his present destination.

"Did Count Palliardini make any enquiries as to trains when he left the house?" was her question when the servant made his appearance.

"None whatever, ma'am," was the reply. "He told the man to drive him back to Lower Upton. He asked me, as he went out, if visitors to the Castle from London or Liverpool must all pass through Lower Upton? Of course I told him 'yes.'"

"If visitors to the Castle from London or Liverpool must all pass through Lower Upton," Madge repeated to herself.

The question seemed to point to the fact that the Count intended to await Lance's arrival at Lower Upton, either to pick a quarrel with him or to dog his footsteps hence, taking it for granted that by so doing he would come upon Etelka's hiding-place.

Madge felt that her course lay plain before her now.

She was willing enough to admit that sooner or later Lance and the Count, as rival candidates for Etelka's favour, must

meet face to face, and that no endeavours of hers could prevent such a meeting. She could only hope that when it took place, Lance's cool courage and common sense might carry the day over the Count's bravado and insolence. It was, however, manifestly to Lance's interest that this meeting should be retarded as long as possible, or at least until after he had seen and pleaded his cause with Etelka.

The one who was first in the field there would be the one likely to win the day—the Count by threats of a criminal prosecution, Lance by the pleadings of his passionate love. Madge knew little enough of the penalty which English law attached to attempts at murder; of the Corsican law on the matter she knew nothing at all. It seemed to her, however, that when the circumstances under which Etelka's crime had been attempted were taken into consideration, together with the Count's object in instituting a prosecution, only a light sentence would be passed on the girl, more especially if weighty influence were brought to bear on her behalf as Lance's affianced wife.

All these thoughts in quick succession passed through Madge's brain. Self was dead in her heart now; all selfish aspirations, hopes, and longings had had their death-blow dealt to them over again, as it were, in that brief moment when, with hand covering her eyes, she had stood listening to the Count's evil whisperings. All her energies were concentrated now on the endeavour to win for Lance the desire of his heart, just as one on a death-bed does his utmost to ensure the happiness of his dear ones in a future in which he himself can never play a part.

Her plan was quickly arranged. She wrote a brief line to Lance, telling him of Etelka's hiding-place, and bidding him go there direct instead of returning first to the Castle. There were strong reasons, she added, why he should do this. It would be easy enough, she knew, for him to get to Cregan's Head from Carstairs by posting direct to Elstree, a bleak little village distant about two miles from the headland below which, on a ridge of low rocks, stood the disused lighthouse.

She said nothing of Count Palliardini's unexpected visit, nor of any one of the bewildering events which had occurred in such rapid succession during Lance's short absence from Upton. The great thing, she felt now, was to defeat the Count's evident intention of either delaying him on his

way to Etelka, or of acting the spy and following on his steps.

Her letter written, she cast about in her own mind for a trusty messenger. Passing over Sir Peter's protégés, one and all, she fixed upon Lance's groom as being not only a discreet person but also a good rider—a consideration this.

She sent for the man and herself committed the letter to his charge, bidding him to take the swiftest horse out of the stables for the nine miles of rocky road which lay between the Castle and Lower Upton. At Lower Upton he was to put up his horse, and take the train to Carstairs; he could just save it by hard riding. At Carstairs he was simply to remain at the station, await Lance, and immediately on his arrival there, place the letter in his hands. Whether Lance came on from Liverpool or direct from London, he must change trains at Carstairs for Upton, and the man had orders to watch all trains arriving from both places.

Madge took the man so far into her confidence as to caution him not in any way to attract the attention of Count Palliardini, who might be waiting about at Lower Upton Station; and still further to prevent such a misadventure, she desired him to change his livery for his plain clothes.

After she had despatched her messenger, she wandered about from room to room, restless, nervous, and ill at ease, occupation of any sort being an impossibility to her.

There was not a soul in the house to whom she could apply for a word of sympathy or counsel. Sir Peter was not likely to get back from his errand of mercy much before nightfall, and Lady Judith, as usual, was down at her farm. The gale of overnight had unroofed a cattle-shed, and had sent down a chimney-pot into one of the poultry-yards, so she had deemed her presence at the scene of disaster a necessity, in order to the safe housing of her short-horns and Houdans.

Madge racked her brains to think whether she could better have expedited Lance's meeting with Etelka. At the time that she had despatched the groom on his errand it had seemed to her that he could not fail to intercept Lance on his return journey; but now, as she thought over things, all sorts of mischances began to suggest themselves.

The fact that Lance had not acknowledged her telegram of the previous day pointed

to one of two things: either that he had not yet returned to Liverpool, and consequently had not received it; or else, that he had decided upon acknowledging it in person by an immediate return.

If the first supposition were correct, he as yet knew nothing of the good tidings concerning Etelka; but most likely, with a heavy heart, was pursuing in London some supposed clue which might lead him far afield, and Liverpool might not see him for days.

If the second supposition were correct, he might have started on his return journey before she had despatched her messenger; in which case it was possible that he and Count Palliardini had already met at Lower Upton.

She scarcely dared to think of the latter possibility; it seemed a catastrophe whose evil consequences she was powerless to avert. But the first difficulty, looked fairly in the face, did not seem insurmountable. It might be that Lance, in the course of his investigations in London respecting Etelka's supposed death, or Mr. Stubbs's false statements, had consulted Sir Peter's solicitors on certain points on which, perhaps, he dared not trust his own unaided judgement. If that were the case, they would no doubt be kept informed of his movements, and would have his latest address. Why not telegraph to them for this, and then forthwith send a second telegram to Lance, repeating the message she had already sent by his groom to Carstairs?

She caught at this idea so soon as it presented itself, wondering over her own dulness in not having thought of it before.

To ensure secrecy in the despatch of her telegrams, she resolved that she herself would send them from Lower Upton Station. It might be that Count Palliardini, if he waited there, had decided upon watching the wires as well as the rails as a possible source of information.

Also of necessity time would be economised by her being on the spot to receive the reply from the London solicitors, and Lance would get his message, at the lowest computation, about two hours the sooner for it.

Madge, at her best, was not a good horse-woman, and her recent failure in health had still further unfitted her for a sharp ride along a rough road. According to all showing, she ought to have been ready to collapse from fatigue before she had accomplished five out of the nine miles

which lay between the Castle and Lower Upton. The exact contrary, however, was the case.

"When the soul is strong the body is strong." With every step her horse took along that steep road a fresh rush of strength seemed to come to her. Even the keen breeze, from which of late she had shrunk, seemed to bring life and energy to her. By-and-by, no doubt, the inevitable reaction would set in, but for the moment she was in the mood in which great things can be dared and done.

"Oh, you!" she said to herself as she rode along, "who once before made it your business to part these two, make it your business to bring them together again, and thank Heaven that the chance of atonement is given to you!"

The afternoon was beginning to wear away; she timed herself for her nine miles' ride.

"Five o'clock," she said, "it must be when I ride past the knoll at the corner of the station road." And five o'clock it was.

At this knoll she dismounted, gave her horse to her groom, and bade him wait for her there. She concluded that she would attract less attention by slipping into the station by a side door, than she would if she rode up to the front.

The wind, which had lulled throughout the day, was beginning to rise now, whistling among the stripped trees and whirling the dry leaves before her in a cloud. The knoll, at which she had pulled up, was crowned with some straggling young hazel trees; the sun had just sunk behind these, leaving a great golden glare, which shone through the delicate tracery of slender rods and leafless branchlets, like some pale fire from behind a wrought-iron screen.

Madge had brought with her a long cloak and thick veil. Before she attempted to enter the station she shortened her habit, and donned both cloak and veil.

The telegraph office was on the other side of the lines. The ringing of the bell and a slight bustle on the ordinarily quiet platform announced the arrival of a train from Carstairs, and she knew the other side could not be reached at present. She judged it best to slip into the ladies' waiting-room till the confusion subsided. This waiting-room, small in dimensions, owned a good-sized window, which looked directly on to the platform; through this she could see all that was going on without running any risk of recognition.

Naturally, as she took her stand at this window, her first thought was: "Where is the Count?" A single glance answered her question. There in the very middle of the platform he stood, in a line with, but with his back towards her window. Among the sturdy country-folk, with their baskets and bundles, his tall, well-moulded figure showed somewhat as a giraffe might show among a herd of bullocks. He addressed a question to a porter who stood near him; the man appeared to answer it in the affirmative, so Madge conjectured that the question might have been whether the incoming train brought passengers from Liverpool.

There followed the usual bustle of arrival and departure. Madge thanked Heaven as the train glided out of the station that it had not landed Lance at the very feet, as it were, of his unknown foe.

There seemed to be a good deal of luggage to be disposed of; some had to be labelled for transit to outlying hamlets by later trains. Evidently for this purpose a small box was placed temporarily immediately beneath the window at which Madge stood.

And now a circumstance occurred which sent telegrams out of her head, which, in fact, reversed all her plans, and sent her in hot haste upon another quest.

The Count came close outside her window, and addressed another question to the man whom he had before interrogated.

Madge could not catch the question, but she distinctly heard the man's reply, "No, sir, he has not come by this train," and she naturally concluded that the Count had commissioned the porter to watch for, and report to him Lance's arrival.

She drew further back into the room, for the Count's large black eyes seemed, to her fancy, to be piercing and searching in all directions. Once she could have vowed that they rested on her window, and she trembled lest her thick veil might be an insufficient disguise. It was not upon her, however, that his eyes were fixed, but upon the box which had been deposited beneath the window, and upon which an address card had been nailed in rough-and-ready fashion. The name on that card had evidently attracted his attention.

Madge, closely watching his face, saw a sudden change of expression sweep over it. Then he took from his pocket a note-book and pencil, and carefully copied the entire card.

A terrible suspicion flashed across her mind. As the Count moved away to the further end of the platform, she crept out of her hiding-place. A single glance at the box confirmed her worst fears; it was addressed to

MISS ETELKA McIVOR,
Cregan's Head,
Near Elstree,
Cumberland.

The writing was big and bold; the label on the box showed that it had come from Liverpool. Madge conjectured that possibly it was some friendly package from "Jessie," the minister's sister, to whose duties at the Observatory Miss McIvor had succeeded, and who, knowing the scanty supplies Cregan's Head could command, had done her best to remedy local deficiencies by kindly gifts from the big city.

For a moment Madge stood as one transfixed. All her elaborate plans and precautions had been defeated by blind chance.

The Count's voice immediately behind her recalled her to herself. He was asking in his slow, mellow tones, which was the most direct way to get to Cregan's Head.

The man so questioned replied that in about an hour's time a train would start for Elstree, a little hamlet about two miles and a half distant from Cregan's Head. There might be the chance of a horse or a conveyance from Elstree, but people generally walked the two miles. The railway journey from Lower Upton to Elstree occupied about an hour and ten minutes.

The Count had evidently changed his plans, and instead of lying in wait at the station for Lance, he intended to set off for Etelka's hiding-place with as little delay as possible.

Madge, in one flash of thought, seemed to see alike Etelka's extremity and her own opportunity.

Etelka suddenly confronted by the Count would most likely say, "It is fate," and yield to his combined threats and entreaties; more especially as she was unaware of the fact that Lance's love for her had not wavered, and that Lance's people were ready to welcome her among them.

The only way by which this danger could be averted, it seemed to Madge, would be for her to reach Cregan's Head before the Count; plead Lance's cause with Etelka; and make light of the Count and his threats—hold the ground, in fact, for

Lance, till he could take it and hold it for himself.

In pursuance of this plan there was evidently not a moment to be lost.

She made a swift reckoning of the time that would elapse before the Count could arrive at Cregan's Head. There would be an hour before the train would start for Elstree, then an hour and ten minutes in the train, then two miles to walk in the darkness in a country he knew nothing at all about. She felt that close upon three hours was scarcely too much time to allow for all this, and that a pair of good post horses might cover the distance in about two.

She threw a furtive glance in the direction of the Count. Gas lamps were being lighted on the platform now; beneath one of these he stood rolling up a cigarette in leisurely fashion. His easy attitude, and the half-scornful, half-triumphant smile which lit up his handsome features, seemed to say: "The road before me is plain and easy now."

With swift feet she made her way out of the station straight to the one inn that Lower Upton could boast.

She lifted her veil and made herself known to the landlord.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Cohen," she said, in answer to the man's look of surprise. "I want to get to Cregan's Head—posting it—within two hours from now. Can it be done?"

The man's face began to lengthen to a demur.

Madge would not let him utter it. "It must be done—it is of first importance," she said, peremptorily. "You know I do not spare my money when I am in earnest about anything."

Yes, he knew that well enough, as did the whole country round for miles.

"Very well," Madge went on, watching the demur die rapidly out of the man's face. "I will give you twenty pounds for every mile of the road your man takes me over if he will get me to Cregan's Head within—mind, I say within—two hours from now; and in addition I will give him twenty pounds for himself. And you must not let a soul in the place know that I am here, or that any one has started for Cregan's Head. I will wait for your horses outside the village, at the knoll beyond the station."

There were of necessity no objections that were worth weighing against such golden inducements. Madge went back

to the little knoll outside the station to dismiss her groom, and to send back a message of excuse to Lady Judith. Within ten minutes from the time that she had given the order at the inn she was being whirled along the country road, that led to Elstree, at an altogether unconscionable speed.

There was no golden glare to be seen in the sky now, it was one expanse of leaden grey, splashed here and there—as if by an angry hand—with sullen red. The wind was steadily increasing in strength.

And it so chanced that at the very moment that Madge was setting off behind her two sturdy, yet swift-footed hacks, Lance, arrived at Carstairs, was reading the letter put into his hands by his groom. It took him about a minute and a half to debate with himself which was the best line of route to be followed, and then he, too, was on the road to the same destination, mounted on the best horse that he could hire in the place.

So here was Etelka's destiny hastening to her that night by three several roads.

THE RASCOL.

PERHAPS we should call the Rascolnik the Russian "Old Catholics," seeing that in 1659, when the Russian branch of the Greek Church, guided by the patriarch Nikon, got up a printed and corrected edition of its mass-book, and made several slight reforms—changing the shape of the cross from what we call "Latin" to that with four equal arms, which we wrongly call "Greek;" ordaining that three fingers should be uplifted in benediction instead of two, and such-like—some stubborn souls stood on the old paths as resolutely as that famous Worcestershire priest who, just before the Reformation, declined to be set right in a manifest blunder, protesting that he "preferred his old 'mumpsimus' to their new-fangled 'sumpsimus.'"

The Russian peasant is not given to dogmatise, but he is wonderfully cantankerous about trifles; and in the middle of the seventeenth century he was vastly less enlightened than his brethren of the West.

To find a parallel to the folly of the Rascolnik, who objected to Nikon's correction of the time-honoured clipping of holy names—that is, Jsu for Jesus; to his ordering processions to move eastward instead of

following the sun's course; to his directing a triple hallelujah in certain hymns instead of only two hallelujahs and a "God be praised," one must come down to the middle of the nineteenth century, when in enlightened England men were ready to tear one another in pieces about whether the parson should preach in surplice or gown, and bow or stand with head erect at the name of Jesus. Men went to prison and helped to send others to prison about the surplice, and the bowing, to the scandal of religion and the filling of the lawyers' pockets. But the Rascolnik went further. Thousands bore the cruellest tortures, and died the most horrible deaths rather than give way about the shape of a cross or the number of fingers to be used when you bless yourself.

They were very ignorant; Russia had gone back, while the rest of Europe was going ahead. Priests and laymen were sunk in the same illiteracy; the priests, knowing no Latin, were thus always cut off from one source of culture, and during the Tartar supremacy they gave up Greek too. Nay, they even forgot the old Slavonic, the language of their Liturgy and of their Scriptures, and mostly learnt the prayers by ear and by rote, while serving as assistants. They might have been driven along the new road as easily as you drive a flock of sheep, had not the Council of 1666, presided over by the two Eastern patriarchs, of Alexandria and Antioch, solemnly anathematised all who held to the old missals and the old rite, "giving up their souls to endless torments along with those of the traitor Judas, and of the Jews who crucified the Lord."

This was going too far. Even the dullest could see that it condemned all the piety of old time; the saints, the old Czars, all had held up two fingers and had used the double hallelujah. Rascol began to spread, and of course authority got angry. Czarina Sophia began to persecute; officials were ordered to search; "orthodox" were enjoined, on pain of knouting and confiscation of goods, to inform against their neighbours; even he who gave a night's lodging to a Rascolnik, not knowing he was a heretic, was heavily fined.

In 1689, death was threatened as the penalty of negligence on the part of officials, or of connivance among neighbours. In 1693, not only were the heretics to be cut off, man, woman, and child, but their houses were to be burned to the ground. Never was the old proverb that "the blood

of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" more triumphantly fulfilled. The obstinacy became contagious. A whole village, seeing a few men and women whom they knew to be worthy people thrown into the flames, and watching the two fingers held up to the very last, would be awe-stricken and converted as it had been one man.

Women began to shout during mass: "Do not bow. Their wafer is stamped with the seal of Antichrist." Girls began to see the skies open and the blessed Virgin holding crowns of glory over the martyrs. A monk, Danilo, said: "Flee into the wilderness," and some three hundred followed him. But, a strong body of troops having surrounded them, Danilo said: "'Tis time that we were baptized with the baptism of fire;" and they locked themselves into a big barn, set fire to it, and were all burned to death. Another monk, Ignatius, with a large body of Rascolnik, crossed Lake Ladoga on the ice, and surprised and drove out the inmates from the island monastery of Paleostrovsky, monks who were hated because they had always acted as guides to the heretic-hunters. There Ignatius's men held out for months, putting to headlong flight the first troops sent against them; and, when at last a small army came with heavy guns, they boarded up the windows of the big wooden church, and half filling it with faggots and pitch, walked in, set it on fire, and to the music of their hymns perished—two thousand seven hundred say the Rascolnik, anxious to magnify the heroic deed; one thousand five hundred say the Government accounts.

A few years later, the same monastery, rebuilt, went through the same phases. It was seized and its orthodox monks turned out, and, when the inevitable siege grew strait, its occupants, about the same number as before, burned themselves in the same manner. They are said to have challenged the "Niconians" to religious discussions in order to gain time for those of distant villages to come in and be burnt with the rest. The soldiers pulled a few out of the flames with boat-hooks, but they tried to get in again, feeling that God must deem them grievous sinners if He would not suffer them to die for His sake.

Perhaps the hardships these nonconformists had to bear every day of their lives were worse than an occasional wholesale holocaust. Enthusiasm may make you lock yourself up in a burning barn with a crowd of comrades; it is like storming a battery, or riding through Balaclava valley.

But to skulk in the frozen marshes with dread of the police always on your mind, as well as the climate and the other hardships; and to be knouted if caught, and imprisoned and perhaps killed if you would not conform; why, it is worse than standing in the squares at Waterloo.

All this was not two centuries ago; and yet we wonder that Russia is not like other countries, and that Russian Socialism takes to the dark and secret ways of the Nihilist. That is just the plan which the Rascolnik had to adopt, perfect secrecy, under-hand working; and the tradition of it lasts on still.

In this way many districts got honey-combed with Rascol; and where, as in some places, its followers found scant sympathy among their neighbours they stole away and settled, some amid the virgin forests of Perm, and Viatka, and Tchernigov, and Orel—the great forest where a squirrel can go for hundreds of miles without coming to the ground. There, we are told, there are even nowadays whole villages of them wholly unknown to the authorities, paying no taxes, and furnishing no conscripts. Others wandered to the shores of the White Sea, and filled with little agricultural colonies a, till then, unoccupied land. Others crossed to Siberia; others joined the Cossacks of the Don, themselves descendants of run-aways from State oppression.

Under Peter the Great the Rascolnik, at first, fared worse than before. They called him Antichrist; what else could he be when he deprived men of their likeness to God (always figured in the "ikons" with a venerable beard) by forcing them to shave; when he changed the times of the year and the days of the blessed saints; and when he married an unchristened heathen (the Protestant maid of the inn, Catherine), and forced the Church to crown her Empress? Peter's rule, too, made many sympathise with Rascol principles. His public works were as grievous as those of the Pharaohs. Forty thousand people were forced to come, at their own cost, and help build St. Petersburg, not counting those who had already dug (and died) in its canals. His poll-tax was severe, and whole villages were turned out naked into the frost if the sum was not made up. Serfdom became more hateful; the serf being thenceforth bound to his owner and not to the soil. The levies for troops were continual. No wonder that Rascol gained many adherents.

Peter, happily, was no bigot; and his persecution of the Rascolnik was wholly a State affair; the Church had not meddled in it after simply launching its anathemas. So at last a compromise was made; Rascol was recognised in a sort of way as a faith by which men might live without the need of burning themselves alive by the hundred; and the Rascolnik were left in comparative peace—broken only by the fussiness of individual officials—on condition of paying double poll-tax.

Then began splits of the strangest kind. So long as men are persecuted they have a common bond; when the iron hand is lifted off they become a rope of sand.

"Upwards of two hundred sects in Holy Russia," say the books; many of them, like our "Bryanites" (Methodist Free Church), followers of one man, or even woman, who had no peculiar doctrine, nay, no distinctive practice, but just wanted scope for his or her individuality.

Several of these sects are mystical. "Shamanism," the religion of the old Finns, was a sort of Pantheism, centering in the "medicine man." It has many analogies with Christian mysticism. Hence when the moujik Danilo Filipovitch, after years of prayer and study of old missals and new, in a cave by the Volga, came to the conclusion that "revelation is from the living God alone," and, putting his books in a sack, flung them into the river, he soon got followers. "Christis" they called themselves; "Chlists" (whips) they were nicknamed by the orthodox, for self-flogging was an important part of their practice. "Jumpers," "dancers," etc., were offshoots from the "Christis;" and they alone, of the sects, made converts among the higher classes.

The main Rascol body, however—excluding the wilder sects—was soon sorely puzzled how to go on without clergy. It is the corner-stone of all Churches that none but a Bishop can ordain. Hence the devices to which the Scotch Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Methodists were driven; hence—say the Romanists—the "Nag's Head" business and the very imperfect succession in the Anglican Church.

Paul of Kolomna was one of the first to adopt Rascol views, but he died without appointing a successor; besides, it takes more than one Bishop to make a new Bishop. So, when the Rascolnik "popes" (clergy) died out, there was nobody to fill their place.

"Let us bribe some young Niconians,

provided they abjure this new nonsense and undertake to go our way," said some who—strangely inconsistent, as men so often are in matters of religion—believed the Niconian clergy, though apostate and servants of Antichrist, to be the only source of the sacraments. "No!" said the main body; and henceforward there was a split, the "Popovzy" looking out for any "pope" who was likely to be dismissed by his Bishop for bad behaviour (for they did not insist on morality, only on orthodox ordination), the "Baglopopovzy" appointing old men of good character, and well read in the Scriptures, to do everything except celebrate mass and marry. This became a sad difficulty. The moujik must have a "baba" to cook, mind the cattle, and so on. Thousands actually believed that living together unmarried was a venial sin compared with allowing a layman to intrude into the sacred office. In 1750, a popular tract writer, Anikim, boldly maintained that marriage is sacred before God, whether it has the Church ceremony and the priest's blessing or not. As another writer phrased it in 1798: "The essence of marriage is in the eternal vows of the married couple." Still, many thought otherwise; the same man who voted for prayers for the Czar actually maintained, "Better have ten bastards than one husband;" and a picture was very popular early in this century, representing the newly-born child of a wedded pair into which the devil was putting a soul with a red-hot poker. These extremists would purchase from some orthodox church a supply of consecrated wafers and oil, and themselves would administer extreme unction. One great recommendation was that they took no fees, the honour being enough for them. The "Popovzy" kept up the awkward practice of re-baptizing the "popes" who came over to them; and they made them jump into the water in full canonicals, that everything Niconian, all that savoured of the "new rite," might be washed off in the operation. Such runaway "popes" must often have been very hard bargains, and no wonder, while the "Popovzy" do not amount to four millions, the "priestless" number considerably more than nine. Both were robbed by Nicholas the First; for, with the co-operative spirit of the Russian peasantry, they had each formed a vast friendly society, with a capital of more than eleven million roubles. This was simply confiscated on the plea that the State could manage those things better.

In 1800, the Metropolitan of Moscow, Platon, a broad-minded man, advised the Government to revoke the excommunication of 1666, and to allow him to ordain men who should be free to use the old books and the pre-Niconian ceremonies. But it was too late. Such a step a century earlier would have led to an "Eirenicon," and there would soon have been no Rascol at all; but now, with the exception of a few hundred thousand, the Rascolnik refused to give up "their forefathers' faith," suspecting that beneath Platon's fair words might lurk some design for alluring them into Niconianism.

As I said, their sub-sects are legion. One of them, named after its founder, Theodosius of Fedosy, broke away because he thought that it is impious to write over the crucifix, "Jesus Christ, the King of Glory;" you ought to write, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." You should also be sure to raise your hand when in the Easter Service you say "Christ is risen." A more important difference (it could hardly be less important) is the twofold view of Antichrist. For the sticklers by the original schism, the Primitives (as we in Norfolk call them), he is a living man, the Czar for the time being. This branch, therefore, cannot pray for the Czar, or for the Government of which he is the head. The more advanced branches spiritualise the idea, and are, therefore, able to pray for his Czarship, though rejecting the adjectives which answer to our "most religious" applied to the Queen. These Moderates have their head-quarters at Moscow, where many of the rich merchants belong to them, and where they have a vast alms-house with room for several thousand inmates, a school, a board of management, etc., all of which, by "squaring" the police, they have got classed under the head of "burial ground." It was dread of Paul the First, supposed to have a special hatred against dissenters, that led the Moscow Rascolnik to put him into their prayers, and even for a time to pray for him as "truly believing." After Paul's assassination, some wanted to go back to the old plan; but a famous Rascol preacher took "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" for his text, with the result that a good many congregations outside Moscow also expressed a wish to pray for the Czar. Of course there was a reaction; a branch broke off, declaring the Czar to be the Beast's False Prophet, and the two-headed eagle the sign of Antichrist; and

therefore by paying taxes, or being registered, or taking a passport or document stamped with the impious mark, one shut oneself out of the Book of Life, and became doomed to perdition. These, called Beguny (wanderers), were naturally pronounced "very dangerous" by the authorities, knouted when caught, and banished to Siberia. They consoled themselves with strong language. Eflan (Euphemius), their founder, thus described the Czar's coronation: "Then came to worship the False Prophet those fierce fiends the Bishops; then the mock-popes, Satan's horses who carry souls to hell; then the various foul sects, accursed, hateful to God." Such a sect must have been soon stamped out, especially as one of their tenets allows them to give no bribes, and that, like the Nihilists, they admit two degrees of membership. Those who lack strength or courage for the counsels of perfection, continue in the world, and make it their business to tend and to hide the movements of those who are literally wanderers. Their houses are always furnished with hiding-places, like those of our Catholics in Queen Elizabeth's time; and every one of them, before he dies, tries to nerve himself for an actual wandering, in order to cleanse away the worldly stain. Their comment on the moderate Rascolnik is characteristic: "Ye sing and say, 'God preserve the Czar;' but think ye, ye blasphemers, for what a victory you are praying? The victory over those who, for the Holy Word's sake, hide themselves in forests and caves of the earth; who will not swear allegiance to the Beast, nor give their sons to him, nor pay his tax, nor let him number their souls. Ye are praying that the Beast may be able to overcome them, and cast them into prison. O ye servants of Antichrist, upholders of Satan, defenders of the seven-headed serpent!" Naturally it is war to the knife between the police and such fanatics; but even the most moderate Rascolnik are only tolerated. Unlike Moslem, Jews, Protestants, and heathen, they must not make their churches look in the least like places of worship; they must have no processions; they must ring no bells. Individuals, too, are still treated in the old harsh style. Three Popovzy Bishops were kept in prison from 1856 to 1881, the whole of Alexander's reign, because, having joined the dissenters, they refused to give up their ecclesiastical grade.

Rascol has done much for the cause of education. It may seem strange that what began as the "reductio ad absurdum" of conservatism should have made its votaries the only progressive people among the peasantry. The reason is that the orthodox accept their proper spelling of holy names, etc., because the Patriarch tells them; the Rascolnik spell badly by right of private judgement; and private judgement inevitably leads to thought and thought to education. They began long ago. The famous monastery on the River Wyg—which soon became not only an agricultural centre, but a High school for both sexes—was founded by two brothers Denisoff, one of whom joined the martyrs at Paleostrovsky. The other, despite great hardships, succeeded in anticipating by nearly two centuries the "national" schools, which were not founded till 1861. Their publications were for a long time hand-copied, and in this way secrecy was ensured. The original idea at Wyg was to be as rigorously celibate as the American Shakers; but nature was too strong. Despite all precautions, scandals became so numerous that the doctrine had to be relaxed. However, they vastly raised the position of women. An offshoot from them was the Belizy (white ones)—women who devoted themselves to education, wandering into the most secluded nooks to teach all whom they found. An early sub-sect set apart the most gifted girl in each family, and assigned her whole time to study, so that, when of age, she might be chaplain, confessor, and spiritual adviser.

Gloomiest of the sects are the Negators—not Nihilists—for they claim to be optimists, while the Negators are selfish pessimists. One of them, in prison, was so relatively quiet that the gaolers humoured him—let him wear his hat in their presence, call them bad names, and enjoy other privileges. But one day, when the new Governor of the province came to inspect, this strange being fell upon him and called him the most opprobrious names, at the same time overthrowing the zerkal (symbol of the Emperor). He was flogged almost to death, and when a friend saw him in hospital and asked:

"Why were you such a fool?"

"I had to do it. I could not help it," was all the answer he got.

Another queer sect is the "Dumb" (Molchalniky), of whom a late Governor of Western Siberia used to torture a few

every now and then to try to make them belie their name.

Besides all these more or less Christian sects, there is the vast mass of Free-thinkers. The Slavonic mind has a leaning to Rationalism. The strange views of the Provençal Albigenes were said to have come from Bulgaria; and Rationalism in Russia is of old date.

Poor Matvey Bashkin—the noble who confuted the “pope” Simeon, and was by him accused of debauchery, his doctrine being that the sum of religion is to love one’s neighbour as oneself—was condemned (probably burned) in 1555. He may have read “Maxim the Greek,” an admirer of Savonarola.

The Duklorby (Champions of the Spirit) were first found out by the police in 1750. They still exist, and some of their congregations have lapsed into strange idolatries. Catherine the First persecuted them savagely. In her reign, and in that of Paul the First, thousands were knouted, mutilated, and sent to Siberia for life.

With modern Rationalists, Stundists—due to German Protestantism—Shalapat, etc., another paper might be filled. Stepniak, in “The Russian Peasantry,” has a full account of them. Much of the foregoing is due to him. It is a strange story.

One young moujik was always haunted by the question: “What must I do to become a godly man? It’s no use asking father, for he drinks.” And so he went to a monastery, and found the monks such a sad lot that he soon ran away. Such a man might either evolve a creed like that of Count Tolstoi; or he might be baptized four times into four different sects, and might end by studying for himself, only “to find the Scriptures a mass of contradictions, and to make up his mind that the world is eternal, and that man after death lives only in his children.”

A MOORLAND MYSTERY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

It was what sailors call a dirty night. A wild west wind was tearing over the Fells and sweeping down the narrow valley in fierce gusts, driving the rain in sharp bursts against the windows, and howling angrily round the chimneys of the little inn at Selside.

But if the evening was dark and stormy

and things outside were cheerless, the kitchen of “The Moorcock” was a cosy picture of warmth and brightness. A mighty fire blazed in the wide open fireplace, and sent long trails of sparks and great curls of smoke roaring up the huge chimney. Its light danced upon the timbered ceiling, across which long ropes of onions and bundles of dried herbs were artistically festooned; it flashed upon rows of pewter plates and dishes on the old delf rack on the wall, and lighted up the brass face of the old oak clock in its dark corner, as it ticked a solemn accompaniment to the fitful snoring of a golden-tan sheep-dog which lay stretched out upon the brick floor in front of the hearth. One side of the room was taken up by a deep old-fashioned settle, with sloped back, and an end which curved round so as to shut out the back door into the “garth,” or yard. On this bench some half-dozen natives were seated, puffing stolidly at their long clays, which were periodically withdrawn from bucolic lips to allow of the application of the quart mugs which stood in regular sequence upon the wooden table in front.

Two tall rocking-chairs were drawn up on the opposite side of the chimney, in which we two storm-bound rovers were comfortably ensconced. And highly picturesque figures we made, clad in miscellaneous garments, belonging to “mine host,” who was himself enthroned on an upturned cask, and formed a connecting link, as it were, between “the classes” on one side and “the masses” on the other of his hearth.

“A good deal pleasanter here, landlord, than up on the Fells.”

“So I reckon, sir. Turn-Dub’s a dowly spot o’ neets when it’s deggy [Anglicé, misty]; eh, Jöb?—tha knäwa.”

A tall, lean fellow, with the hard, wiry look of a Yorkshire dalesman, gravely nodded, and muttered:

“I’d noän gan ower t’neet not fur ten pund.”

“Ah! thee had ’onst a rum soart on a thing happen tull’ee,” quoth his right-hand neighbour, whose ruddy face was set in a mass of bright-red whisker. “Come, tell t’gen’elm’n on’t; they’ve noän heerd loike on’t, I’m bärd.”

After a little coy hesitation, which gave way when our order to “fill up all round” had been carried out, Job Kirkbright, shepherd and factotum, told his story, which, being translated from the rugged

dialect of Craven into ordinary parlance, was much as follows :

"I had sold some ewes over in Littondale, and after getting the brass, and taking a glass of ale to wet the bargain at Tom Mason's, I set off home over the Fells in good fettle. I had my dog, Bob, with me, and we climbed up on the moor, and had soon got well on our way. It was late in the autumn, and the days were drawing in fastish, but I knew the path well, and so thought nothing much about the time o' day. But when I got right up on Moortop, I began to see as how it was coming on misty, and so I pushed on a bit faster; but the fog was coming up with a coldish wind from seawards, and soon it had got all round me and made me feel chilly. It did not close in thick, like a regular smotherer, you must know, but it kept whirling in patches, then lifting a bit and rolling away up the Fell, but only to come unrolling back every now and then. I don't mind as how I ever heard the wind moan so queerly; it was for all the world as if a lot of folks were groaning and moaning, and it made me feel a bit skeery like; and the rocks and boulders looked uncanny with the grey wisps twining amongst them. I was main glad, I can tell you, when I made out Hanging Crag, and knew I was over the highest point of the road, and beginning to get nigher home.

"The path leads down a dip like on the moor, and Langton Beck runs alongside for maybe half a mile, and then it turns off suddenly and runs away southwards, to plunge down into Hunt-pot—a big sort of pit, which is ninety yards deep, and as fearsome a place as you can want to see. They say it's haunted with a boggart, ever since a young girl was thrown in there by her sweetheart nigh twenty years ago. At least, folks always said as how he had shoved her down, for they was seen not far off the hole one evening having some words together, and that was the last time she was ever seen. He swore, when they asked him what had become of her, that he did not know more than that she had left him, saying that she would not keep company with him no longer, but take up with his brother Bill, who was 'prentice to Tom Benson, the wheelwright."

"But do you mean to say," interrupted one of his horrified hearers, "that the poor girl was never traced—was not Hunt-pot searched?"

"Oh, ay, there was a bit of a fuss at

the time, and some of the lads went up, and Jim Newbould was let down by a rope; but he was nearly drowned, for there is a big underground aleck empties itself into the pot half-way down, and it caught him, and doused him rarely till he could not breathe. It put his lamp out, too, so he could not see anything, and he was gladly enough to be up out of it into daylight again. And if he had gotten down to the bottom, he would have found nothing, for the water is twenty yards deep there, and they say it flows out at one end into another underground beck, and if a body had gotten in it would have been sucked down with the stream. But all this is outside my story, and has naught to do with me. Well, as I was saying, I had gotten half-way down the hollow when I dropped my stick, and as I stoops to pick it up, all of a sudden I felt as some one or something was behind me.

"I looked round sharp, I can tell you; and sure enough I sees a man a-standing looking at me with his head all on one side, and somehow I began to go cold all over.

"'Hullo there!' I shouts.

"But he never moved, nor took no notice; only the mist curled round him, and the wind blew his coat, which was unbuttoned, about.

"'Hullo, there, hullo!' I shouts out again, and louder.

"But he stood there just the same.

"'Hullo—hullo! Hul——'

"But somehow I got so skeered at the echo of my own voice, I stopped short and stood there shaking like a poplar. I did not like the looks of him, he was that unnatural. Then I noticed that Bob, my dog, had gone on, and was out of sight; and I whistled for him smartly, you bet. Up he comes with a clatter, but the moment he sees the man beyond me, he gives a long unearthly howl, and sets off with his tail between his legs as hard as he can pelt. Then I can tell you I was in a proper fright, and thought only of getting away myself from that thing as still stood looking at me with its head all down on one side. But you see I didn't like to turn and run for it, and him at my back.

"'Hullo there! what's up with you? Where are you from? Where are you bound?' I shouts again in desperation.

"The thing never answered a word; but it slowly lifted its head, and then let it

fall again on the other side, just for all as if the neck was broken.

"That settled me properly, and I made up my mind to try a run for it, and off I moves down the path, looking back and never taking my eyes off him. Sure enough, he began to walk on too, rolling his head slowly and swinging his arms; but always just the same distance behind, and never making no noise or call. I tried to shake him off over and over again; but fast as I went he kept up, and when I slowed he slowed too. Once or twice I tried stopping dead, thinking he would, maybe, pass me, or at least come nigh enough for me to see him plainer; but no, he was always ready to stop when I did, and he never came nigher by even a yard.

"If ever I wished myself at home it was then, and I shall never forget the horror of that twilight walk in the mist with that awful thing. I think I should have had a fit, or something, but for the fear that the boggart, or whatever it was, would jump on to me. So I kept on somehow, wondering how it was to end, and presently I saw the front of Eagle's Cliff looming up on the left. The sight of it put a sudden idea into my head. I would scramble up it and over to Gearstones, for I felt certain the thing with its loose head and arms could never get up that path after me. I walked slowly till I came right opposite the cliff-face, keeping my eye well on the fellow. Then I stopped dead short, and he did too.

"'Hullo there!' I shouts, in a sort of desperation, 'you must keep straight on down this track if you want to get to the village, there's no other road.'

"He never spoke, only the head fell over to the other side. Then I made a dash for it, tore madly over a bit of moss there is, and was twenty feet up the cliff amongst the startled, swearing jackdaws before I dared to look round. I could have yelled with joy, for there was that unholy figure a-going slowly up on the moor again, and before I could wink or rub my eyes he disappeared in the mist.

"Well, I did not come down to the path again, you may be sure, but took up over Scelby Moor and five miles round home; but I got home safely at last, and mighty thankful too.

"You, maybe, think I am gammoning you; but I tells you honest and fair, that if you, gentlemen, was to offer me a fiver apiece this blessed minute, I would none

gan over yon Fell to-night; no, nor any other night either."

There was dead silence when Job finished, and we, his hearers, puffed on in meditative fashion, eyeing each other surreptitiously to note the effect of the narrative. Then mine host arose, and, knocking out the ashes from his pipe against the top bar of the grate, said tersely:

"Cloasing toime, lads."

The occupants of the settle began to bestir themselves; mugs were drained to the last drop; there was a great shuffling of heavy boots, a chorus of "neet all," a clicking of the latch, an inrush of cold air which made the candles splutter and flare, a slamming of a heavy door, and we were alone in the kitchen with John Newbould and his buxom wife.

"What is all this story which Job has been telling us?"

"Nay, you must not ask me; all I know is he came dashing in here one night scared out of his wits almost, and swore he had seen a barghest or something on the moor, just as he has told to-night."

"Was he drunk?"

"Never a bit, I'll take my davy. He is a steady-going sort always, is Job; and I can't make head or tail of it myself."

"But you don't surely believe he did ever see this thing except in fancy?"

"I won't go for to say that either, for there are a sight of rum things as no one can understand or fathom, and may be this is just one of them. Anyhow, gentlemen, whether Job Kirkbright did or did not see this boggart, a poor soul was lost somewhere on that very moor a few months before. He was a queer sort who was staying up at Haverthwaite Hall, a brother or cousin of my lady's they said, who had had a sunstroke in India, or in some of those hot parts. He used to take long walks on the Fells all alone, and one afternoon he set out to go over to Littondale, and was never seen again. When it got late they set out to look for him, and found a little fox-terrier which belonged to him, and had gone off with him, whining at the gate. He had never been into Littondale, and although half of the villages round went up to search the moor, and scoured every cleft, and cranny, and rock for miles, and though the squire offered one hundred pounds for any trace of him, he has never been seen to this day, and never will be now. Likely he is ligging in one of them pot holes."

"And so you think it was the poor wretch's ghost that followed Job?"

"Nay, nay, I won't say anything for certain; but I can't help thinking altogether as it might have been."

BIRD FAIR.

ON a Sunday morning, not early as the clocks go, but when, as far as daylight goes, it might be just after dawn, what a hushed silence is there among the gloomy streets wrapped up in a grey, clinging mist! St. Paul's looms overhead, its dome a shadow against the dusky light, and lurid touches of light fall upon the grass and the old grey tombs. The great arched porch of Bow Church opens out like a dark cavern among tall buildings, dimly visible, and the narrow streets that descend into the once Alsatia of Whitefriars lose themselves in a mysterious sea of yellow gloom. How still and quiet, too, are the purlieus of the great centre of the wealth and commerce of the world; the Bank that shows nothing but a great blank wall, and the Exchange, with the golden grasshopper at top just visible poised in mid-air, that golden insect with not a glint of light upon it, but with its long legs outlined against the sky. Gloom and solitude dwell among the streets where the millions of the money market are trafficked in during the week. But when Bishopsgate is reached the air is clearer, and signs of life are manifest. The old houses with their gables to the street, and the leisurely foot passengers, seem to belong to another age than this. And that beautiful fragment of the house of a great merchant of the Tudor age, known as Sir Peter Pindar's, shines out like a jewel, from a chasm of demolition and reconstruction.

Dark gateways open into old inn-yards, where the stabling is replaced by workshops and factories; while what remains of the old tavern devotes itself to purveying dinners for City warehousemen and clerks, and bills of yesterday's fare, headed by the sign once familiar to the Jehus of the road, flutter idly from the gateposts. As Bishopsgate shades off into Norton Folgate, and that again into Shore-ditch, the traffic gently increases, and daylight breaking through the mist takes affairs in hand, and reveals some evidence of the carnival of the night before; the gutters choked with torn and crumpled paper, an old bonnet lying here, a broken

shoe abandoned there, with shells of the homely whelk, and all kinds of débris, as if abandoned by the receding tide.

Where the huge goods depôt of the Great Eastern Railway has made a wide clearing in this thickly peopled neighbourhood, a number of streets meet in a somewhat chaotic fashion; so that where to cross the wide sea of liquid mud, and in what direction to steer when once across, is a puzzle to the casual wayfarer. The railway forms a broad divide. On this side is Spitalfields, on the other is Bethnal Green; and fields more barren of beauty, or green with fewer spots of verdure, it would surely be hard to discover. And yet it is in Bethnal Green that such a spot is said to exist; a grove haunted by birds, where feathered songsters are to be heard continually.

Skirting the wall of the goods station on the Bethnal Green side, every now and then one gets a glimpse through some long tunnel of masonry of the fields, the Spitalfields that lie on the other side—marvellous glimpses in the yellow, gloomy light, framed in solid masonry, as of some fields not altogether Elysian, where shadows pass to and fro, and the dim, dingy houses seem ghost-like and unreal. On this side are huge warehouses, and great stores of timber, with immense blocks of model dwellings rising out of a wilderness of small, mean tenements. And here opens a street of the same dingy order, from which, as you approach, issues a sudden cheerful sound of innumerable chirpings and twitterings, a chorus of birds, now falling almost to silence, and again rising to a full volume of eager and plaintive notes.

"This is Sclater Street, 1773," says a florid little plaque at the other end of the street. And the aspect of the street is not without interest; the houses are quaint and grimy, with high-pitched roofs partly tiled and partly slated, and below the roofs long windows stretch the full length of each house—windows that once lighted the looms of the silk-weavers who plied their craft in all the streets hereabouts.

In its present state the street has an air of factitious gaiety. There are the birds first of all, stretching their little throats to outvie each other in shrillness. Every other shop is a bird shop, and there is a continuous row of shops from one end to the other, and these are covered outside, all but the doorway, with cages containing

every variety of bird that can sing, or whistle, or croak; while, within, the whole interior, front and back, is also crammed with cages, every occupant of which is striving its uttermost to add to the general din. It is odd, this enthusiasm for song in the midst of captivity, and strange to see how the little songsters, but lately wild and free among hedgerows and copses, have seemingly lost their timidity and shyness, as they chirrup forth their chorus, although to those who understand the language of birds, this may sound rather regretful and reproachful than joyous or gratulatory.

Such shops as are not occupied by birds are bedecked to catch the fancy of the bird fanciers themselves. Strings of hats and caps, adorned with coloured papers, hang in festoons over the footways; bundles of gay scarves and neckties flutter in the air. Here an urbane dealer offers his stores of new and second-hand apparel, with waistcoats of velvet and plush, adorned with the brightest of glass buttons; and there are touches of fancy about the soberest articles of apparel, as if to show that the taste of those who resort to Bird Fair is of anything but a neutral or colourless character. Equally striking are the stands and windows of those who deal in the various articles of a little bird's ménage, or, indeed, of a big bird's, for that matter. For parrots and parroquets; cockatoos, and birds of that tropical plumage and character; solemn native owls, jackdaws, and magpies, these are all within our dealers' purveyance. And whether it is the great gilded cage of pretty Poll, or the wicker-work dwelling of Ralph the Raven, or the tiny habitation of Jenny Wren or Master Goldfinch, here, having got your bird, there you may find its cage with every comfort and convenience that the most fastidious songster could desire.

But as the main feature of Bird Fair is its smaller song birds, so there is an especial charm and variety about the various comforts and appliances of the small bird's house. Such pretty, tiny articles in metal and glass; such dainty little drinking fountains; such burnished and shining dishes for the vegetarian banquets of these small fowls; and all gathered together in a shining trophy, so as to make the dull brick wall scintillate with brightness!

As the morning advances, so thicken the crowds about the bird dealers' shops; louder shrill the birds within and without, and the strident voice of the dealer is

heard, as he shouts his invitation to all and sundry to come forward and buy:

"If you want a canary, step inside; take your pick for three-and-six; no hens among 'em, my boys. That's not the way Joe does his business."

But canaries are not much in demand to-day; the run is all upon goldfinches, and no wonder, for a brighter and prettier bird it would be difficult to find. Goldfinches are selling freely this morning at about a shilling apiece—the cock birds, that is; as for the hens, you may buy as many as you please at threepence or fourpence a head.

The bird dealer, it must be said, handles his little captives with an ease and dexterity that are something marvellous. The birds seem to own his power; and if he wants a bird out of a cage, that bird seems to "climb down" from its perch, and resign itself into his hands unresistingly.

"See the horseshoe on its breast," says the dealer, dexterously whiffing up the poor little thing's neck-feathers. "There ain't no ochre about that. Now buy, buy! the finest set you ever see. Pick 'em where you will, you won't find no ochred ones."

There are dark allusions always in the bird dealer's "patter," as to nefarious tricks of the trade which other dealers delight in, but which he, the speaker, would scorn to be guilty of; yes, even in the matter of these little birds there are no doubt tricks of the trade.

It may be a poor neighbourhood this, but there are plenty of people about with money in their pockets, and the bird traffic goes on briskly. The little, square stock-cages, with their inmates, change hands rapidly. Threepence is charged for the cage; but there are boys hanging about with battered, second-hand cages that may be had for a penny or so; and if the buyer does not want a cage, the dealer pops the bird into a little paper bag as if it were so much "candy," and you see people walking off with half-a-dozen or so of these paper bags about them, all as snug and compact as the blackbirds in the famous pie that was fit to set before the King.

Among the smaller dealers who come this way, is the old chickweed or groundsel man, with his basket full of the green stuff, and another with a hamper filled with fresh-cut grass-sods, such as we put in a skylark's cage, to make him believe that he is once more among the fresh, green fields, and thus tempt him to burst

into song. There is a shop that deals almost exclusively in larks and their cages. And if it seems cruel to imprison a bird so free and spirited, yet surely the wrong may be forgiven for the delight that such a bird will sometimes give among the dullest and densest quarters of the city, and among those whose lives are so little cheered by beautiful suggestions.

Then there is the useful, pleasant little canary. All the world seems to deal in canaries—the shops, front and back, are full of them; and, give them water enough, and sufficient seed, they don't seem to mind where they are stored.

"Take your pick among 'em—three-and-sixpence apiece—the finest cock birds in the market. You ain't obliged to buy unless you like, and if you don't want to buy, you ain't obliged to walk inside. Now then, who'll buy?"

Some such eloquence as this seems necessary to overcome the coyness of spectators, for after each address there is a movement of several purchasers into the canary-lined shop, where, in the heat, light, racket, and excitement, the birds are singing away at their loudest.

There are linnets, too, in their modest plumage, but not in such demand as of old times, and the bold bullfinch is there eyeing the scene defiantly, with head stuck on one side. Are there piping bullfinches? Well, these belong rather to the bric-à-brac of the trade. A bullfinch well instructed to pipe a popular air, and perform a trick or two, is a bird of price; and yet if you cannot find him here, you may hear of such a one, and be introduced to his lucky proprietor.

Here are starlings in cages apart, rather dejected and melancholy, and not inclined to join in the concert of twitterings. The larger birds seem to feel their position more keenly than the irresponsible tribe of finches. But the starling, once so popular, and known as the poor man's parrot—for it may be taught to whistle half-articulate sounds—the starling, once familiar in many a cottage, is now rather down upon his luck. Nobody will take the trouble to teach him his lessons, and speech is fast becoming a lost art with his tribe. An odd magpie and jackdaw, too, we may find among the dealer's stock, and there are plenty of blackbirds and thrushes, the latter always a favourite with the lover of sweet song.

Still as the day advances, with something like a stray glimmer of sunshine

lighting up the dusky street, and the distant ting-tang of church bells sounding in the ears, people gather still more thickly about the purlieus of Bird Fair. Barrows and trucks come rolling up on every side, and men with baskets of pigeons or crates of poultry take their stand by the kerb, and chaffer lustily with hesitating buyers. The Temperance bar is open, and eel-pie shops emit a fragrant steam. Sweetstuffs are on the ground, temptingly displayed upon barrows. From the long, upper windows of the old hand-loom weavers' workshops, female heads are protruded, and masculine shirt sleeves loll over the window sill. The looms have vanished into space with the weavers who wove the brocaded silk and the many-hued sarsnet. And yet this bird fair is in some way a memorial of their existence, a legacy from those old weavers who, for conscience' sake, left cottages and weaving sheds in the fair land of France, to toil for subsistence in the bare regions of Spitalfields. For the weavers of old were bird fanciers to a man. It was they who first started the pigeon cotes of Bethnal Green, and who lightened the gloom of the dull London streets with the birds they loved. And this little fair has struggled on year after year, in evil times and in good, without charter from the Crown or license from the Lord of the Manor; but retaining its vitality because it suited both buyers and sellers, and met a popular want.

Motley and varied is the crowd that saunters to and fro, and deals and chaffers as occasion offers. Here are dockside and 'long-shore labourers, in their rough working clothes, buying, perhaps, a tiny bird and cage for the "kid"; and there hops and skips along a bright little girl in Sunday clothes, who hurries her father along, the custodian of a bright shilling that is to be spent as she pleases, and, therefore, as a matter of course, in Bird Fair. The smart London artisan is there, too, who has promised his sweetheart a canary; and work girls, from the factories, seeking some cheerful songster to enliven their dull rooms. Here are matrons, too, country-bred, no doubt, who are anxiously investigating the merits of broody-looking hens, whose egg-laying properties are loudly vaunted by their proprietors.

Down a little dingy side street, birds of another feather are to be met with. If you want to buy a good goat, or sell one, here is your market. Here are costermongers' carts dashing up with three or four nannies

balancing themselves knowingly in the frail vehicle as it flies over stock and stone. Or, are you for a hackney goat, quiet to ride and drive? Your affair is at hand, with harness and everything complete, and a four-wheeled waggonette to match, in which you may drive home in triumph. "There's a genteel living to be made out o' that turn-out," cries its owner, with conviction. And the goats wander up and down and nibble here and there, and thrust their mischievous noses everywhere. Rabbits, too, are here in force, and there are crates full of poultry, with pigeons, and doves of sorts, and guinea-pigs, for those who care for such profitless cattle. And there is a boy who hangs about the buyers, provided with an armful of canvas bags—not money bags—but rabbit and pigeon bags, which he sells for a few pence. And when you have got what you want, you have only to throw your sack over your shoulder and depart with a light heart.

What nailing, and sawing, and hammering of boxes, and building of hutches and cotes and cages, will be going on in back-yards and back-gardens, in many a humble quarter of the town, when the frequenters of Bird Fair return home with their prizes!

And for the little songsters, and the other live-stock of Bird Fair, we may hope that their fate will be a happy one. There will be no lack of kindness to the little pets, for people mostly keep birds for the love of them. And for birds that take kindly to captivity, there must surely be happiness in the affection they inspire, and in the delight they give where the good things of life are uncomfortably rare. And among pleasant, harmonising influences, may be classed the keeping of birds and animals. So that in this way of looking at the matter, Bird Fair appears as a bright patch in the general dinginess of this part of London, and the cheerful chirruping of its multitudinous denizens, a pleasant break in the stolid quietude of the slums.

The contrast, indeed, may be realised in passing from Sclater Street into Brick Lane, where there is a kind of market going on with coasters' barrows drawn up on each side of the grimy street, and one of the Cheap Jack tribe at the corner, offering saucepans and kettles to a crowd of slatternly women. Between the dull and drowsy people collected hereabouts, and the brisk, lively traffickers of Bird Fair, the

difference is strongly marked, and so much of a civilising and humanising influence may fairly be ascribed to the birds.

SAILORS' SONGS.

THE songs which are sung at sea are not those which do duty in the drawing-room and the concert-hall as sailors' songs. "Nancy Lee," and "Jack's Yarn," and other ditties of that class, may stir the hearts of the gentlemen and gentlewomen of England who live at home at ease, but you will never hear them in the fore-castle or round the galley fire. Nor is what we know as sea-poetry that which is really the poetry of the sailors. In truth, there is very little poetry and very little romance about the life of poor Jack, whose days and nights when afloat are one round of hard, uncomfortable, and often dangerous, work, and whose days and nights ashore are not made joyous by lodging-house keepers and other land-sharks.

No. You don't hear Jack carolling forth about "A Life on the Ocean Wave," or trolling out that he's "Afloat on the fierce Ocean tide," or dropping his voice into his boots concerning events that happened "As she lay, in the Bay of Biscay, O." True, it was a sailor who wrote at sea (and the night before a battle, too, if tradition is to be trusted) the famous song beginning:

To all you ladies now on land,
 We men at sea indite;
 But first would have you understand
 How hard it is to write.
 The Muses now, and Neptune, too,
 We must implore to write to you.
 With a fa la, la, la, la.

But you may travel the seas over without ever hearing a real sailor sing it. You may at times, perhaps, although not often, hear in the fore-castle, a musical tar who will render with effect, "Hearts of Oak," or "You Gentlemen of England," or "When the stormy winds do blow," but even these are regarded as 'long-shore songs. More likely are you to hear:

We be three poor mariners, we be three poor
 mariners,
 Newly come from the seas,
 While others live at ease.
 Shall we go dance the round, the round, the round,
 Shall we go dance the round, the round, the round?
 And he that is a bully boy,
 Come pledge me on the ground, the ground, the
 ground.

We care not for these martial men
That do our States disdain;
But we care for the merchantmen
Who do our States maintain.

To them we dance this round, around, around,
To them we dance this round, around, around,
And he that is a bully boy,
Come pledge me on the ground, the ground, the ground.

You may also still hear, sometimes as a fore-castle song, but more often adapted, in time and metre, as a Chanty, a song which was popular in Captain Marryat's time :

Now, farewell to you, ye fine Spanish ladies,
Now, farewell to you, ye ladies of Spain,
For we've received orders to sail for Old England,
And perhaps we may never more see you again.

We'll range and we'll rove like true British sailors,
We'll range and we'll rove all on the salt seas,
Until we strike soundings in the Channel of England.
From Ushant to Scilly is thirty-five degrees.

There are four more verses given in "Poor Jack," and the whole song has been incorporated by Mr. Chappell in his "Music of the Olden Time."

Like the gentlemen who are too busy making history to read or write it, Jack is too much engaged in composing the real poetry of the Ocean, to concern himself with landsmen's poems of the sea. Yet Jack is before all things musical, and his greatest pleasure in life—next to tobacco—is in song.

But his songs are peculiarly his own, as is also his manner of singing them, and in neither will you find any resemblance to the performances of the elegant young gentlemen who "oblige" romantic young ladies with so-called sea-ditties in the chastened atmosphere of a fashionable "soirée musicale." As a recent writer well says: "The songs of the sailor are sung to the accompaniment of the thrilling shrouds, the booming double-bass of the hollow topsails, and the multitudinous chorus of ocean."*

While the sailors are "making poetry" their lives are neither bright nor comfortable; but they are infinitely better than they would be without song. It is song that puts spirit and "go," into all their work, and it is often said at sea that a good "Chanty-man" is equal to an extra hand. The chanties, or working songs, are the real sea-songs of sea life. It may be that they are going gradually out

of use nowadays, when so much is done by steam; but, wherever the concentrated strength of human muscles is needed, even on a steamship, there is nothing like a chanty for evoking the utmost motive power.

Chanties are of various kinds, adapted to the different varieties of work on ship-board, and without a chanty a crew is as listless as a gang of South Carolina darkies without their plantation songs. In truth, there is a good deal in common between the working songs of sailors and of niggers, and it is curious that many of the most popular sea-chanties are wholesale adaptations of plantation airs, and often of the words also.

For quick haulage, working at the sails, and so forth, one of the most favourite chanties is this :

We'll haul the bowlin' so early in the morning.
(Chorus) We'll haul the bowlin', the bowlin' haul.
Haul on the bowlin', the fore and maintop bowlin'.
(Chorus) Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul.
Haul on the bowlin', the packet she's a rollin'.
(Chorus) Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul.
Haul on the bowlin', the Captain he's a growlin'.
(Chorus) Haul on the bowlin', the bowlin' haul.

There is not much poetry in this, you will say. Well, there is not; but there is an immense amount of vigorous music when ten, or twelve, or twenty strong-throated seamen give voice to the hearty chorus, and with each recurrence of the word "haul," strain every muscle of the body in combined effort. That is where the chanty is invaluable—in timing the moment for the concentration of force. It makes all the difference in the world in the working of a ship, and the chanty will often be changed several times at some special job, until the right one is got, which sends the men together like the beat of a conductor's bâton in an orchestra. A good chanty-man—that is, the soloist who starts the songs, and gives the time to the chorus—is one of the most popular, as well as the most useful, men on board a ship.

The airs to which the chanties are sung are pretty much common property—that is to say, you will hear them all the world over. Miss Smith has scored many of them, and musical readers cannot do better than consult her pages if they want to test the quality of Jack's music. But the words of the chanties vary very much. There is a sort of general range of subject for each air, while a great amount of latitude is exercised by the chanty-man. In fact, a clever "improvisatore" who can adapt the lives and the peculiarities of officers and

* Miss Laura Alexandrine Smith, in a work on "The Music of the Waters" (Kegan Paul and Co.), to which we are much indebted in preparing this article.

crew to the metre of the chanty he is leading, is very much esteemed. Like everybody else, Jack enjoys hearing the foibles of his fellows humorously hit off, and he does not object to being "dressed" a bit himself in turn.

Thus, then, the words of a chanty may be altered according to the ability of the chanty-man and the opportunity afforded by the incidents and personages of each separate voyage. All that is wanted is that hauling chanties shall be short and lively; that windlass chanties be more measured; that pumping chanties be adapted to the monotonous movement of the work, and that capstan chanties be in long metre, and of a more tender character in general. Thus it is, that in the capstan chanties, when the men run round and round from slow to quick as the anchor comes "home," we find usually both more sentiment, and more of the semblance of part-songs.

Here is one capstan chanty :

To the Liverpool Docks we'll did adieu,
To Suke, and Sally, and Polly, too;
The anchor's weighed, the sails unfurled,
We are bound to cross the watery world.
Hurrah, we're outward bound!
Hurrah, we're outward bound!

The first four lines may be either sung as a solo, with the last two in chorus, or the four lines by divisions of the men, and the last two in unison. Of course, for "Liverpool Docks" will be substituted the name of any other place from which the ship is parting.

Here is another very favourite outward-bound chanty :

(Solo) The ship went sailing out over the bar.
(Chorus) O Rio! O Rio!
(Solo) They pointed her nose for the Southern Star.
(Chorus) And we're bound for the Rio Grande.
(Together) Then away, love, away, away down Rio.
Then fare you well, my pretty young girl,
We're bound for the Rio Grande.

(Solo) Oh, were you ever in Rio Grande?
(Chorus) Away, you Rio.

(Solo) Oh, were you ever in Rio Grande?
(Chorus) We're bound to the Rio Grande.
Away, you Rio; away, you Rio.
Fare you well, my pretty young girl,
I am bound to the Rio Grande.

As capstan work is long, we may take this as only the beginning of the song, the rest of which will depend on the chanty-man's ability to weave in some narrative. Failing that, the words of the old song, "Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" will be utilised, each line being sung twice by the soloist, followed by the Rio Grande chorus. The effect is curious, but very pleasing.

Another capstan song is sacred to the memory of a certain mythical being called "Old Stormy" or "Old Storm Along":

(Solo) Old Stormy he is dead and gone.
(Chorus) To me, way, hay, storm along John.
(Solo) Old Stormy he is dead and gone.
(Chorus) Ah ha, come along, get along, storm along John.
(Solo) Old Stormy he was a bully old man.
(Chorus) To me, way, you storm along.
(Solo) Old Stormy he was a bully old man.
(Chorus) Way, hay, storm along John.

There are several variants of this chanty, and one of the versions gives to the soloist these curious words:

When Stormy died I dug his grave,
I dug his grave with a silver spade,
I hove him up with an iron crane,
And lowered him down with a golden chain,
Old Storm Along is dead and gone.

One of the most beautiful in a musical sense of all the chanties, is that known as "Lowlands Low." The words are nothing, and, as usual, many versions are used; but the air is singularly wild and mournful, and is an immense favourite with Jack. It generally begins somewhat like this:

(Solo) I dreamt a dream the other night.
(Chorus) Lowlands, lowlands, hurrah, my John.
(Solo) I dreamt I saw my own true love.
(Chorus) My Lowlands, aray.

The most sentimental and also the most poetical of all the capstan chanties, is "Home, Dearie, Home":

Solo.
Oh, Amble is a fine town, with ships in the bay,
And I wish with my heart I was only there to-day;
I wish with my heart I was far away from here,
A-sitting in my parlour and talking to my dear.

Chorus.
And it's home, dearie, home, oh, it's home I want to be,
My topsails are hoisted and I must out to sea.
For the oak, and the ash, and the bonny birchen tree,
They're all a-growin' green in the North countree.
Oh, it's home, dearie, home, it's home I want to be.

Solo.
Oh, there's a wind that blows, and it's blowing from the west,
And of all the winds that blow, 'tis the one I like the best;
For it blows at our backs, and it shakes the pennon free,
And it soon will blow us home to the North countree.

(Chorus as before.)

The next verse refers to the supposed arrival of a little stranger:

Solo.
And if it be a lass, she shall wear a golden ring;
And if it be a lad, he shall live to serve his King;
With his buckles, and his boots, and his little jacket blue,
He shall walk the quarter-deck as his Daddy used to do.

(Chorus as before.)

Hauling chanties are much quicker and jollier. The following is sung in chorus, with a concentrated pull at every recurrence of the word "handy":

Oh, shake her up and away we'll go,
So handy, my girls, so handy;
Up aloft from down below,
So handy, my girls, so handy.

One of the most popular of the quick-time chanties, and always most effectual in getting good work out of the men, is the tuneful but rather senseless one known as "Blow the Man Down":

Solo.

I'm a true English sailor just come from Hong Kong.

Tibby, heigh ho, blow the man down;
My stay on the old English shore won't be long,
Then give me some time to blow the man down.

Chorus.

Then we'll blow the man up, and we'll blow the man down,
Tibby, heigh ho, blow the man down;
So we'll blow the man up, and we'll blow the man down,
Then give me some time to blow the man down.

Another favourite, although mournful in its melody, is "Reuben Ranzo," another mythical being of the sea:

(Solo) Pity Reuben Ranzo.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.
(Solo) Oh, pity Reuben Ranzo.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.
(Solo) Reuben was no sailor.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.
(Solo) By trade he was a tailor.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.
(Solo) He went to school on Monday.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.
(Solo) Learnt to read on Tuesday.
(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.

And so on, to a most inordinate length, poor Ranzo evidently having been a most unfortunate individual until he shipped with a good captain, to whose daughter Reuben becomes happily wedded; and

Thus ends my little ditty.

(Chorus) Ranzo, boys, a Ranzo.

A hauling chanty to the same tune as "Blow the Man Down," runs in this fashion:

Solo.

There once was a family living on a hill,
And if they're not dead, they're living there still.

Chorus.

Up, up, my boys, up a hill,
Up, up, my boys, up a hill.

As a pumping song this is often sung to the tune of "Paddle Your Own Canoe":

(Solo) Your money, young man, is no object to me.
(Chorus) Pay me the money down.
(Solo) Half-a-crown's no great demand.
(Chorus) Pay me the money down.
(Altogether) Money down, money down,
Pay me the money down.

This is another lively pump chanty:

(Chorus) Run, let the bull chimes run,
We will run—
(Solo) Away to America.
(Chorus) Way aha! way aha!
Way aha! way aha!
(Chorus) We'll pump her dry and get our grog.
(Solo) Run, let the bull chimes run.
(Chorus) We'll pump her dry and away we'll go.
(Solo) Away to America.

As a specimen of a windlass song we append the following, but are unable to afford any explanation of its singular refrain:

(Solo) Oh, Boney was a war-ri-or.
(Chorus) Ah, hi-lon day.
(Solo) Oh, sigh her up, my yaller girls.
(Chorus) A-hi, hi-lon day.

"Boney" often appears in the sea-songs, as does also "Johnnie Franswaw," by whom we may understand the French sailor generally. Here, for instance, is how Boney or Bonny figures in a hauling chanty. To save repetition we may only mention that the chorus is repeated after every line:

Oh, Bonny was a warrior.

(Chorus) Way, hay, ha!

Oh, Bonny was no Frenchman.
Bonny beat the Rooshins,
The Prooshins, and the Ostrians
At the Battle of Marengo.
Bonny went to Moscow,
Moscow was a-fire,
Bonny lost his army there,
Bonny retreated back again.
Bonny went to Elba,
And soon he did come back again.
Bonny fought at Waterloo,
There he got his overthrov.
Bonny went a-cruising
In the Channel of Old England.
Bonny was taken prisoner.
On board the "Bella-Ruffian,"
Bonny was sent to Saint Helena,
And never will come back again.
Way, hay, ha!

It is impossible to convey the gusto with which this historical, if not poetical, ditty, is sung and chorused. Bonaparte, indeed, with all his faults, has been a perfect god-send to successive generations of poets, singers, and preachers of all sorts.

The above is a hauling chant, as is also the following:

(Solo) Oh, once I had a nigger girl.
(Chorus) Away, haul away, haul away, Joe.
(Solo) And she was fat and lazy.
(Chorus) Away, haul away, haul away, Joe.

The soloist then goes on in succession to enumerate all his various loves, not in the most flattering terms, but with a provoking jollity, and sends all the power of the men into the

Away, haul away, haul away, Joe.

A favourite windlass song has evidently come from the American plantations :

(Solo) Sally Brown was a bright mulatto.
(Chorus) Hurrah, you rollin' river.
(Solo) For seven long years I courted Sally.
(Chorus) Hurrah, you rollin' river.
(Solo) I courted Sally down in yon valley.
(Chorus) Ah, ha! I'm bound away on the wild Missouri.

The following is a very popular homeward-bound song, sometimes used as a capstan chant :

At Katherine's Dock I bade adieu
To Poll, and Bet, and lovely Sue ;
The anchor's weighed, the sails unfurled,
We're bound to plough the watery world.
Don't you see we're outward bound ?

But when we come back to Katherine's Docks,
The pretty girls they come in flocks ;
And Bet to Poll and Sue will say :
"Oh, here comes Jack with his three years' pay !"
Don't you see we're homeward bound ?

Then we all set off to the "Dog and Bell,"
Where the beat of liquor they always sell ;
In comes old Archy, with a smile,
Saying, "Drink, my lads, it's worth your while."
Don't you see we're homeward bound ?

We need not moralise on these verses as only too faithfully embodying poor Jack's ideas of enjoyment after a long voyage. He has his faults, poor fellow, but we have seen that he can be tender and true, even in his songs, when far away from England, home, and beauty. Here is one of his favourite fore-castle choruses :

O, the rose it is red and the violet is blue,
And my heart, love, beats steady and constant to you,
Then let it be early, late, or soon,
I will enjoy my rose in June.

But here is another equally popular :

Then we'll drink and be jolly, and drown melancholy,
Our spirits to cherish, our hopes, and our lives,
And we'll pay all our debts with a flying topsail,
And so bid adieu to our sweethearts and wives.

Perhaps, on the whole, both are more typical of the true Jack than the chorus to the well-known song which, although sometimes sung at sea, is more often heard ashore :

For the raging seas did roar,
And the stormy winds did blow,
While we jolly sailor boys were up into the top,
And the land lubbers lying down below, below,
And the land lubbers lying down below.

The language of the sea is a polyglot one, and it may be of interest here to quote a short Norwegian chanty, the chorus of which is in English :

Og Keiseren sad paasit Nü-je Stot.
(Chorus) Good-bye, fare you well ; good-bye, fare you well.

Hans höiröde kjole den klarham saa goot,
(Chorus) Hurrah, my boys, we're homeward bound.

The Norwegian words may be thus translated :

And the Kaiser he sat in his castle so high,
His crimson jersey suits him so well.

Finally, as a curiosity, we give the following, said to be a great favourite among the sailors of the South of France :

Il était un petit navire,
Il était un petit navire,
Qui n'avait jamais navigué,
Qui n'avait jamais navigué.
Au bout de cinq à six semaines,
Les vivres vinrent à manquer.
On fit tirer la courte paille,
Pour savoir qui serait mangé.
Le sort tomba sur le plus jeune ;
En sauce blanche il fut mangé.
Il monta sur le mât de hune,
Et vit la mer de tous côtés :
"O Sainte Vierge, O ma patronne,
Préservez-moi de ce danger."

Here the song ends, but let us submit a literal translation :

There was once a little ship,
There was once a little ship,
Which never, never sailed,
Which never, never sailed.

At the end of five or six weeks,
Provisions began to fail.

They drew lots with bits of straw,
'To know which of them should be eaten.

The lot fell on the youngest,
In white sauce he must be eaten.

He climbed up to the top of the topmast,
And saw the sea on every side.

"Oh, holy Virgin! guardian Saint,
Preserve me from this danger."

This is plainly a French version of "Little Billee" and the last split-pea and the "Catekis"; but the question naturally arises, did Thackeray get the idea of his famous song in France, or, have the French sailors nationalised one half of Thackeray's ditty? The subject is an interesting one for those who are always on the outlook for marks of plagiarism in every writer.

And here we must leave the subject of sea-songs and chanties; not that the subject is by any means exhausted, but that the space allotted will not allow us to present any more of those interesting, although often almost unintelligible, illustrations of the real life of the British sailor.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XII.

VERY few words passed between Thora and Gaspard after the latter came in; both were heart-sick and miserable. Gaspard

would fain have said something to comfort the girl, but he could think of nothing that would not wound more than heal; while she, in turn, longing for a word to show her that he did not wholly repent burdening his life with her, could not ask for it, could not even by any sign show that she would receive it. And yet her soul craved for so little—only for this:

"You have not been wholly a vexation and trouble to me; there has been some compensation."

But this testimony, which all but the worst of wives may win, was not given to her, and so she sat, more and more desolate as the minutes passed, more and more convinced that Gaspard wished her dead or gone from him in any way. And meanwhile Gaspard was saying to himself:

"If only I could think she cared for me, and that my love was some atonement to her for all I have cost her, life would be endurable still."

He went to his work next day, still burdened with the same hopeless discontent, and now, by reaction from the mood of strained loyalty of the night before, he thought with distaste of Thora's gloomy face—that face which, growing ever more listless and sullen, was all he had to look forward to throughout the years to come.

He did not guess how Thora's gaze followed him as he went down the street. He would not have credited the hopeless longing in her eyes.

When he had gone quite out of sight, she bestirred herself, and set her house in order, trying to set out its poor furnishings to the best advantage. She put a great lump of coal on the kitchen fire, and built it up so that it would smoulder for long hours without going out. She set the table for his evening meal, and put the coffee-pot, with the tin of coffee and the measuring spoon, on a side table near the fire, so that he might find all things ready for him when he came home. Then she went out and bought some flowers—and flowers are dear, even in summer, in that bleak northern town. She placed them in a glass in the middle of the table, and leaning against it she put a letter which she had written to her husband. It contained only a few words, in her doubtful French:

"I have gone away because you will be happier without me. If I had known how much injury I was to do you I would never have left Stromness.

"THORA SWEYNSON."

This done, she dressed herself in the plainest of all her cheap, plain gowns, and left the house which, after a fashion, had been her home. For a moment she stood on the doorstep, picturing how Gaspard would look that evening when he came home and found the house silent and empty. She saw his puzzled, irritated air; then her mind fixed upon him in the act of opening her letter, and reading it with a first aspect of surprise and anger, settling down into a permanent expression of relief. This last thought—pure fancy as it was—stung her, and she hurried away.

She went to the Masons' house first, and asked for the French lady who was staying there. Mademoiselle Meudon was at home; but the maid who answered the door looked as if she doubted whether she would see this tall young woman with the long straight gown and plain small bonnet, "like a Salvation Army or a hospital nurse," thought the damsel.

Thora saw the hesitation, and knew she could end it.

"Say that I am Madame Gaspard Harache," she said, not without a bitter sense of the ludicrousness of using the name she had no right to bear, to win admission to the presence of the woman who was withheld from gaining it only by her existence. But it was a pitiful joke, and whatever false triumph it contained she was about to throw away.

Sophie soon appeared, with a troubled look on her smooth face. She was afraid Thora had come to make a "scene."

"Why did you come here? You have no right. What do you want?" she asked, breathlessly.

Thora smiled. She saw what Sophie's fear was, and with all the energy of her frankly rebellious nature she despised the woman who, having it in her to sin, and scheme, and lie without remorse or pity, could be anxious lest any breath of scandal should hurt the delicate skin of her reputation. Thora was weak and selfish in many things, but she never wilfully did a thing she dreaded others knowing.

"Do not be afraid," she said, contemptuously. "I have come to ask from you just what you will most readily give me—money."

"Money!"

"Yes. Not much. I do not want to touch a farthing of yours that I can help. If I could by any possibility call five pounds my own, I would not ask you, but I have not a penny. The few shillings I

had in my purse this morning were Gaspard's, and I have left them behind, because I will not cost him more than I have done."

"What do you mean? Why do you seek help from me? I should have thought——"

"You would have thought I would not come to you, of all people in the world? You are right in a fashion; but I am playing your game, and you are the fitting person to furnish me with the means to carry it on. I am not the wife of Gaspard Harache; you told me so. I took him to task last night, and made him admit the truth. Well, I have not fallen so low as to live with any man, conscious that I am not his wife. Remember, I do not blame Gaspard. He meant no wrong to me, he says he will never desert me, and he would keep his word. If I had not known the truth we might have gone on well enough, after a fashion; he would never have enlightened me. But that has nothing to do with the question. I do know, thanks to you who want to marry him. Well, win him if you can. The first step to that end is to get rid of me, and for that purpose I come to ask you for money enough to carry me to my old home. I do not know how much it will cost—not more than five pounds, I should think. I want it only to pay the cost of the journey; I would not eat food bought with money of yours. If you grudge it to me, I can do without it. There's another way for me to leave Gaspard free—a way that is always open to those who are beyond both hope and fear; but you can judge for yourself if my taking it would profit you. To me it matters little; but if I threw myself into the sea, or did anything of that sort, it would leave Gaspard remorseful, and I do not want that. I may kill myself when I get to Stromness, but he won't know of it. If I only leave him he will think—ah, never mind what!—but it will not grieve him much. And, therefore, it will answer your purpose better. Now do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said Sophie. She had been struck dumb by Thora's arguments, uttered quickly, but in a voice of the calmest tone, as if she was dealing with some unimportant, impersonal question. Poor Thora was not consciously cynical, but she stated the facts of her position and intentions in the way which seemed to her most within the compre-

hension of the woman she addressed. But even Sophie was frightened for a moment at what she was doing, when Thora explained the reasons for and against suicide. Only for a moment, however. After all, Thora did not mean to kill herself; and she would be a fool to refuse the opportunity of winning the man she desired, just for a weak hesitation about sacrificing another woman. After all, she thought, she had done all she could to make Thora miserable; there was no good in drawing back now. She hurried upstairs and brought back all the money she had with her.

"Take it all," she said; "you will need it, I am sure."

Sophie spoke tenderly, sympathetically, feeling indeed a genuine pity for this poor, deceived girl, whose eyes she had been the means of opening to her false position, but not swerving from her intentions for all that.

"I will take five pounds," said Thora. "That is as much as I shall need. If there is any left after I get to Stromness, I will send it back to you. There's no need for you to adopt a strain of charity; you are serving yourself, not me."

She took the money she wanted, and went away, walking firmly and calmly towards the railway-station. It was Sophie who was so unnerved that she had to sit down in the hall for a few minutes, till her heart should recover its steady beating, now lost to an unusual degree. That steady pulsation seemed unwilling to come back; ten minutes after Thora had gone, Sophie was still sitting there as flushed and breathless as ever. Eleanor Mason, whom she had left upstairs when she heard that Thora wanted her, came down at last to look for her, wondering what detained her so long. Sophie could struggle in face of difficulty; triumph unnerved her. But when she saw Miss Mason's face, growing anxious as she came towards her, she felt the necessity of taking up her rôle; and, with the necessity, regained the power of doing so—very woman in this, at least, that she could postpone the inevitable emotional reaction till the time for action was wholly past.

"Are you ill, Sophie?" asked Eleanor.

"No, not ill, chérie; only a little tired and saddened," said the French girl.

"Saddened! Why, what has happened?"

"Ah! you did not hear who my visitor was."

"No."

"It was Gaspard Harache's wife."

"What!"

"Yes. You know I visited her yesterday. I said nothing about her when I came home, because the visit had made my heart ache. She—she is a beautiful woman; that is all one can say for her. I suppose men find more satisfaction in beauty than we do—at least, I hope so, for poor Gaspard can have no other compensation for all he has lost for her sake than what he gets by looking at her. She is cold, harsh, uneducated; even I, who am not of her country, could see that. But that was all I saw yesterday, and I would not speak of that to you. But to-day she came here and spoke ill of Gaspard—abused him for having married her and brought her to poverty. It seems that they are terribly poor."

"I don't know about that. Your friend Gaspard has twenty-five shillings a week. Indeed, I'm not sure that papa hasn't raised his wages to thirty. He spoke of doing so."

"Ah! even then it is not an enormous sum. Still, they need not starve if Madame Gaspard were careful. Probably she is not. At least, she came here to-day to borrow money from me."

This was Sophie's ingenious version of poor Thora's request.

Eleanor looked shocked. There was something repulsive in the idea of a woman who on so slight acquaintance came to ask money from a friend of her husband's, even supposing—and naturally Miss Mason did not give Thora the benefit of the doubt—even supposing she did not know this friend to have been his destined wife, a chosen candidate for the place she had won.

"The horrid creature! You didn't give her any, I hope?" ejaculated Miss Mason.

"Oh, yes! I did. I gave her five pounds. I suppose you think me foolish, but I could not refuse to give the money; it may purchase some luxury for Gaspard. My poor friend! He was not accustomed to live on twenty-five shillings a week."

"My dear Sophie, it's evident you're a foreigner. A woman like that! Why, it's more than probable that she gets drunk, and that's how they are so poor. She'll just waste this."

"Do you think so? How terrible!" cried Sophie, with an aspect of distress. "Poor Gaspard, poor Gaspard! Will you think me very wicked, Eleanor, if I tell you that all this draws me more to Gaspard

than any prosperity of his could have done? To know that he is poor and unhappy makes me—yes, I will venture to say it—makes me love him!"

Honest, dull-witted Eleanor clasped her friend in her arms. "I suppose it is wrong," she said, "but, considering everything—and I know you don't mean anything wicked—I understand how you feel so. Poor Sophie, poor darling!"

Sophie accepted the embrace gratefully, and, being in a rather hysterical condition, even shed a few tears. But she pulled herself together soon, and kissed her friend with a gratitude which was not wholly false. Sophie always liked the people whom she deceived, and liked them the better the more easily she deceived them. We all like the people who make easier our path in life.

Sophie soon dried her eyes, and managed to look herself again.

"What a trouble I am to you!" she exclaimed. "Now I will go out for a little—there is such a delightful freedom in being able to go out by oneself! If you will not be very angry I will go to the dockyard and see Gaspard. I should like to find out if it is not possible to bring about a reconciliation between him and his mother. Poor Gaspard, if I could only help him!"

She was rather afraid that Eleanor would disapprove of her going again to see Gaspard; but, though the English girl's instincts went against such a step, she was young enough to be carried off by the romance of Sophie's hopeless and self-sacrificing love. And it is very difficult to express disapproval of the conduct of a guest. So Miss Mason made no opposition.

Gaspard was working on the deck of a sloop that was nearly finished. So near completion was it that some men were engaged in taking away a great number of the props that held it in place in the dock, to facilitate its being launched on the following day.

"Take care not to take away too many," Gaspard had warned the workmen, "or the vessel may fall over on its side."

As, however, the supervision of this work did not happen to be Gaspard's special duty, the men conscientiously did not heed his advice.

His face lightened when he saw Sophie coming; then flushed with a dull red, and grew gloomier than before. The girl came up to him without speaking, and let her

hand lie in his for a long time. As a matter of fact, she had no words ready; and, moreover, she felt that in coming to Gaspard to-day she was taking a dangerous step. On the other hand, she wished her image to be not far distant from Gaspard's mind when first he learned of his wife's desertion. She told herself, too, that she was attempting a less dangerous feat to-day than yesterday, when her attempt to conquer Thora might have ended in the latter being unabashed, and giving Gaspard such an account of her doings as would have made him hate her for ever. Nevertheless she felt, unreasonably enough, that it was harder to face the man she loved than the woman she hated.

"You are very good, Sophie," said Gaspard at last, letting her hand fall from his clasp—"very good to come and see me in my exile."

"Ah, Gaspard, am I good? Am I not the opposite of good to bring to your mind recollections which must make your exile harder to bear? Would it not be better for you to forget that there is such a place as le Havre, that you have a mother and friends who love you?"

"Do they—does my mother, at least—love me? I sometimes doubt her love."

"You wrong her. If you saw her now, saw how she has aged since you left, you would not doubt her affection for you, nor the pain your going away has caused her. Gaspard, will you not come back?"

"My mother would not do the thing that would have prevented my going away—the thing that would make my coming back possible."

"And that thing, Gaspard—what is it? Will you not tell me?"

"It is useless, Sophie; you cannot understand; I cannot explain."

"So! She has told him nothing about my visit. That is good. My way is easy," she said to herself.

"You think me stupid," she exclaimed aloud. "Perhaps I am, I never professed to be clever. Yet for your sake, Gaspard, I think I could understand many things that would otherwise be beyond me. Or if I cannot—Gaspard, give me a message to your mother, something that I may repeat even without understanding. She does not know where you are. You seemed so determined to cut yourself off from us all, that I did not feel free to tell her where you had gone. But now will you not let

me say that I have found you, and that you will return, if—if what?"

"If she will receive Thora Sweynson as my wife," said Gaspard, thus accepting Sophie's intervention.

Sophie repeated the words, not wholly able to exclude from them the bitterness they bore for her. Then with a sudden outburst of jealousy she exclaimed: "You love her so much, then, that everything—mother, friends, country, wealth—is well lost for her sake?"

"My honour binds me to her," he answered, speaking almost sullenly, for Sophie's words reiterated a question he had often asked himself.

As he spoke the sloop rocked a little, and remained poised slightly on one side.

"They have taken away too many of the props," exclaimed Gaspard, quickly.

"Come, Sophie, let us get away."

He took her hand to lead her towards the plank that went from the deck of the vessel to the side of the dock; but she did not think there was danger in so slight a movement, and hung back. Her chance of winning Gaspard was the one thing of importance to her then.

"It is honour that binds you, then, not love?" she said. "But if in honour you could feel yourself free—what then?"

He was still drawing her towards the side, but he turned to answer her question, and turning read her secret in her eyes. With the knowledge came the conviction that Thora's despair of the night before had some connection with Sophie and the question she now asked. She, too, was in the conspiracy to lead him to dishonour. He had loved her till now, but always as an angel, pure, and gentle, and innocent; never as a faulty woman whom he could care for, faults and all, never even as he had loved poor beautiful, passionate, imperfect Thora. And seeing her as she was, no pure-souled saint, but a woman who would lead him into sin to gratify herself, his love vanished in an instant, lost in horror.

He loosened his grasp of her, and stopped for a moment to answer her. "Understand that I have taken Thora Sweynson to be my wife in the sight of God, and in happiness or misery, good or evil, I will be true to her as long as I live."

He had scarcely finished the words when the sloop fell over on one side with a great crash, and the two were thrown violently against the wall of the dock.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XLV.

THAT swift drive in the darkness along the steep road was one to be remembered. The wind seemed to increase in strength with every half-mile they covered. It was not a mighty wind, but a strong, rushing one that filled Madge's ears with all sorts of strange, wild cries, and seemed to bring the rush of the ocean to the very road-side long before they neared the coast. There was a moon, nearly at its full, a cold, white, ghastly thing which showed now and again when a gust of wind swept away an inky mountain of cloud. Madge held her watch in her hand the whole distance in order to take advantage of every such passing gust. It had been half-past five as a turn in the road had hidden the slate roofs and grey walls of Lower Upton from view, and seven o'clock chimed from the village church as the sturdy chestnuts clattered along the stony street of bleak little Elstree.

Here, at the little inn which vaunted itself as a "railway hotel," Madge dismissed her post-boy with his tired horses, and took possession of the only two which the stables of the small hostelry could supply, thereby cutting off from the Count all means of transit to Cregan's Head from this place, save that which his legs afforded.

She reckoned that by this time he must have accomplished about half of his short railway journey from Lower Upton to Elstree, and that consequently in half an

hour's time he would be exactly at this point in his road. To this half-hour she thankfully added another for the two miles' walk along the steep dark road which lay between Elstree and Cregan's Head.

Madge knew Elstree very well, but, as it chanced, had never been to Cregan's Head, in spite of its short distance from Upton. Although she had frequently heard it described as "the other end of nowhere," or "a God-forgotten place, where gulls were plentiful and Christians few," she was totally unprepared for the scene of utter desolation which met her view, as the man pulled up his steaming horses at the foot of a narrow pathway which seemed cut out of a mass of black rock.

"It's as near as I can take you, ma'am," he said in reply to Madge's astonished exclamation:

"But surely this is not Cregan's Head!"

She strained her eyes, peering into the surrounding darkness.

"Which way lies the coastguard station?" she asked. "Where is the little fishing hamlet, and where the old lighthouse?"

Behind her the bare, grey road, along which they had driven, wound away into gloom; before her stood the dark mass of rock, cleft by the narrow, upward-winding pathway; on her left-hand lay a dim waste of country, with stunted trees showing black out of the whitish ocean mist which overhung it; on her right hand stretched the expanse of ocean—miles upon miles of moving, rushing, noisy darkness.

The man answered her questions in succession.

"The coastguard station is two miles distant, ma'am, on the other sides of these rocks, and the fishing hamlet is half a mile beyond that. This pathway, after winding

upwards a little way, descends to a sandy hollow, in which, so far as I know, are only two cottages. A ridge of low rocks stretches out from this hollow, and on these rocks stands the old lighthouse."

It was not a tempting prospect this—of having to follow this steep, narrow pathway without lantern or guide.

"If I could leave my horses, ma'am," began the man.

But at this moment a light shone in gradual approach along the road they had just quitted. It suggested to Madge the cheering possibility of a local guide.

To save time, she advanced to meet the light, and found it to be a big lantern carried by a man of about sixty years of age, clad in the rough serge of a fisherman.

In addition to his lantern he carried a basket and sundry bundles, which seemed to suggest the likelihood that he was returning from a day's marketing in a neighbouring village.

He stopped at the unwonted sight of a lady and post-horses.

Madge accosted him, and stated her business in a breath.

"I want to get to the other side of these rocks," she said. "Is there any one called Harold Svenson living there? Does he live in the old lighthouse, or at one of the two cottages which I am told are in the hollow below here?"

Fortunately the man was able to give her the information she wanted. He lived in one of those two cottages, he said, and Harold Svenson lived in the other, using the old lighthouse simply as an observatory.

"And a mighty lot of queer things he has put i' the light-room, ma'am," he went on to say. "Telescopes—Lord ha' mercy on us!—that show what's going on i' the moon, an' clocks that ha' insides to them big enuff to lie down in; and tell the time they do in such outlandish fashion that naebody can understan' them."

It was easy to secure the services of the old man as guide, so Madge at once dismissed the postboy and his horses, exacting from him the promise that, in consideration of the handsome fee she had paid him, he would not take his horses back to Elstree that night, but would put up at the village on the farther side of Cregan's Head.

A fitful gleam of moonlight enabled her to look at her watch once more. It was just three minutes past the half-hour.

The Count must be getting dangerously near to Elstree now.

The old fisherman grew loquacious as they trudged along the rocky path. He took the weather-side, putting Madge under shelter of the rocks. Every now and then the rush of the wind carried his voice away, and she could only get at his long speeches in snatches.

He had been a fisherman all his life, he said; his name was Thomas Cundy—he pronounced it "Tammas Coondy"—he hadn't a big boat now, but just a little cockle-shell of a thing that he had made for himself. He lived all alone in his little cottage; his wife was dead; his daughters were married. He "did" for himself; made his own clothes—

But here Madge interrupted him, her impatience refusing to be longer restrained.

"Had Harold Svenson lately had a young lady—a foreigner—as a visitor?" she asked.

The old man nodded.

"A young lady, yes. Some fouk wud ha' called her a witch." Here a prolonged shake of the head did duty for a sentence. No one scarce had heard her open her lips, and he was told she had come from they outlandish foreign parts where people didn't know decent English ways.

As they had talked, their path had been sloping downwards. A black chasm of a hollow lay at their feet, out of which a curl of red smoke, puffed this way and that way by the wind, showed where a human habitation stood.

Cundy nodded to it.

"That's fro' my chimney," he said. "Svenson an' his wife ha' been abed the last half-hour."

"In bed," repeated Madge, dismayed at the possibility of having to arouse the old couple before she could get speech with Etelka.

They were standing on a ledge just over Cundy's hut. On the other side of the hollow, at about the same level, a dark square blot indicated Svenson's cottage. From top to bottom of it not a glimmer of light was to be seen. Looking seawards, Madge could make out a black line about sixty yards out at sea—a ridge of sunken rocks, no doubt; for there, out of a mist of dashing spray, arose the gaunt outline of the disused lighthouse.

The old man nodded towards it.

"She's there—the strange young woman," he said, "she's not gone to bed, like other Christian fouk."

"What!" cried Madge, aghast, "she's alone there this terrible night!"

"It's her own doing—naobody could keep her indoors. You see Svenson had her here to help him wi' his books and look up at the stars for him—he's gone blind you know—but directly he set her there to look through his telescope, he couldn't get her awa' fro' it. She crouches over the fire i' the day time i' the lower room, and so soon as the sun sets, she goes up to the light-room and stares at the stars and says her prayers to them as if they were living things. Svenson won't get his book done if he waits for her help I'm thinking. Here we are, ma'am, at Svenson's door. Shall I knock the old people up?"

Madge thought awhile. Why disturb them? Her mission was to Etelka and Etelka only.

She pointed to the gaunt tower with the white-crested waves dashing furiously against it.

"Can I get there to-night, will your boat take me?" she asked.

Cundy shook his head. "Better wait till mornen, ma'am," he said. "The wind is gay bad. There are some nasty sharp rocks between this an' the lighthouse; you might walk across to it in fair weather scarce wetting your feet; but i' the dark with this sea!" and again he shook his head.

But Madge had not come all these miles to be turned back by the first glimpse of danger. She determined to be lavish with her gold again.

"Listen," she said. "I am a rich woman. I'll give you twenty—thirty pounds if you'll take me across to that lighthouse in your little boat."

The man hesitated a moment, then he shook his head again. "Na, na," he said. "I'm a Christian man, and I've a soul to be savit. I would na risk your life, my leddie, for thirty pounds. If it were only my ain——" here he broke off.

"It will be at my own risk," said Madge, "not yours. See, I will give you forty—fifty—sixty pounds if you'll just row me across that little bit of water!"

"That little bit of water!" The phrase but ill represented the sixty yards of wild sea which lay between them and the lighthouse.

Possibly the prospect of so large a recompense made the old man feel a little less like "a Christian man with a soul to be savit," for after muttering something which the racket of wind and wave

prevented Madge hearing, he bade her wait there in a sheltered corner of the beach while he ran his boat out and saw what he could do.

Minutes seemed to prolong themselves to hours while Madge stood there with that gloomy lighthouse facing her. Once more she pulled out her watch—the hands pointed to five minutes to eight; the Count by this time, most likely, had covered three parts of the road which lay between Elstree and Cregan's Head. Heaven grant that he might miss his way in the dark, and again and again have to retrace his steps!

And it so chanced that exactly at the moment when the dark figure of old Cundy, dragging his boat behind him, appeared on the beach, Lance, with a heavy heart, was pulling up at a road-side inn, half-way between Carstairs and Cregan's Head, with his horse hopelessly lamed by a big boulder lying in the dark road.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BEFORE she got into that boat Madge had a request to make.

"After you've taken me across that little bit of water," she said, trying to keep up her grand show of courage, "shall you come back here with your boat, or will you stay all night at the lighthouse?"

The old man jerked his head towards his hut, where the dull light of a peat fire showed through one window.

"I've just put a bit o' bacon on th' peat for my supper; it'll want turnin' by the time I get back," he said, deeming that an all-sufficient answer.

Madge again thanked Heaven for her gold. "Listen," she said. "As I told you before, I am a rich woman, and I don't mind spending my money when I want a thing done. I am Mrs. Cohen from Upton Castle; do you know me by name?"

Cundy nodded. Madge's name, as local benefactress, was known all over the county.

"Very well. Do you wish to earn a hundred pounds by this night's work?"

"A hundred pounds!"

"Yes, I will give you that, if, so soon as you get back, you will stave in your boat—before you turn your bacon even."

The old man gave a sorrowful look at his boat.

"I've had un a long time, it's like a living thing to me, but still—a hundred pounds 's a goodish bit of money. Yes, I'll do it, never fear, my leddie."

"And," Madge went on, "soon after you get back a man—a gentleman—will possibly find his way to your hut and want you to help him get across to the lighthouse. You must give him no help whatever. Remember, I have bought your services until the morning. Promise me that not a soul shall cross after me to the lighthouse before then."

The old man was profuse in his promises and protestations.

Directly he had taken his old boat to pieces, he said, he would turn in, put out his fire and all lights, and then not a soul would find out his hut under the shadow of the shelving rocks. As for Svenson, supposing the gentleman succeeded in finding him out, he would be unable to afford any help for he owned to nothing in the shape of a boat.

Madge's courage nearly gave way when she and Cundy were fairly launched on "that little bit of water." She could never, at her best, boast of much physical courage, and now what with her rapid travelling and the excitement she had gone through that day, she was beginning to feel far from her best. She hid her eyes with her hand, and sat shivering in the stern of the little boat as it bravely mounted crest after crest of the furious waves. Every moment she expected they would be dashed to pieces against some sharp jutting crag of that low ridge of rocks, which stretched away from the beach to the lighthouse.

The old man, however, knew his ground, and kept as straight a course as wind and wave would let him. He had not battled with the elements on that coast for fifty years for nothing.

As they neared the lighthouse, the dull, red glare of a fire showed through a high narrow slit which served for a window. The old man directed Madge's attention to it, exclaiming that, "they furriners were nowt without a fire."

Madge drew her hands from her eyes to find that the boat had reached the foot of a flight of steps, which had been let down from another window below the narrow slit to meet the exigencies of the high tide; ingress and egress being no longer possible through the door of the lowest room.

The boat tossed now high on top of a wave, now low in its trough. Drenched to the skin and half-blinded with spray, it was with difficulty, and many a misgiving, that Madge scrambled out of the boat and gained the topmost of that flight of steps.

"Push the wooden flap—it opens on th' inside—it's nowt but a shutter," shouted the old man; and then his boat was tossed away in the darkness, and the rest of his words were lost to her.

Madge, in haste, pushed back the flap and crept in, fearful lest the next puff of wind might whirl her away like a leaf into the blackness beyond.

For a moment, as she stood within, she could hear nothing—see nothing—for the outside racket of the gale still filled her ears, and she had brought into the light-tower with her a rush of breeze which sent the smoke from the peat fire, that burned upon the hearth, whirling in all directions, and obscured the sullen gleam of the firelight. Other light there was none.

Presently those clouds of smoke parted, and Madge could make out that the room in which she stood was lofty, but circumscribed at the farther end by a flight of steps, which wound away upward into darkness. The lowest steps also were begirt with shadows and whirling wreaths of smoke. Out of those cloudy wreaths a pair of large, luminous eyes seemed for a moment to look out at her, and then disappeared. The haze of the smoke made everything uncertain; but she could feel the silent presence of Etelka McIvor, though her eyes failed to assure her of the fact. Madge thought of the last time that she had seen those large, desolate eyes, and her courage began to fail her. She felt that she must speak or succumb as to a spell.

"Are you there, Miss McIvor? I am Mrs. Cohen. I have come to speak to you on an urgent matter," she said in a voice which even to her own ears sounded strangely.

Then, from out the smoke wreaths and shadows at the farther end of the room the tall, slender figure of Etelka slowly advanced and came to a standstill within two yards of Madge.

Madge stretched out her hands by way of greeting.

"Forgive me if I am abrupt," she said; "but time is precious to-night."

Etelka did not speak, did not take the proffered hands, and Madge bethought her of other things beside abruptness for which she ought to beg forgiveness.

She let her hands fall to her side.

"I do not wonder that you will not shake hands with me," she said sadly. "I did you a grievous wrong once, but I have come travelling to you to-night in the dark

and in the storm, to try and undo that wrong—to make amends for it, if amends are possible.”

Etelka drew a step nearer. The smoke carried by the current was making its way now for the aperture which served as chimney. The red gleam of the fire threw a fitful light across the gloom, and Madge could get a clearer view of the girl's face. Madge thought that she had learnt to know that face; she had seen it rigid and white as carven marble; she had seen it soften and glow as might a carven marble statue flushing into warm life; she had seen it brilliantly beautiful, radiant with hope, as on the night of the ball; and she had seen it darkened with forlornness and despair before that night had come to an end. But the face which confronted her now was none of these.

“Jael, who drove the tent peg into the tired Sisera's forehead, might have had much such a face,” Madge had said to herself on the first day that she and Etelka had met. Now, if time had been given her to put her thoughts into words, she would have said:

“Jael, with a deed of blood in her past, turned prophetess, priestess, seer, might have much such a look as that in her eyes. Is she looking at me or at things in the room which I do not see? Is she talking to me now or answering voices which I do not hear?”

The last thought was caused by Etelka saying in slow, low tones:

“I knew it would come to-night. I said to myself: ‘I may shut myself up here alone, and the winds may make the waves my jailers; all the same, my fate will find me out.’ And lo, it comes travelling to me in the darkness and storm!”

Madge's heart sank. This was the woman she wished to inspire with energy to fight a pursuing evil in the strength of an encompassing love!

“If Fate is finding you out to-night,” she said, trying her utmost to speak out bravely, “it must be a glad and happy fate, for I come as a messenger of glad tidings. Listen, I bring you news of Lance. He will be here to-morrow morning—the very first thing I hope—to tell you all over again how truly he loves you, and how that it was only in seeming that he gave you up, when he thought, as we all did, that you had—died at Liverpool.”

She faltered over the concluding words. But it was impossible to avoid abruptness.

Necessity was laid upon her to say all that she had to say rapidly. In truth, she thought little of the manner of her speech in her eagerness to unfold to Etelka's view the bright things the future might have in store for her, before she told the evil tidings of Count Palliardini, his threats and pursuit.

But it seemed as if Madge might as well have shouted her good tidings to the stone walls which shut them in, as into Etelka's ears, for still as a statue the girl stood, with her large, dreamy eyes looking beyond, not at, the flushed, eager face which confronted hers.

Madge lost her self-control. She sprang forward, seizing both Etelka's hands in hers, and crying out impetuously:

“Oh, if one came to me, bringing the glad news I bring to you, I would not stand as you do, saying never a word? I would go down into the very dust and kiss the messenger's feet, and then I would jump up and clap my hands and shout for joy! Do you not understand me? I come from Lance, as Lance's messenger.”

Something of animation shone in the cold, pale face.

“You come as Lance's messenger, you say,” she said, in the same slow tones as before; “then take a message back from me to him. Tell him that since I saw him last a revelation has come to me—the stars have taught me things that they never taught me before.”

“Oh, do not talk of the stars now,” broke in Madge, impetuously.

Etelka held up her hand.

“Hush,” she said, “you are a messenger, you say, therefore you must take as well as bring a message. Promise me you will.”

“I promise,” answered Madge, strangely impressed with the solemnity of Etelka's manner. It might have been that of a person, who, about to depart on a very long journey, gives minute and special directions as to what is to be done during his absence.

“Say to him,” Etelka went on, “that, since I have been here in this lonely place, I have spent hours looking up at the stars through a grand telescope, and things have changed to me. Tell him I have seen the house of life in the heavens, and I have seen the house of death; but I have seen something else which has made life and death fade into nothingness. I have seen Eternity there—immeasurable time, immeasurable space—tell him that—promise me!”

"I promise," answered Madge, a sense of awe creeping over her, for Etelka's manner recalled now less that of a person about to depart on a long journey, than that of one about to undertake the longest journey of all—that journey from which there is no return.

There fell a pause. Outside sounded the solemn sound of wind calling to wave, wave answering to wind; within, those two women might have heard each breathe the other drew as they stood silently facing each other in the dim light.

Madge felt that she had succumbed to Etelka's strange powers of fascination, and to the weirdness of the scene, and had but ill done her work. Why should she, indeed, consent to carry Etelka's messages to Lance when—as she hoped—he would be here on the morrow, and receive them for himself? One half, also, of her mission remained unfulfilled; her bad news had yet to be told—perhaps it might make a deeper impression than her good appeared to have done—so, making a great effort, she broke the silence, and said:

"There is some one else I must speak to you about besides Lance, for he, also, is on his way to you to-night—some one whom you have no reason to love."

Etelka started, a change of expression passing over her face.

"Count Palliardini?" she exclaimed, under her breath.

Madge's reply was cut off by a heavy and prolonged puff of wind, which must have sent the sea dashing over the top of the lighthouse; it set the wooden flap, which served at once as window and shutter, rattling as if it were being shaken on the outside by a human hand.

Madge's fancy instantly conjured up a vision of Count Palliardini having succeeded somehow in obtaining a boat, and now standing outside on the steps seeking means of entry. She bethought her of the possibility of fastening down that wooden flap.

"Is there bolt or fastening to it?" she asked, at the same time crossing to the window to ascertain for herself what means of securing it could be improvised.

Etelka followed her. Madge pushed back the flap, and looked out into the darkness, in order to assure herself that her fears were groundless.

The salt spray dashed in her face, the wind sang in her ears. Clouds were scudding rapidly over the face of the wan

moon. Not a light was to be seen on the shore in either cottage, and the red curl of smoke from Cundy's fire had disappeared; so Madge dismissed her fears, concluding that the old man had kept and meant to keep his promise to her.

A dark mass of cloud at that moment separating, a fuller stream of light poured down from the faint moon; a receding wave, also, for a brief space left the air free from spray, and Madge could get a clearer view of the beach. In that brief space she saw something else beside the black outlines of coast and cliff—the figure of a man standing just where she had stood waiting for Cundy to bring his boat round. Then clouds swept over the moon once more, and sea and shore became again one dark expanse.

Madge knew that Etelka must have seen that man's figure as clearly as she had. She let fall the wooden shutter, and turned impetuously to the girl, taking both her hands in her own.

"Do not fear," she cried, "he can't get to us to-night. Cundy, at my request, has staved in his boat, and there is no other. And to-morrow Lance will be—must be—here!"

Etelka's hands were cold and trembling; her breathing came thick and fast.

"He will come—he will be here presently," she said, in low, hurried tones. "I know that man—he will lose his life—his soul—but let go his purpose—never!"

Madge noted with thankfulness that the girl did not say now, as she had so often before, "It is fate—I bow to it."

"I tell you it is impossible—impossible," Madge repeated, "for him to get here till the tide runs out, which will not be till morning. Oh, Etelka, have you no courage? How can you be so faint-hearted, when you have true and strong friends to take care of you, and such a bright future before you!"

All Etelka's reply was to free her hands from Madge's clasp, lift the wooden shutter, and peer out into the darkness once more.

And this is what they saw when, after a moment's waiting, the faint moonlight again filtered through the drifting clouds—the man standing in precisely the same spot on the beach, throwing off his heavy overcoat and boots, and tightening and drawing together his other garments. He meant to swim.

He, the dandy who carried a pocket-

comb, who had hands whiter than a woman's, and fit for no rougher work than the twanging of a guitar, was going to dare death in the darkness rather than defer his purpose by even a few hours.

A low cry escaped Etelka's lips.

Madge threw her arms round her.

"Promise me," she cried, "that you will not be frightened by his threats; that you will say 'No' to his entreaties! Think of Lance now on his road to you! Think of all the happiness that lies waiting for you!"

Etelka freed herself from Madge's arms.

"He will drown!" she said, in a strained, unnatural tone. "He will be dashed to pieces against the low ridge of rocks in the darkness!"

Even as she spoke black masses of clouds rolled up from the horizon, and the moon was gone.

She walked away to the fire, which still burned low on the hearth.

Madge wondered if she were going to take away the man's one chance by quenching that fire—it still threw a fitful gleam, which must have shone in the outside darkness through the glazed slit in the wall.

But the next moment showed her that Etelka had another purpose. With her foot she stirred the embers together, then, picking up a short pine-bough which lay on the hearth, she ignited it, and carried it, a blazing torch, to the window at which Madge still stood, and passed through it on to the outside wooden steps.

The life which she had once before attempted to destroy she would now do her utmost to save.

To the last hour of her life Madge never lost the vision of that tall, slender figure in shadowy, grey garments standing out there in the windy darkness, with flaming torch held high above her head. The wind tossed her black hair in disorder about her shoulders; the torch threw fitful light on the beautiful, white face, with wide-open, desolate eyes, and mouth slowly settling into hard, rigid lines.

Not a second Hero assuredly! For the priestess of Venus lighted the man she loved across the dark waters, but this one the man she hated!

And as Madge stood dumbly gazing at her, there came a sudden terrific blast which seemed to shake the lighthouse to its very foundations, and turned the solemn sound of wind and wave into one wild turmoil of rushing, dashing fury, as of some fiend-orchestra let loose upon creation.

The wooden shutter was wrenched from Madge's hand, the embers of the peat-fire were swept from the hearth, and the room for a moment seemed filled with whirling clouds of smoke and salt spray, which came rushing in through the now unshuttered window.

Something else fell upon Madge's ear beside the roar of the gale and the dash of the waves—a human cry, a crash, and then a great stillness, which seemed something other than the sudden lulling of the wind.

And when, half-blinded with smoke and spray, and with a great terror at her heart, Madge ventured once more to peer out into the darkness, no slender figure holding high a flaring torch was to be seen, nor dark form battling with the angry waves; all that met her eye was the great, black, desolate expanse of furious ocean; nothing else.

"I did my best, Lance, for you—for her," said Madge as she ended the terrible story which, with quivering lips and many a halt, she told him on the morrow.

But Lance stood looking at her, saying never a word, struck into silence, not alone by the greatness of the tragedy, but by the magnitude of Madge's love for him, which, until that moment, he had never measured.

EPILOGUE.

SIX telegrams from Sir Peter Critchett:
No. 1.—To the Rev. Joshua Parker, Chadwick Coal Pits, Durham:

"I know you will be glad to hear that the marriage of my adopted son and Mrs. Cohen—delayed a year ago—took place this morning. Excuse haste; my hands are very full."

No. 2.—To Mrs. Lancelot Clive, Hôtel des Anglais, Nice:

"So glad you remembered to send Lady Judith the patent incubators from Paris. I start at once for Redesdale to see that things are going on all right there."

No. 3.—To same:

"Arrived safely at Redesdale. Lovely weather."

No. 4.—To same:

"Glad I came here. Lots of things want seeing to. The weather-cock on the top of the village church has stuck at north-east."

No. 5.—To Lancelot Clive, Esq, Hôtel des Anglais, Nice:

"Forgot to tell you I went to see

Stubbs, at Millbank, the other day. Poor fellow—truly penitent—must look after him when he comes out."

No. 6.—To same :

"Don't let Madge worry about the weather-cock, I'll have it set going before you get back. Will telegraph again to-morrow."

MISTLETOE AND HOLLY.

TIME out of mind it has been the jolly custom of the English people to deck their houses and churches with evergreens at Christmas.

Howbeit, four or five centuries ago, almost the only greeneries to be got were holly and ivy—not counting mistletoe, which is not "greens" at Covent Garden; for laurels, and all the other shrubs originally exotic, though they now flourish as natives, were not found in England.

Box there was, of course; but then it only grew in certain places. At present, it only grows wild at Boxhill, in Surrey. And though yew was plentiful enough, it was looked upon from its associations as an ill-omened, uncanny tree, not to be lightly brought into houses.

To have stuck a branch of yew in the hall over a reveller's head at Yuletide, would have been as much as to suggest that, merry and snug as he sat there then, he might soon be lying in the churchyard with a whole tree of it waving over him.

Ivy, too, seems somehow to have been held an inferior—a vulgar, base-born sort of tree, compared to gentleman holly; perhaps for no better reason than that from its humble limpness of character it could only be dealt with in wreaths and festoons, which lazy people thought it trouble to make, whereas the bold holly stood up well and stiffly wherever it was ordered, like a sturdy spearman under arms.

Witness the old song of "Holly and Ivy," of the time of Henry the Sixth :

Nay, Ivy, nay,
Hyt shal not be, I wys,
Let Holy have the maystery,
As the manner ys.

Holy stand in the halle,
So fayre to behold;
Ivy stand without the dore,
She ys ful sore a-cold.

And again an old carol praises the good-breeding of the holly :

Here comes the Holly, that is so gent.

However, by the end of the seventeenth century, many kinds of foreign shrubs had been introduced into England, and become common, so that old Herrick could sing of

The holly and bay,
In their green array,
Spread over the walls and dishes,

But at the present time poor holly is much fallen from his former high estate in the churches at Christmas time; and, indeed, in many is quite neglected.

Ultra-refined people think he has a vulgar smack about him of inn-parlours and plum-pudding.

High art is to the fore in things ecclesiastical, as in all else, and church decorations mean all sorts of æsthetic and hieroglyphic floral emblems and devices, with gold and silver foil, red and yellow cloth, cotton wool, and no end of pots of greenhouse-flowers. The general effect is doubtless charming, and does the greatest credit to the invention and fingers of the fair artists; but it would have driven an old-fashioned sexton to imitate the man of Thessaly in nursery rhymes, and scratch his eyes out by taking a header into the next holly-bush.

Those whose memories can carry them back thirty years, know how differently things were done then.

The only decorator was the sexton aforesaid, or clerk, with a schoolboy or two to help him, and the decorations were conducted on the simple plan of sticking branches of holly, large or small, into gimlet holes made along the tops of the old high pews; and the chief glory centered, not about the altar, as at the present day, but around the pulpit, where the "christmas" was stuck so high and thick that the preacher looked like a Jack-in-the-green, or the ram caught in a thicket. Sometimes he even nearly disappeared altogether till Candlemas, which was the proper time for taking the holly forest down.

The system was certainly a rough one, from a strictly artistic point of view; but it had the merit of following the "wildness of nature." Occasionally, too, it was productive of various unrehearsed effects. For instance, in the evening service, when the greenery had got pretty dry, the flaring flame of a tallow candle or oil lamp—there was no gas in any country church in those days—would set a bough on fire with a loud crackling of leaves and an aromatic smoke, to the discomfiture of the

inmates of the pew and the delight of the schoolboys.

But the sexton—who was perhaps standing with his back to the blazing fire which he had just stirred up in the large open stove contiguous to the Squire's pew, and critically enjoying the sermon—would come promptly up, and, tearing the burning branch out of the gimlet hole, cast it on the stone floor, and, as he himself expressed it, "stomp it out."

What pleased the little girls much more than the miniature bonfire—which rather frightened them—was when a robin, which had wandered into the church, attracted by the greenery, flew about twittering and perching from place to place—now on a bough on the pulpit, now on the cover of the holly-wreathed font, with an expression in his twinkling black eyes which plainly said: "Any crumbs?"

No one who has not been to Covent Garden Market, at Christmas time, before daylight in the morning, can have any idea of the immense quantity of holly and mistletoe which comes to London.

For a full week before Christmas Day, great waggons, vans, and carts, carrying their towering loads, keep on arriving, and as fast as they arrive they are unloaded, and depart to make room for more.

Nearly all the holly is home-grown, and comes chiefly from Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, and a few other counties, in whose woods, and hedgerows, and deep, tangled lanes the bill-hook has been ruthlessly wielded by strong hands for a fortnight past.

The holly is divided into three qualities: that which has plenty of berries, that which has a few, and that which has none. Of course, the quantity of berries varies from one season to another; according to the old saying, when there are a great many, it is a sign of a hard winter.

Holly is of two sexes, male and female; the former with few or no berries and very strong, prickly leaves; the latter—as becomes the softer sex—with pliant leaves, few prickles, and, in favourable years, thickly adorned with bright scarlet berries.

There is also white holly, very pretty, but not much in market request.

Holly is one of the hardest of trees, and even flourishes in the gardens of smoky London; and what is still more to its credit, keeps its leaves glossy and clean. It makes the best of living fences, and its stems are so strong, and array of close-set spears so formidable, that few animals will try to go through it.

On the sheltered and sunny side of an old holly-hedge, perhaps eight or nine feet high, and as many thick, it is always warm, even when the keenest winter winds are blowing. It puts forth its small white blossoms in May.

The "greenwood tree" of the old poets is thought by some to have been the holly, which anciently grew often in whole woods together. There is probably more wild holly in Surrey than in any other county. The wood is valued by the turner, and the engraver finds it a good substitute for box; the young straight stems make good walking-sticks.

Though there is plenty of mistletoe in England, not much of it finds its way to London. What does come is from the cider counties, where it grows on the apple-trees.

But the chief supply is from the north of France, Normandy and Brittany, the people of which parts propagate and cultivate it in the great orchards as carefully as the apple-trees themselves; in fact, you may see whole acres of trees given up to mistletoe.

In consequence of this careful cultivation, the French parasite is much finer than its English cousin, and worth more money. It is gathered, packed in great crates, and shipped in steamer to Southampton, whence the South-Western brings it up to London.

The price varies from fifteen to twenty-five shillings a crate, according to quality. It is a ticklish commodity, for it soon withers if left exposed to very keen wind or hard frost after it has been cut. It is soon damaged, too, and its berries easily knocked off, by rough usage; moreover, the French farmers have, it is said, a trick of putting good "stuff" on the top and outside of the crate, and filling in with "rubbish," so that it behoves a buyer to be wary, or he may lose by his bargain. But, as a rule, Covent Garden buyers are a very wary class indeed.

The old school-books of our childhood used to tell us that mistletoe "grew on the oak, and was much venerated by the Druids."

Well, it was venerated by the Druids, and it did not grow on the oak, or, at least, so seldom that when it was found there it made a red-letter day in their calendar.

The Arch-Druid was immediately sent for to come and cut it off with a golden knife. But what happened to the man

who had found it nobody knows, for the ancient writers have not told us. Perhaps he was as great a hero as a modern bowler who has done the "hat trick."

Kissing under the mistletoe is a very old custom, invented probably by the Druids. Some say that a man may kiss a maiden as many times as there are berries on the bough, provided she consents to it. Blackbirds, thrushes, starlings, and other birds love the berries of both mistletoe and holly. Poor things! how unhappy they must be to see their winter store carried away!

The great business time at Covent Garden is from three to six in the morning.

Most Londoners consider this the middle of the night in winter; but the market is crowded; gas flaring; porters hurrying with huge burthens; dealers inspecting "stuff;" holly and mistletoe everywhere; waggoners pulling at their horses; hundreds of vehicles, from great railway vans and carts down to costermongers' barrows; shouting, chaffing, swearing!—yet nearly every one, on the whole, good-humoured, considering the enormous amount of work to be done and the short time in which to do it.

Now the sales begin.

Twenty auctioneers, every one with his desk and porter beside him, form each the centre of a crowd of eager bidders.

"Now then, first lot!" and the panting porter bangs down a great crate of mistletoe, by some miracle, on nobody's toes. "How much?"

"Twelve shillings, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty!"

"Yours."

And down comes the hammer.

"Next lot!"

This is a great bundle of holly, or perhaps young firs for Christmas trees.

So it goes on without stopping, till the sales are over, and the buyers, who all pay ready money (no credit), begin to clear away their lots.

About six o'clock the costers and "little men" come in, to pick up odds and ends at low prices; and in a couple of hours more the market will begin to look empty and deserted.

How all the thickly packed waggons, carts, and barrows have got safely away is more wonderful even than how they came in.

Soon the tide will begin to set back again, and the same wonderful scene will

be repeated day after day till Christmas Eve is over.

Holly fetches, wholesale, from eighteenpence to six shillings a bundle, according to size and quality.

The poorest working-man's wife, when she goes out on Christmas Eve to do her shopping, will, by hook or by crook, have a penny to spare out of her slender purse to buy a spray or two of red-berried holly, which will be carried home in triumph, and stuck up in their room to make it, as she says, "Christmas-like."

LITTLE NIEL'S RED MAN.

LITTLE NIEL lived in the loveliest and wildest district of Donegal, on the banks of Mulroy, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean, which looked like a lake, with gigantic mountains all around, and sloping farms creeping yearly further up their sides. Mountain ponies climbed these steep fields like goats.

There were beautiful green islands of every shape conceivable, sleeping upon the water's breast—*islands sacred to the seals, a soft-eyed race that loved to bask on summer evenings, and that took to the waves when the fishermen passed by singing Irish songs; and islands given up to sea-birds.*

The home of Niel was opposite Bird Island, so called because the gulls built their nests upon it so close together that it was first white with eggs, and then grey with fluffy fledglings; and, later, dense flocks of white gulls covered the water, gently tossing up and down like fairy boats.

It can be imagined that this island was dear to the heart of every boy in the country; and of course it had many attractions for Niel. Nature was so charming that the landscape made the educated traveller dream of fairyland; and, as his foot pressed cushions of wild thyme, and he plucked oxlips and the nodding violet, he was fain to connect the spot with our great poet's fair imagination.

Yet little though he believed it, the place was a veritable fairyland!

Just below Niel's house was the "gentle thorn," a gnarled and lichen-grown hawthorn, and on summer evenings it was lighted up as if every old knob was on fire, while flutes and pipes of a silver tone sounded gaily.

On a May Eve, or Halloween, especially, the elfin music was loud, and Niel and his

brothers and sisters watched little, nimble fingers moving round the tree.

One day, as Niel's mother and her two servants were spinning at the fireside, a tiny woman entered, and said: "Wad you like me to gie you a hand wi' your spinning?"

"Ay, surely, an' thank you kindly, good woman," replied Ellie McColgan, without observing that the visitor had not wished the house "good luck."

The small woman sat down at once and began to spin, working in so marvellous a manner that she got through more work in an hour than the mistress and the two servants put together. She was thanked and begged to prolong her visit, and every one in the house treated her as an honoured guest. The strongest cup of tea, the warmest corner in the chimney-nook were given her. Thus she lived a member of the family, nursing the children, spinning hanks of yarn, doing many a hand's turn about the farm; and a week went by. But she disappeared as suddenly as she came.

Some time afterwards the master of the house wakened very early, and, looking out of bed, saw her sitting at the fire.

"Welcome, good woman," cried he, "I hope you are come to stop wi' us?"

"Na, na; I was just waiting till you wakened. I'm come for my wages."

"Troth, my decent woman, I'm right glad to hear that, for you're deserving o' wages. What shall I gi'e you?"

"Naething but a plate o' meal; but gi'e it quick, for they are waiting on me out-bye."

McColgan jumped up and gave her the meal, and would have gone with her to the door, but she pushed him back, and hurried away, clapping the door behind her. He heard whispering and trampling outside the house. These sounds ceased; and, plucking up courage, he lifted the latch and looked out. No one was to be seen. The rising sun was gilding the waters of Mulroy; touching the islands with green, white, and crimson; lighting up Crohan and the chapel, and the dark mountain range of Knockalla. His eye fell on Bird Island far beneath him, then swept the wide landscape, resting longest on the winding road to the left, where the highway from the broad Atlantic wound past Kindrum, under the lofty mountains of the Carne. Failing to discover any trace of his late visitor, he went back to awake the sleeping family.

"It's well we were kindly wi' thon old woman," said he, "for I'm certain sure she's ane o' them we willna name."

Soon after this adventure little Niel was playing on Bird Island. McColgan happened to be employed in ploughing his field near the gnarled hawthorn, when he heard shrill cries, and, recognising his son's voice, he ran down the bank and crossed the shingly neck of land that separated Bird Island from the mainland at low tide. The pretty boy stood watching his jacket floating away on the Lough, and he was crying bitterly.

"The saints be between us an' harm! What ails the wean!" cried McColgan.

"The red man! The red man!" sobbed Niel in lively terror, and he would say no more. His father had heard from old people that the fairy king appeared as a red man, and that when the queen sent him to steal a mortal child, he first took some article of its clothing away with him. All this flashed into his mind as he saw the boy's jacket swimming away. He plunged into the Lough, caught up the jacket, and brought it to shore; then he took the frightened child home.

"Ellie, dear," said he, "we be to watch the wean careful, for I'm afeared the gentry has set their hearts on him. Dinna be letting him outbye his lone."

"But where's my wee, nice, new jacket, father?" interrupted the child.

The jacket had been hanging over his arm as he came up the brae. It was gone! snatched away by invisible hands. The fairy king had a hostage now—he would yet have the little captive! The terrified parents looked at one another, and were silent. A sharp look-out was kept by the whole neighbourhood for the "wee, red man;" but Bird Island seemed to be left to the gulls and the plover—no fairy king appeared.

"He's too bonnie—fartoo bonnie," sighed the mother, twining Niel's yellow curls round her hard-worked fingers. The jacket was taken and the child was to follow, so all their watching was in vain. One evening when the stirabout was being ladled out for supper, Niel was missing. Paddy and Kate, chubby Grace, and broad-faced Andy, were all seated round the hearth, porringer in hand; but no Niel joined the party. "He didna go back to Bird Island, for he was too 'feared,'" said his parents; "but anyway he's lost to us."

Many suns rose over fair Mulroy, and Niel did not return. At length Hallow-

een came round. McColgan was on the point of going to a merry-making, and had his Sunday coat hanging over his arm, with his Prayer-Book in the pocket. The moon shone as he opened the door. He heard unwonted sounds—the galloping of horses—the cracking of whips. A cavalcade was advancing. All at once he recollected that the fairies were supposed to ride in full force on Halloween. What if his lost child should be in their company? As the second horse passed by, he threw his coat upon the ground before it. Something fell on the coat, and at that instant the train of horses came to a standstill. But where were now the steeds with strange, quaint riders, that had come forward looming so large in the moonlight? They had all vanished, and only a heap of withered ben weeds lay on the road.

McColgan saw Niel lying on the coat. He caught him up, and hurried into the house. The rejoicing in the cottage may be imagined—how the mother wept for joy, and kissed her beautiful child; how the father trembled from the excitement of his eerie adventure; and how Grace and Andy, Paddy and Kate, who had won no fairy hearts, crowded round the hero of the hour.

“An’ did they do naething on you, jewel?” asked Ellie.

“Naething ava, mammy.”

“Where were you anyway, Niel, avick?”

“I was in a grand, lovely place, far nicer nor his reverence, Father Daniel’s parlour; an’ there was plenty o’ wee childer playin’ an’ dancin’, an’ they had cakes an’ sweeties an’ lozengers; an’ oh! the bonnie plays—the bonnie dies!”

“But you’re no sorry to come back to your poor mammy, son?” questioned Ellie, wistfully. Niel would not answer this question, and Ellie noticed that he was very restless for some time, as if his baby breast was conscious of a vague yearning after his elfin companions and their “bonnie plays.” But his uneasiness wore away by degrees, and he again ate his stirabout with appetite, and again played happily with his ragged brothers and sisters. Having been won back from the fairy king, he was ever after secure from his wiles and spells.

There were many “gentle” places on Joe McGinty’s farm in the parish of Myroe; and he had been warned more than once that he had invisible neighbours. His mother and grandmother had had

visits from the “good people;” they had gladly shared their milk and meal with the king and queen, and their men had always been careful to give the “gentle places” a wide berth when they were ploughing the land.

Joe, however, forgot the good advice of his friends. He did not much believe in the fairies, and he wished to improve his farm by stubbing out a few whins, or blasting a few rocks each year. His wife, too, was pretty sharp with her dairywoman for daring to leave the “stripings,” or richest milk of her best cow, for the “gentry.” No wonder that rashness like this terrified the farm-servants.

“The master an’ mistress ’ll rue it yet,” said they in frightened tones. They remembered their prognostications when Mrs. McGinty had a son, and reiterated their warnings more seriously than ever. “You be to watch thou wean careful, for he’s bonnie, an’ them we willna name ’ll be setting their hearts on him. Dinna leave him his lone in the house without putting the tongs across the cradle.” It never struck the mother that she might have neglected to profit by this friendly warning, when a sudden change came over her child. He grew pale and thin, peevish and elf-like; yet it did not strike Mrs. McGinty that a horrible misfortune had happened. Mother-like, she only loved him the more because he was wakeful by night, and cross and fretful by day.

Little Corkey was a spiteful, ugly, peevish urchin; but he never wore out her patient love, though his father often dashed out of the house in a rage when his wails grew desperate, and though the servants longed to give him a pinch or a slap when he provoked them.

Corkey was three years old when a tailor came to work at the farmhouse; and while he was seated cross-legged on the table in the kitchen window, stitching the farmer’s breeches, he observed Corkey in his cradle, playing with straws and feathers, and pining and fretting the while. Corkey liked “brochanrye,” a species of gruel sweetened with treacle; and his thin, shrill voice was often heard calling, now angrily, now wheedlingly:

“Mammy, oh! ahorkey,
Brochanrye for Corkey!”

a call his mother was never deaf to.

The tailor used his eyes and ears, and he came to a conclusion about Corkey. One day the mother left the room. Imme-

diately Corkey set up his fretful, distracting wail, varied by cries of :

"Mammy, oh ! ahorkay,
Brochanrye for Corkey !"

"Hold your tongue, wichel, or I'll rise an' go to you," said the tailor.

The urchin grinned, and taking a violin from beneath his pillow, said :

"I'll play you a braw tune, if you promise not to tell the old cat."

Such wild music ! such fantastic reels and jigs ! The tailor flung down his cloth and needle, and sprang from the table to the floor, where he danced madly, while the malicious elf laughed and played, and laughed again.

"Stop, wichel, stop ; I canna breathe !" cried the unhappy dancer, clutching by the table, the dresser, the window, in vain efforts to stop. But his breathless cries for mercy were useless. Corkey played more wildly than ever, until he caught his mother's returning footsteps. Then he quickly hid the fiddle, saying :

"Whisht, not a word ; the old cat's coming."

And just as Mrs. McGinty entered, his fretful wailing recommenced.

"Here, darling, jewel, honey, whisht wi' your crying," said the poor woman, "here's your ain mammy, an' ye'll get brochanrye now."

"Dinna gie the wee divil one sup !" cried the tailor ; and he told her exactly what had happened during her absence.

"It's a lie, goodman. Come to your mammy, Corkey, avick !"

And Mrs. McGinty tried to clasp the fighting, wailing creature to her breast. But the farmer came in at that moment, and the tailor repeated his tale to him.

"I ha' heard the like frae the old people," he said meditatively, scratching his head.

"Weel-a-weel ! Let me set Corkey on the riddle and shake him over the fire, an' ye'll soon see what he is," returned the tailor. "I'll no hurt him, I promise yez ; an' if he's what he should be, back he'll go into the cradle."

Mrs. McGinty demurred ; but her husband consenting, the riddle was produced, the struggling Corkey was set upon it, and it was shaken over the turf fire in the wide chimney. Corkey clenched his fists at his horrified mother, made a spiteful grimace, sprang up the chimney, and was gone !

The farmer and the servants were de-

lighted that the tyrant was gone ; but as to the poor mother, although she was obliged to confess that her own child must be in fairyland, and that Corkey had been merely an elfin changeling, she mourned her tormentor very bitterly, and carried an empty heart with her to her grave.

Joseph Ried had bought the goodwill of a farm, and, well pleased, went to take possession of it. The land was in good order for the most part ; but a field before the farmhouse door was disfigured by a stunted hawthorn of great age. Joseph resolved to get rid of it without delay, and notwithstanding the grave warnings of his next door neighbour, Matt Quin, he cut it down, stubbed out the roots, and burnt the branches. On the following day, he put his new horse into the plough, and proceeded to turn up the soil, Quin and his wife and children looking on, as well as Mrs. Ried and her servants. The third time the horse passed the spot where the old tree had stood, he dropped down dead.

"I told you how it wad be if you stirred the 'gentle bush,'" said Quin. "I told you I had seen the good people dancin' round it as long as I mind—ay, an' as long as my father minds, too."

"Pooh, pooh ! Good people, indeed !" mocked the new farmer.

But various strange experiences were to convince him that his farm was haunted. One day he went out to cut furze in a ditch, and he was working steadily, when a child's head rose up suddenly, as if just under his sickle. He drew his hand back with a shudder, calling out :

"Be off, Micky Quin, ye young rascal ! I might ha' cut the head off ye !"

He felt sure the child must be one of his neighbour Quin's sons. The sprite sank back, laughing in a taunting manner, to be succeeded by another head.

"Dan Quin !" he now cried, aghast, "was it your head I was near cutting off that time ?" Malicious laughter again echoed from the ditch, and a third head appeared. "Henry Quin !" he exclaimed, "I'll tell your father on ye ;" and he took his hook, and went home baffled. "I didna' get cutting the whins," he complained to his wife, "for thae wee divils o' Quin's was aye in my road, putting up their ugly heads out o' the ditch to taunt me."

"The Quins, man alive ! Why, Quin's childer was all in this kitchen a minute

ago, fleeching the loan o' we'er bakeboard for their mother. Leave the place even at a loss, Joe, dear, for you ha' offended them we willna name."

Too plainly did his fairy enemies show their dislike to the unlucky man in a hundred ways. His teacup was upset on its way to his lips; his morsel was snatched off his fork; his nightly rest was disturbed by pinches and plucks from unseen fingers. The most vexatious hindrances happened to him in his work. Things were mislaid; time was wasted; he could not get on. Hardworking though he was, he could make little progress. He was harrowing in his field one day with a young mare, when, as he turned the first row, a sound of sweet, gay music burst forth, and he saw a party of dancers in the next field. The music was everywhere. The pipes and flutes sounded now as if above his head; again their strains came soft and muffled, as though from underground.

The mare snorted and trembled; she broke loose from him, and dragging the harrow after her, dashed towards the gate. But the farmer had no thoughts of following her, for his eyes were glued to the bonnie sight of the whirling figures; his ears filled with the entrancing strains. Toil was forgotten—he thought neither of broken harrow, nor of runaway steed—only of the scene before his eyes.

Everybody in the "town"—that is, the little group consisting of the farmhouse and cottier houses—heard the music, and came running out. Quin, and his wife, and children came, so did Mrs. Ried and her servants, and all stood near Joseph, listening, enchanted. But though all heard the bewitching music, none saw the fairy dancers except Joseph.

Not a man was able to catch the mare until the strains ceased, and then she was led to her stable with broken knees.

The Halloween after this adventure Joseph and his wife were returning home from a jovial night's merrymaking with their cousins at Rallagh, three miles from the haunted farm. They were burdened with a present—a quarter of veal, their cousins having killed a calf. It was a misty night—the air cold, and very still. The couple had to cross a bridge. The quarter of veal was on Joseph's shoulder when he stepped upon the bridge, when he reached the other side it was gone. There was much disappointment and mutual condolence, and the tormented pair got home in the lowest spirits, whispering,

"It was them we willna name—it was them we willna name."

"You be to quet the farm," said Matt Quin, "for 'they' will gi'e you nae life ava."

Joseph pondered over this serious advice, and a time came when he was forced to act upon it. His little daughter Fanny was three years old when she began to stray beyond the confines of the farmyard, and there was no account of her for hours at a time.

"Where were you, darling, all this long time?" asked the mother, who, with a baby at the breast, and multitudinous cares to occupy and worry her, was not able to run after the child. "I was out bye there wi' the nice, green-coated, wee childer," lisped Fanny.

"What wee childer, jewel?"

"Oh, just those nice anes," smiled the little one.

"I'll tell your father to beat you if you go near them again," said Mrs. Ried, in alarm. But Fanny did not heed her; she was often missing. Voices were heard in the house as well as in the yard; the silvery lisping of the pet child was heard as if in reply, and the alarm of the parents became overwhelming. But Joseph was a slow man, a very "slack" man his schoolmaster had been wont to call him in his childish days, and a "slack" man he was in his middle age. He was slow to act upon his convictions, and so the days ran on.

At length in the height of summer there came an evening when there was no account of Fanny. She did not come home to supper; her bed was empty. The young Quins were questioned, and confessed that they had seen her playing in the low meadow with a number of children dressed in green, and she seemed very happy.

"Why but you called the father or me?" asked Mrs. Ried.

"I took nae thought."

"Oh, wichel, why but you took thought, an' this sick an a gentle place!" exclaimed the mother, bursting into a passion of tears. Her eyes never rested on Fanny again. The only news of her she ever obtained was from the little Quins, who now and again came in with wide opened eyes to tell that they had seen the green-coated children in the meadow making garlands, or chasing one another, and that Fanny was with them.

"We be to fit now," said the poor farmer, sighing dismally. Soon after he

sold the goodwill of the farm, and saying farewell to the Quins, and to the low meadow where Fanny was supposed to dwell in mysterious bondage among the green-coated children, he took his infant son and sailed from Derry quay to the new world. It is not known that the "good people" have ever yet crossed the wide Atlantic, and it is therefore confidently hoped that Joseph's dangers and misfortunes are over.

THE SOMERS TOWN BLIND AID SOCIETY.

"THE hand of Charity is nowhere so open as in this country; but is often paralysed for the want of being well directed."

This paragraph appeared in the first volume of "Household Words," in the number for the week ending July the twentieth, 1850, in an article on "Ragged Dormitories," one of several which appeared that year in that periodical on the same subject. Now, it may seem at first sight, that there can be no very close connection between Ragged Schools and the Somers Town Blind Aid Society; yet a very strong link exists in the fact that Mr. Starey, the founder of the Ragged School Union, who gave much valuable information to the writer of those articles, is the Treasurer of the Blind Aid Society, and his energetic and indefatigable wife is Hon. Secretary; and it is mainly due to their kind, untiring efforts, that the poor people belonging to it receive so much comfort and benefit.

Some of the objects of the Society are to help the blind poor by providing medical advice and medicine free of cost; to send those who are ailing for short periods to the country or sea-side; to grant small pensions; and to supplement and strengthen all efforts at self-help. Then, when any are in distress, aid is given in money, food, clothing, and so on, and many other ways are found of helping these poor, afflicted people.

The majority of the blind belonging to this Society having become so in adult life, the poverty attendant on their blindness is terrible; and the opportunities of earning a livelihood are very few. For when a man has worked at one trade up to middle age, it is extremely difficult for him to learn any other, when it is taken

into consideration that he has lost his sight; yet many of them have been taught to cane chairs, and to make mats, baskets, and such articles, and can earn a small weekly sum by this kind of work. They are visited in their own houses by a small band of lady visitors, who read to them, and give them help and advice; and the readings are not confined to religious subjects, but a large range of literature is gone over, the blind choosing their own books; which, as a rule, are works of Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, and other popular writers. Newspapers, too, are greatly appreciated; one man recently remarked in making his choice, "My favourite authors are Saint Luke and the "Daily Telegraph."

But the great feature of the Society is the meeting which is held every Thursday evening in the Aldenham Street Board Schools, near King's Cross Station, and these are so much enjoyed that, as a rule, it is only in cases of illness that there are any absentees. Mrs. Starey generally provides a very attractive programme, and nowhere could there be found a more attentive and appreciative audience. The evening is begun by singing a hymn, followed by a short prayer, offered by one of the blind, in which all heartily join. Readings, recitations, lectures, and music form the entertainment, and it is a most pleasant sight to see the happy, interested expression on all their faces, while, for a time, they are thus led to forget their many troubles and great affliction. They all look forward to these evenings, and show keen enjoyment and intelligent interest in what is done for them; and it is quite a pleasure to hear them, during the following week, relate what they have heard from either Mr. R. M. Ballantyne, Dr. Habershon, Mrs. Fawcett, or one of the other many kind friends who have helped to amuse them.

There is one poor man who always sits at the foot of the platform, who, in addition to being blind, is stone deaf too. A relative sits close by him, and, holding his hand, tells him by touching his fingers, what is going on.

And there is a young woman who comes there, afflicted in the same way, quite blind and quite deaf. I believe she was a domestic servant; but work is almost impossible now that she has lost both sight and hearing. The woman with her is a friend, who lives with her and treats her with all the care and kindness that one so often sees shown to each other by the poor. It

is wonderful to see how cheerfully they bear their affliction, and especially so when we consider what blindness has meant to them.

One very sad case is that of a clerk, who, some six or seven years ago, was earning a salary of three guineas a week, when he was attacked by a form of spinal paralysis, which has destroyed the optic nerve. The comfortable home was broken up, and his poor wife, in order to support themselves and their five children, goes out to clean offices at five o'clock every morning, and works at her needle the rest of the day. They now receive a weekly pension of ten shillings from the Society.

Here is another case of a man with a wife and seven children, who a few years since worked as a tailor, until he had a severe attack of brain fever, which left him totally blind, and, moreover, subject to epileptic fits. Until Mrs. Starey found them, they were almost starving; but now they are members of the Society, and in receipt of a pension. They earn a little money by caning chairs; but the man can only manage to do the preliminary part of the work, and even between them they can but earn a very little.

There are so many similar cases of the bread winners being struck down by this terrible blindness, that it would take too much time and space to enumerate them. Suffice it to say, that although many are helped by this excellent Society, yet there are numbers waiting to be admitted, and they will have to be excluded unless the funds increase. I have not the report of 1887 by me, but in that of 1886 it is stated that "Pensions have been given in sums varying from one shilling to eight shillings weekly, to the amount of three hundred and twenty-eight pounds nineteen shillings."

All these people to whom I have spoken are loud in their praises of Mrs. Starey and her kindness to them, and they appreciate and value her sympathy and advice as much as the more substantial help which she is able to give them from the Society, and she is always thankful to receive at her house, 53, Hilldrop Road, Camden Road, any contribution in money, clothing, etc., for distribution among these poor blind people, and is always very glad for any one to pay a visit to the Aldenham Street Schools on Thursday evenings at seven o'clock, when, for a short time, their sad, dark lives are made bright and happy by the kindness of others, and when for a

few moments they can forget the touching significance of the lines:

Day for the others ever, but for me
For ever night! For ever night!

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

THORA went swiftly away on her journey, feeling far more composed about this flight than she had been when she left Stromness, though she had had Gaspard with her. She was surprised at her own coolness, and congratulated herself on being so free from any emotion which would dull her intellect and make her betray by word or sign that she was in any other plight than the most commonplace of her fellow-passengers. That she could be so calm about leaving him, so steadfast in her determination to go, proved, she told herself, that Gaspard had never been very dear to her. She resolutely kept her thoughts to this one aspect of her case, and did not let herself look at the shipwreck of her life, which had culminated in her going away from the man she had looked upon as her husband for a year.

But passengers between Hartlepool and Newcastle—the first stage of Thora's northward journey—must change carriages on the way, and at this point Thora managed to enter the wrong train and was carried to her destination by a very long and round-about route. About the same time she discovered that she was very cold, though the sun was shining in hotly upon her. Then she began to realize that she cared about what she was losing. "I wonder if this is how people feel when their hearts are breaking?" she asked herself. "I thought they went mad, and raged, and suffered intensely. But I am only cold—so cold!"

So cold, that just because of the chill, she began to cry. But such icy troubles as hers freeze up tears, and soon they dried again, and she sat upright in her place without a trace of passion on her countenance, unless, indeed, the close-set lips and eyes, that looked straight before her, and yet saw nothing, were such. Only, she felt very cold—so cold, that it seemed to her that nothing on earth could ever make her warm again.

At last the train reached Newcastle.

Though the journey was long, it was hardly long enough to account for all the fatigue she felt. "I suppose it is because I am tired that I am so cold and stupid. That is the only reason," she said to herself.

But she did not ask herself why she was so tired.

She had to wait some hours for the Scotch train that was to take her the next step towards Stromness. She wandered listlessly about the station, or sat upon the benches, hardly conscious of the bustle around her. A man, hanging about like herself, saw the beautiful girl from a distance, and uttered some word of audacious flattery as he lounged past her. She heard the voice, but not the words, and turned upon the speaker a look of such sad questioning that he hurried by, and did not come near her again. She was evidently not the proper material for such a passing flirtation as he wanted. After a time the evening newspapers came in, and the broadsheets, telling the most sensational news they contained, were placarded about the bookstall. In a little time the newsboys were busy folding them, before they began to go about selling them, and calling out a list of their contents.

"Serious accident at a Hartlepool dock-yard!" shrilled one.

The name of Hartlepool pierced the cloud that chilled Thora's brain like an electric current, perhaps because it found so many thoughts and memories there, negative in their vagueness, but ready to complete the galvanic chains as soon as the positive impulse came. In an instant after bearing the word Thora was alive to the full.

Hartlepool! Who had mentioned it? That boy who was passing with the basket of books and newspapers hung round his neck. And what had he said about it? As if in answer to her query, the cry came again: "Serious accident in a Hartlepool dockyard!"

Thora rose, and went forward to the boy.

"Tell me about that," she said, abruptly.

"About what?" asked the youth, in some astonishment.

"That in the Hartlepool dockyard."

The boy started. The public did like to get its news cheap, he knew; but this was the first time he had ever been asked to tell for nothing the details of any event chronicled in the journals he sold.

Happily his business instinct stuck to him in spite of his bewilderment.

"The accident, miss?" he said, interrogatively; and when Thora said "Yes" in a breathless tone, he added: "Evenin' News, Post, Chronicle—it's in 'em all. Ha'penny only."

"Give me one—any of them—which-ever has most about it," said Thora, giving him the first coin she could find, and taking a paper.

She opened it drowsily, and walked away, searching for the paragraph she wanted. The newsboy watched her hurried, uneven steps, and meditated.

"She haven't waited for the change," he said, "and she looks as if she'd devour the whole thing. I suppose the news is worth a shilling to her; and, anyway, it won't break her."

So he went on his way.

Thora found the paragraph, and read, as instinctively she had known she would, that Gaspard was hurt.

"He has sustained a compound fracture of the humerus, with dislocation of the elbow-joint, besides two broken ribs, and internal injuries the extent of which cannot yet be accurately ascertained. He was removed to the hospital, where he now lies in a critical condition. It is expected that the surgeons will be compelled to amputate the injured arm. At the time of the accident, Harache was talking to a French lady, Mademoiselle Meudon, who is on a visit to his employer, Mr. Mason, and who had taken a kindly interest in her compatriot. In the accident she was thrown on the deck with such violence that it is feared her skull is fractured. By the doctor's wish, she also was conveyed to the hospital, where she now lies in an unconscious condition."

It may be forgiven Thora if, for one moment, she felt a fierce joy at the thought of her enemy being thus struck down. Why was Sophie at the dockyard at that hour? Was it not that she might try to win Gaspard to herself? She had not so much womanly shame in her as to wait till he should learn that his wife—or the woman he had called his wife—had deserted him. Thora felt the hand of Heaven in the blow that struck Sophie Meudon down, and said:

"It is well."

But after the first moment she forgot all about her rival. She could think only of Gaspard, her husband, who was lying suffering, in danger of death. And she

had left him—left him within an hour of the time when he needed her most.

But he was not her husband. She returned to the torturing thought as if now it contained some atonement for her flight. She was not his wife; she had no more right to be with him in his pain than any stranger who had never seen him till that day. So she told herself, with the icy feeling not yet melted from her heart; but the surface, the worldly truth, could not deceive her now. Her heart protested in one great throb, that sent the blood tingling through every vein and brought her back to full, clear-seeing life.

"Not his wife for happiness and prosperity," she said to herself, "but his wife for days of pain and weakness; his wife so long as he needs me to help him."

She could not go to Stromness now; neither for pride or anger would she leave Gaspard. Her place was by her husband—her husband's side. In a moment all dread of the world's judgement, all regard for the world's respect, had fallen from her; and she knew what was the work she had to do, careless of what people who knew this or that half of the truth might say of her; sure that Heaven, at least, was on her side.

It was late at night when she got back to Hartlepool; and at the hospital, where she went direct from the station, they at first refused to admit her. But she would not take a refusal. "I am his wife," she said. "I was away when he got hurt, and I must see him."

At last they let her in, and fortunately she had not heard the reason given for the concession in a brief colloquy between the porter and the nurse of the accident ward:

"Let her come. He is very weak, and I wouldn't answer for to-morrow; she had better see him to-night."

The long ward, with the lights turned low, and the night-nurse moving among the beds whence came an occasional long sigh from a sleepless patient, or the incoherent words of one who spoke in his restless dreams, bewildered Thora; and though she glanced up the room she could not see Gaspard.

"Where is he?" she asked the nurse.

"There," said the nurse, pointing to a screen that surrounded the bed in one corner. "You'll have to wait a little; the doctors are with him now."

As she spoke the house-surgeon and one of the honorary staff came from behind the screen, and not noticing or not heeding the

woman who stood by the nurse's side, began a consultation in a low voice.

"I certainly think amputation's the only thing," said the elder doctor; "the fracture and dislocation are too much together, especially considering his condition. You can see he is suffering from the shock. We couldn't make a good job of it in any case."

"He is so anxious to have his arm spared," pleaded the house-surgeon. "It's his working arm, he says, and, for his wife's sake, he wants to keep it."

"I don't know that it will ever be good for much work even if we leave it; and as for his wife, she hardly seems worth risking his life for. She ran away from him this very day, I hear; but I suppose he doesn't know that."

"Yes, he does; they sent for her, you know, and found the house empty, and a letter from her in French, saying she had gone. They couldn't keep it from him, for he was always asking for 'Thora, my wife,' and when he heard the news he got fearfully excited. His temperature rushed up three degrees. But it wasn't anger or anything like that. He cried—he's French, you know, and in a weak condition—and exclaimed, 'Poor Thora; poor child, she has misunderstood me, and now I am laid here like a log and cannot go to see her.' And since then he has begged us more and more to save him, and to spare his arm for her sake."

"H'm. I suppose they had had a quarrel; but she must have been a goose to bolt on that account. But about his arm?"

"Don't you think you could leave it till to-morrow? It—it mayn't make much difference, you know; and, as a matter of fact, I think the despair he would feel at losing the arm would hurt him more than anything."

"If you like," said the senior surgeon, giving in. "You're right; it may not make much difference, and, besides, doing an amputation by this wretched gas-light is rather a troublesome piece of work. We can do it to-morrow, if it seems advisable."

As he turned away Thora went up and touched him on the arm. "What do you mean by its not making much difference?" she asked.

The surgeon looked at her in a questioning manner, and she went on—"I am Gaspard Harache's wife. I was—away—when the accident happened; but I came back as soon as I heard of it. Tell me, is he so

much hurt that—that—— Why is it that sparing his arm won't make much difference?"

The surgeon looked gravely down on the girl's pale, agonised face. "He is badly hurt; the shock has injured him more than the mere fractures. His arm is so much damaged that it will be almost impossible to mend it, therefore it may be necessary to cut it off; but we mean to wait till to-morrow to see if—if it can't be avoided, and if his strength will stand it."

"You mean," she took him up, "that he is so near death that you may leave him alone?"

He hardly caught the whispered words, and yet it seemed to Thora that she was speaking loudly; she almost thought that Gaspard must hear.

"Not so bad as that, I hope," answered the doctor, but in such dubious tones that she knew she had guessed his meaning correctly.

"I must see him," she said.

"Will you be quiet—not excite him?"

"Yes, yes; only I must see him again. There is something he does not understand; I can't let him think wrongly now, and perhaps, after all, it may not be as you say."

"What do you think?" asked the doctor, turning to the house-surgeon.

"I think it is his best chance; he has evidently been fretting for her, and if anything happened and she had not seen him it would be a never-ending grief to her."

So they led Thora behind the screen.

Gaspard's face was deadly pale, and he lay in that attitude of helpless quiet which a healthy man never assumes. His eyes were closed, and Thora thought at first that he was asleep, but as she came near the bed the white lids were lifted, and he looked up with a troubled, pain-contracted gaze. But as he saw her it changed to one—not of gladness so much as thankfulness.

"Thora, my wife!" he exclaimed, in a feeble voice. "You have come back to me."

"Yes, Gaspard, I have come back to be your wife as long as you need me."

"As long as I need you! That will be as long as I live—and I must live; I will not let myself die, because you—need me too. Chérie, do you not know that our lives are bound together—that God, who let us come together, will not let us part in this wilful fashion? If we stand outside

the pale of man's approval, you and I, it is the more essential that we do not miss God's as well. We have no one but each other, so we must not desert each other. Be patient with me when I am tired and irritable—I know that you have too often found me so. Forgive me for it, and never think for a moment that it means a wish on my part to have the bond between us loosened or removed."

"I did not understand, Gaspard. I thought—I thought——"

"Ah! pauvre petite, believe that you did not think right—believe that I am loyal to you in my inmost soul."

Tears had come fast to Thora's eyes while he was speaking, and now she fell on her knees by the bed, and sobbed out:

"I believe, Gaspard, and I know that you are better than any one I ever dreamed of; and I will love you, and never doubt you as long as I live."

The head of the house-surgeon peeped round the screen:

"I think you should go now, Mrs. Harache; you mustn't excite your husband."

Thora rose meekly and went away, while Gaspard called out, as clearly as his weakness would allow:

"You must save my arm and my life, too. I must live and work for her."

"It will be a difficult business, and you'll suffer a lot," said the house-surgeon; "but it's worth trying, and I'll try."

In another ward Sophie Meudon was lying. She had not yet regained consciousness, and the doctors would not yet predict what the end might be for her; but in their minds the conclusion was fixed—life saved, but reason lost. Eleanor Mason had telegraphed to her friend's father, and in two days he and Madame Reyer were by the girl's bed, trying in vain to get a look of recognition from her blank, restless eyes. Monsieur Meudon was broken down at the sight; but Madame Reyer, though she, too, was shocked and saddened, had not loved her niece so well as to be moved beyond self-control; and when the matron asked if she would like to see the poor young man who had been hurt in the accident, she answered in the affirmative.

So she was led to where Gaspard lay.

"Gaspard Harache!" she exclaimed, as she recognised him. "So he is here! Is this mere accident?"

"Hush!" said a voice near her. "Do not speak loud; it disturbs him."

It was Thora who spoke. She was seated by her husband's bed. Madame Reyer turned and looked at her.

"Is this a nurse?" she asked herself. "She is not dressed like the others; or, is it the girl for whose sake Gaspard sacrificed everything? How beautiful she is, and she looks good also. Gaspard might have thrown away his future for a worse object."

"I am an old friend of Gaspard's," she said, aloud, "and I am surprised to see him here."

"Gaspard, do you know me?" she added, going nearer to him.

"Madame Reyer! It seems strange to see you, and yet it is natural. You have come to see your niece."

"Yes; poor Sophie! But I did not think I should see you also. So she was talking to you when the accident happened. I suppose she had been pleased to see you again. It was a strange chance that brought you to the only place in England where Sophie has a friend."

"A chance! Mais, madame, it was Sophie who obtained for me my situation here. It was no chance."

"Sophie obtained your situation for you!" repeated Madame Reyer, first in bewilderment, then with a conviction that her niece had been following out some subtle plan, an idea which made her nearly hate Sophie, as she thought of Madame Harache, and the scalding tears of hopeless repentance she had shed, not knowing where her son had gone, while Sophie could have told her all. Only the remembrance that Sophie was now harmless for good or evil softened her in some degree.

"Gaspard," she said, "your mother

does not know where you are; she has mourned for you as lost."

"It is my mother's doing that I ever came away," he answered, bitterly.

"True, Gaspard; but she has repented of her action. For months past her most earnest desire has been to welcome you and your wife. She has erred, I know. I do not justify her. But if she stoness, will you not forgive?"

Gaspard's heart was still hot against his mother, and the closer union that had now come to him and Thora made him more hard towards any who had helped to wrong her. Yet he could hardly refuse forgiveness to his mother.

"Let Thora decide," he said, at last.

And Thora, being a woman, could see the case from the point of view of the mother's wounded pride, and said:

"Gaspard, forgive."

So Madame Harache, a grey-haired woman, aged almost beyond her son's recognition, came to Hartlepool, and meekly—nay, thankfully—received Thora as her daughter.

There is an old church at Hartlepool, whose grey walls have withstood the storms and the subtle, gnawing mists of six centuries. Worn by storm and time, it still holds within a shrine that speaks of faith in things unseen, of loyalty to a God who is not the God of this world. There, when many weeks had past—when the arm Gaspard had feared to lose was sound and strong again, and when Monsieur Meudon had carried away his daughter to one of those retreats we keep for those bodies who have outlived their souls—there Gaspard Harache and Thora Sweynson knelt; and the blessing of the White Christ confirmed the Truth of Odin.

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WHAT BECAME OF MR. BLIND-WEED.

By B. L. FARJEON.

Now, then, what are you hanging about here for? You want Mr. Thomas Blindweed? Well, what do you want with him? To see him on a little bit of business. Oh! Is it anything worriting? Because I've had enough worry to last me a pritty long time, and if you're going to add to it, the sooner you cut your stick the better I shall like it. You ain't come to worry me. You only want to hear the true story of the inquest—Mr. Blindweed's inquest, it's got to be called—and anything else I've a mind to tell you. You mean by that, I suppose, that you want to know all about me? You're modest, you are! Why, I've never set eyes on you till this minute. What are you, if I may make so bold? A descriptive writer. What, for shop windows? No! What for, then? Newspapers and magazines, eh? Ah, you want to put me into print. Well, I've no objection, so long as I'm paid for it. And if I am put into print, and if my beautiful wife happens to read what I tell you, it may do her a power of good. You're willing to pay me! How much? According to what I tell you. My time's precious—suppose we say so much a minute. What do you offer? A penny a minute. Won't do. Tuppence. That's better. Let's make a calculation. Sixty minutes

to the hour—a hundred and twenty pence—ten bob. To patter away at that rate ten hours a day—ten tens—five pound nought. But on second thoughts, it'd be wearing to the tongue—mightn't be able to keep up the steam. I'll strike a bargain. Thrippence a minute I'll take, and no less. I reckon six minutes gone already. You don't mind? Well, that's handsome of you. It's just twelve o'clock, and I'll take ten bob on account. Thank you. Easy to know a gentleman when you see one.

You don't object to a bit of personal history, I hope, because it's necessary in what I'm going to tell you. My beautiful wife is out, and won't interrupt us. When she's out there's peace in the house; when she's in, there ain't. But she's beginning to discover that I'm master here, as a man and a husband ought to be. I give her a scare lately it'll take her some time to recover from. You'll hear about that.

I must commence a little way back. Three years ago, my wife—Molly's her name—was a rare handsome piece of goods, and, to do her justice, she was aware of it. She's showing signs of wear and tear now; and she ain't half the figger she was. I'm continually cautioning her about it, and I think she'll take heed of what I say, because if there's one thing more than another she's vain of, it's her good looks.

"Molly, my dear," I says to her, "your face is falling in, your nose is turning red, your mouth is losing its pritty curves, your eyes ain't got half the shine in 'em they used to have, and your figger, Molly—not

to put too fine a point upon it—your figger's gitting scrimpy. If you don't bring that temper of yourn more under control, in a year or two you'll be no better than a bag of bones."

It's temper, guv'nor, more than anything else, that alters a woman's looks. If they could be got to understand that, they wouldn't be so vinegary. Well, as I was saying, when Molly was single she was a perfect beauty, and lots of chaps was wild after her, me among the rest. I don't deny it. I was mad in love with her pritty face and shining eyes, and her pleasant mouth that I thought butter wouldn't melt in. But it will, guv'—I've found that out long ago. In the days I'm speaking of, she wouldn't look at me—turned up her nose whenever I spoke to her.

"I ain't good enough for you, I suppose," says I to her.

"Not by a long way," says she to me.

Why wasn't I? Because I was a working carpenter, making about twenty-five bob a week. That was as much as Dick Pawson was making; but then she was sweet on him, and wasn't on me, which made all the difference, and didn't show her sense. A slim kind of chap, Dick Pawson; curly hair, little feet, a face like a wax dummy, could dance in the latest fashion—ah! that was a powerful bait for Molly. As they went round and round in the Dancing Academy—where I used to go sometimes to keep my eye on her—he looked like a dying duck in thunder. He was a shop-walker in a haberdasher's shop. A regular lady's man. Not a bit of stamina in him. I could throw three of him in the air, and play ball with them. I told him so once, and offered to fight him with one hand, but he sniggered, and refused, and says I to Molly:

"Call the likes of him a man! Why, he ain't got a backbone!"

But that didn't set her against him. The more I run him down, the better she thought him. It's the way of women, guv'.

"You won't have me?" says I.

"No," says Molly, "I won't have you; and I won't have any man unless he can keep me like a lady."

"Can Dick Pawson do that?" I ask.

"When he gits a shop of his own, he can," she answers.

One great thing against me was that I couldn't dance. If I tried a polka, I was sure to fall on my nose, and bring my partner

to grief. Now Molly was dancing mad; she'd loll and languish in Dick Pawson's arms, and go round and round the Academy—admission tuppence; ladies free; cloak-room a penny; light refreshments on the premises at moderate prices—for an hour and more; and when the music stopped, and she was obliged to, you thought she could never git back her breath it come that short. But what did that matter to Molly? Breath or no breath, round and round she'd go, casting her eyes up at the ceiling with a look that couldn't have been more egstastic if she'd been floating among angels. And Dick Pawson 'd come up to me, simpering and sniggering, and say:

"What a pity you can't dance, Mr. Blindweed!"

Well, Molly kept flirting away with this one and that one, but most of all with Dick Pawson, and never with me, till something occurred that astonished me as much as it astonished her and everybody else. I gits a letter one day from a lawyer chap, and on the envelope I'm called, "Thomas Blindweed, Esqerwire." Now, that was unusual; so was the letter. I was to call on the lawyer chap as soon as possible, to hear something to my advantage. I went, you may take your oath on it, and I did hear something to my advantage. There was a brother of mine that I'd lost sight of for I don't know how many years. Went to America. Made money there, and was buried without leaving a will behind him. As he was a single man and I was his only relation, his money was mine. All I had to do was to prove that I was Thomas Blindweed, Esqerwire, brother to Nicholas Blindweed, Esqerwire, who lived and died in America. Says the lawyer chap:

"It's all right, Mr. Blindweed. Leave the matter in my hands, and I'll make things snug for you."

He did, and made things snug for himself by handing me a bill of costs. It made me stare, but it was no use fighting against it. I got what was left. It wasn't to be sneezed at. A matter of fifteen hundred pounds.

I bought myself a new suit of clothes, from top to toe, and I walked up and down in front of Molly's house, with a flower in my coat, lavender-coloured kid-gloves on my hands, and a shiny bell-topper on my head. And, what was more, I smoked a cigar instead of a pipe. From choice? No; I knew what I was about. Molly wanted to marry a man that would make a lady of her.

Now, thought I, what shall I do with my money? Start a business, and lose it in twelve months? Set up a carriage, and spend it in six? Or go to the races, and drop it in a week? "Do a sensible thing, Tom," says I to myself. "Invest it, and make it bring you in so much a week for the rest of your natural life. Then there'll be no occasion for you to work any more." I don't mind telling you, gov'nor, I ain't fond of work; I like to smoke my pipe without being ordered about. So, after considering how to invest, I come to the conclusion that house-property was the very identical. I bought a terrace of four houses down Mile End way, and after deducting for taxes and repairs, and making allowances for the time that some of 'em 'd be empty, I reckoned that I could safely depend on an income of thirty-two bob a-week. Independent of what my terrace cost me I had a matter of a hundred pounds or so to play with, and work my point—which was Molly.

Of course the news flew about. It wasn't fifteen hundred pounds I was worth, it was fifteen thousand. It wasn't a terrace of four houses I'd bought, it was houses all over London that I was master of. The next time I meets Molly it was in everybody's mouth, and she looks at me, and I looks at her, and I lifts my shiny bell-topper in a fashionable way, and bows to her, and then I passes on. I'd practised that hat and bow business before the looking-glass for hours and hours till I was perfect. She meets me again the next day, does Molly, and this time she stops and says:

"I hope you're not gitting proud, Mr. Blindweed."

And she offers me her hand, and lets me hold it as long as I like, and smiles as sweet as honey straight in my face, and I says:

"Proud, Miss Molly, and to you! Not me, miss! Though things have changed, and I'm no longer obliged to work for a living."

"I'm so glad, Mr. Blindweed," says Molly, sweeter than ever. "But you used to call me Molly."

"I didn't know," says I, "that it mightn't be considered a liberty."

"A liberty, Mr. Blindweed!" says she. "Oh, no. I shall be very pleased if you'll call me Molly, as you used to do."

"Well, then, Molly," says I, "how are you?"

"I'm quite well, Mr. Blindweed," says she, casting down her eyes; "and how are you?"

"I'm blooming," says I.

And there we stands, Molly and me, her hand in mine, and her eyes looking up and down, and her boozum swelling and palpitating to that degree that it looked for all the world as if it was being worked by steam-power. I was gone, sir, dead gone! She was a beauty, and no mistake. There wasn't a woman within a mile of us that could hold a candle to her.

"Will you take my arm, Molly?" says I.

"Yes, Mr. Blindweed," says she, "if you please."

Oh, how meek and sweet she was!

"If I'm to call you Molly," says I, "you mustn't call me Mr. Blindweed."

"What must I call you?" says she.

"Call me Thomas," says I.

Then she says, "Thomas!" so soft that I had to put my head down to hear it, quite close to her mouth, and her breath was as sweet as violets. I'd never been so close to her mouth before, and it set my heart beating like one o'clock.

Well, sir, we walked up and down the street, arm-in-arm, for an hour, and people stared at us. And who should we meet but Dick Pawson? He comes up and says:

"Good morning, Molly."

But Molly tosses up her head at him, and says, as cold as ice: "Good morning, sir."

"Sir," he cries, quite flabbergasted. "Oh, Molly!"

"Don't take liberties with my name," says Molly, "and I'll trouble you to keep your distance, and to speak when you're spoke to."

Away goes Dick Pawson, with a flea in his ear.

"I could never abear him," says Molly.

"Couldn't you, Molly?" I says, thinking what a fool I'd been ever to think different.

"Never," says Molly. "Why, he's as thin as a shaving!" Presently she says to me, "Thomas," she says.

"Yes, Molly," says I to her.

"It's such a long time since I've been to a theaytre!"

"Would you like to go to one?" says I.

"I would," says she.

"With me, Molly?" says I.

"I shouldn't enjoy it with nobody else," says she.

"If it's quite agreeable," says I, "will you go to-night?"

"Oh, Thomas!" says she.

I didn't take her to see a tragedy, but something as would make us laugh; and I didn't take her to the pit, but the boxes. And there we set so close together that I felt as if I was in the Garden of Eden. She looked beautiful, I'll say that of her. She was the prittiest girl in the whole theaytre, and she laughed so much that she had to ketch hold of me to keep from tumbling off her seat, and the more she caught hold of me the more I liked it. There was a dark scene in the play that I wished had lasted three times as long. When we come out of the theaytre, as happy as a pair of birds in spring, I says:

"Molly, what do you say to a bit of supper?"

"If you please, Thomas," says she.

We went to a restaurong, and had lamb chops, fried potatoes, and port wine, and before we'd finished supper she was calling me Tom. When we come out of the restaurong I says:

"Shall we walk or ride? It's a fine night."

She looks up and says: "How bright the stars are, Tom!"

And I says, pressing her arm close: "Yes, they are, Molly."

And she says, cuddling up to me: "We'll walk, Tom."

So we walked, and before we'd gone half-a-mile, I asked her plump whether she'd have me, and she said she would. We had a lot of kisses in a quiet street; there was a policeman a long way off, but he didn't take particular notice of us, egsept, I dare say, to wish that he was in my place; and I says:

"Molly, I've loved you long."

"Tom, dear," she says, "I've loved you ever since I first set eyes on you."

"You didn't show it, Molly," says I.

"I didn't want to look bold, Tom," she says.

And I was spoons enough to believe it! In a month from that time we was married. A slap-up wedding, with a coach and two horses, driver with white bows, Molly's family smart and spruce, Molly herself a picture, and a regular spread afterwards at the Royal George. Everything passed off splendidly, and then we took a tour to Gravesend, and spent our honeymoon there. "I've got a prize," thinks I to myself, and it really seemed so, gvn'nor. Molly was as good as gold, and when we

come back there was these two rooms ready furnished for us. Molly didn't say anything at first, but I saw she was a little put out; she let a week go by, and then she says:

"Tom," she says, "we oughtn't to live in rooms; we ought to have a nice house of our own."

"Rooms are good enough for me, Molly," says I, "and what's good enough for me ought to be good enough for you."

"Why, of course it is, Tom," says she, "but think of the neighbours."

"Why should I think of 'em?" says I.

"They're beginning to talk already," says she.

"Are they?" says I. "What about?"

"About us living here," says she.

"What's that to them?" says I. "Tell 'em to mind their own business."

"But, Tom," says Molly, coaxing like.

"Well, Molly," says I.

"When we're so rich," says Molly, "that we can afford to live in style, what reason is there why we shouldn't?"

"How rich do you think we are?" says I.

"You've got hunderds of houses, haven't you?" says she.

"Not by a long way," says I. "Only four—little 'uns."

"Only four little 'uns!" she cries.

"That's all," I answers.

"But you could buy more if you liked," says she.

"No, I couldn't," says I, "unless they'd sell 'em to me at about a bob a time. I investid all my fortune in them four houses, and a very tidy fortune it is."

"Yes, Tom," says she, "fifteen thousand pounds at least."

"Oh, no," says I, "not quite fifteen hunderd, and they bring me in thirty-two bob a week."

She was regularly took aback at this, and a matter of three or four days passed before she spoke of it again. Then she says:

"If we've only thirty-two shillings a week to live on, Tom——"

"Which," says I, "is all we have got."

"Then you ought to go to work, Tom," says she.

"Not me," says I. "I'm quite satisfied with the way we're living, and I ain't fond of work. Now, Molly," says I, "don't you go running your head against brick walls; you'll come off second best if you do. We can be happy and comfortable if you don't act contrary; if you do act contrary, we shall be the other thing."

Then, gov'nor, she begins to cry and storm, and says that I deceived her.

"How's that, Molly?" says I.

"Didn't you make me believe," says she, "before you married me that you had fifteen thousand pounds and hunderds of houses?"

"No, I didn't," says I. "I never said a word about it, and you never asked me."

"But it was in everybody's mouth," says she.

"That ain't my business," says I. "If people will talk, they must talk. I advise you again, Molly, don't you go and act contrary. We've got along all right up to now, and we can keep along all right if you've a mind to."

But she hadn't got a mind to. From that minute she begun to change, and instead of making things pleasant and comfortable, she nagged and nagged to that degree that she almost drove me wild. I tried to bring her to reason, but it wasn't a bit of good. She kept on crying that I'd deceived her, and that I ought to go to work, so that she might have silk dresses and plush hats and things, and she turned the place into a perfect bear garden. And one night, when I'd kept out a bit for peace and quietness, I opened the door of our setting-room, and there was Dick Pawson in my chair, smoking my pipe, and drinking out of my glass. I remembered then that I'd told Molly that I shouldn't be home till eleven or twelve o'clock, and that was why Dick Pawson was making himself so comfortable; he didn't egspect me. It cut me a bit, I'll say that, gov'nor, to see Molly looking as bright and pleasant as she used to do when she was fishing for me.

"Dick Pawson," says I, very stern, "what brings you here?"

"I invited him," cries Molly, defiant like.

"Oh, did you?" says I. "But it happens that I'm master in this place, and nobody comes here unless I ask 'em."

"I'll have anybody here I like to have," says Molly.

"We'll see about that," says I. "I'll settle with you presently, Molly. First, I've got to settle with Dick Pawson. Stand up, mate."

He was very white; and when I pulled him on his feet he was shaking like a jelly.

"Now, look here, Dick," says I. "I ain't going to ask you questions, I'm only going to give you a bit of a warning. This

is the first time I've caught you in my house; if I ketch you here again, you shall remember it. And so that you may keep it in mind, take this"—I gave him one in the eye—"and this"—I gave him one in the mouth—"and this"—I gave him one on the nose—"and now, hook it!"

He didn't want telling twice; he was off like a shot. Then Molly and me had a scene—the hottest one yet. She stamped and screamed, and threw things about, and wound up by throwing herself on the floor and pretending to faint. She soon come to, though, when I doused her with a jug of cold water.

She didn't speak to me for a week after that, and I didn't speak to her. We had to have our meals together, and had to sleep together, but otherwise we might have been strangers. She served me out finely, I can tell you. She ain't at all a bad cook, ain't Molly, but she took a pleasure now in spoiling everything she put on the table. I like my steak underdone; she burnt it to a cinder. I like my chops well done; she hardly warmed 'em. I like my eggs boiled three minutes and a half; she boiled 'em ten. And when we had potatoes they were like bullets. After a bit we spoke again, of course; but it was nothing but sulk, sulk, sulk, and cry, cry, cry, from morning to night. At last I thought it might do Molly good if I gave her a taste of single blessedness.

"Molly," says I, "you ain't the woman I took you for."

"And you're not the man," says she, firing up, "I took you for."

"Sorry for it," says I, "but I'm the same as I ever was—and ever shall be, Molly; bear that in mind. I'm free to confess you're wearing me out, and I'm going away a bit for a rest."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," says she.

I packed up a little bag of clothes, and after breakfast the next morning I got up, all ready to go.

"I'm off, Molly," says I.

"Won't you take me with you?" says she.

"I won't take you anywhere with me," says I, "till you give up being contrary."

"Where are you going," says she, "and how long will you be gone?"

"I ain't made up my mind," says I.

"I shall go somewhere into the country for peace and quietness, and I shall be gone just as long as I please. You shall have fifteen bob a week to live on while I'm

away, and when I come back I hope to find you another woman."

I waited a minute or two, to see whether she'd say anything kind, and whether she'd offer to kiss me; but she didn't speak or move, so I just says: "Ta-ta, Molly," and off I went.

I didn't go fur away, but I went where I wasn't known, and found a farmhouse where they had cocks and hens, and pigs, and three cows, and a horse and cart, and where they lodged and boarded me for ten bob a week. It was so quiet there, and so pleasant with the animals and children, that I regularly enjoyed myself. Why I give a name that wasn't my own I can't tell you; I think it must have been because I didn't want Molly to come after me. Before I left London I got an agent to collect my rents, and wrote on a paper that he was to give Molly fifteen bob a week, and no more, and was to put the rest in the Post Office Savings Bank in my name. I put in a pound myself before I went away, and gave 'em my signature, so that no one could take it out but me.

Well, gov'nor, I did enjoy myself at that farmhouse, and I stopped there six months, and let my beard grow. I had always shaved clean, and when I looked at myself in the glass and saw my face covered with hair, I give you my word I didn't know it was me. I was another man, and what with taking another name, I almost felt as if I wasn't Thomas Blindweed at all. "Molly won't know me when I git back," thinks I. "What a game it'd be to pass myself off for another feller!"

Why did I keep away so long? Well, to give her a regular dose. I thought of her a good deal, and looked at her picture that I'd brought away with me, and I did feel a bit soft sometimes. I'd no fear of Molly doing what wasn't right; she'd be as good as gold if it wasn't for her temper. In the six months I was away I got regularly fond of a country life, and I thought how pleasant it'd be for me and Molly to live there, with fowls, and pigs, and cows, and a horse and cart. I don't despair yet of bringing her to my way of thinking.

Well, gov'nor, when the six months was up I thought I'd go home and have a look at my wife, so I packed up my duds, and off I set. I musn't forget to tell you that there'd been a big railway accident two days before I started.

I took a last look at myself in the glass. My own mother wouldn't have

known me. "Molly will be surprised!" thinks I.

I was glad to git back, and as I got nearer and nearer to Molly I got fonder and fonder of her. Well, when I was in this neighbourhood I saw a lot of people I knew, but not one of 'em knew me, I was that changed. I passed the Royal George, where we had our wedding-party, and there was a little crowd outside.

"What's up, mate?" says I to a man, disguising my voice, speaking husky like.

"An inquest," says he.

"Whose inquest?" says I.

"Tom Blindweed's," says he.

"Oh," says I, "Tom Blindweed's. Is he dead, then?"

"Killed in the railway accident," says he.

"I'm sorry to hear that," says I.

"So am I," says he. "Tom wasn't a bad sort."

I thought I'd go in and attend my own inquest, and see how it was getting on. It ain't often a man gets a chance like that, and it tickled me rather. So in I went.

It was all right. There was the coroner; there was the jury, there was the witnesses, and, among the witnesses, Molly and Dick Pawson. According to what they said, and what everybody else said, I was dead and no mistake. Eight men had been killed in the railway accident—me among 'em. My face had been cut about; but there was my height, there was my build; and, what was really curious, there was my finger and toe. If you'll look at the little finger of my right hand you'll see the leavings of an old cut on the knuckle, that gives the finger a peculiar shape. I can't hold it straight. Similarly, the big toe of my left foot is bent right under, just as though it was cut in half. The man that was found, and that nobody came forward to own but Molly, had just those marks on the same finger and toe; and that, and my long absence, and my height, and my build, settled the whole matter. I heard my wife's evidence—I was dead. I heard Dick Pawson's evidence—I was dead. The verdict clinched it. I listened, and didn't say a word.

I went out—rather dazed I must confess—not quite knowing now whether I'd any right to be alive. I'd take time to think over it, I thought. A week or two, more or less, didn't matter much to a dead man. Right opposite my two rooms there was a room to let, and from the window of that room I could see everything that passed in

the home that had been mine when I was alive. I took the room, and sat the best part of the day at the window. My wife went in and out. People talked to her, and consoled her. I ain't going to do her an injustice. She didn't look overjoyed. "Under the circumstances, Molly," thought I, "you're behaving becoming; and I must say you make a good-looking widdler."

I suppose it was half-past nine at night when I saw a man go to Molly's rooms—Dick Pawson. Then an idea came into my head. I thought it out, and waited. Ten o'clock. Dick Pawson didn't come out. Half-past ten. Dick Pawson was still with Molly. I went into the street, crossed the road, and let myself into the house with my old latch-key that I'd always kept about me. Our two rooms both opened on to the passage. The first room was our living-room, the second our bedroom. I stepped very softly, and tried the handle of the bedroom. It turned; the door was unlocked. I went in.

Between that room and our living-room was a door, and I listened at it. Dick Pawson and my wife was talking. There was no light in the passage, there was no light in the bedroom; but there was a light in the setting-room. I peeped through. There was Dick Pawson, sitting where I'd seen him last—in my chair, smoking my pipe, and drinking out of my glass. He was on one side of the table, Molly on the other. All correct and proper.

It made my blood boil to see Dick Pawson, setting there so comfortable. It wasn't that he looked delighted; his face was serious enough; but it was that he looked so comfortable, and seemed so very much at home.

"Wait a bit, Dick Pawson," thinks I.

Then I fixes my eyes on Molly, and I was glad to see that she was downcast and sad, and that she often wiped her eyes with her handkerchief. I got a little calmer. It did me a power of good every time she wiped her eyes—not sham tears, real 'uns.

"She's sorry I'm dead," thinks I.

Knowing the room so well, I knew where everything was. I felt about for the bellers, and found 'em. I felt about for the matches, and found 'em.

"Now we'll have a game," thinks I; and it was as much as I could do to keep myself from laughing out loud.

Their backs was partly turned to the door between the rooms. Molly's face was hid in her handkerchief; Dick Pawson's face was hid in the glass of liquor. Very

softly I opened the door, slid in, and with one puff of the bellers, blew out the candle. Although I say it, it was neatly and cleanly done. We were all in the dark the minute I was in the room, and neither Molly nor Dick Pawson had caught sight of me. For all they knew I might have been a shadder.

"Oh!" cries Molly.

"Oh!" cries Dick Pawson.

Both in a breath.

"How dare you blow out the light?" cries Molly. "How dare you?"

"Brayvo, Molly!" thinks I.

"I didn't blow it out," says Dick Pawson.

"Who did, then," says Molly, "if you didn't?"

"I don't know," says Dick Pawson. I heard him feeling about for the matches. "It must have been the wind."

"It wasn't the wind," says I, speaking very solemn and low, in my natural voice.

Dick Pawson's teeth chattered in his head, and he dropped the box of matches on the floor. Molly gave a long "O-O-Oh!" and fell back in her chair. I'd come out of the dark into the light, and when I was in the dark again I could see better than they could.

"I'll tell you who put it out," says I. "It was the ghost of poor Tom Blindweed. I'm him! Don't move, don't scream, or something dreadful 'll happen to you! Molly, you know my voice, don't you?"

"Y-y-y-es," says Molly, in a whisper.

"I'm dead, you know," says I. "I'm a ghost, and I'll haunt you morning, noon, and night, to your dying day if you don't answer me true. Speak, Molly, speak."

All the time I spoke I kept my voice very soft and solemn.

"What do you want of me?" says Molly.

"To speak true," says I.

"I will, I will!" says Molly.

"I went away from you," says I. "It was wrong of me, but I couldn't stand the life you led me. Didn't I treat you kind, Molly?"

"You did, you did!" says Molly.

"Call me Tom, dear Tom!" says I.

"It'll do me good, though I am a ghost."

"Dear Tom!" says Molly. "Oh, I shall go off, I know I shall!"

"Not yet," says I. "In a minute you can, but you must answer me first. Did I ever raise my hand against you?"

"Never, never!" she gasps.

"Say dear Tom," says I.

"Yes, dear Tom!" says Molly.

"But you tried me hard, Molly," says I, "and I had to go. Was it my fault that I had fifteen thousand pound instead of fifteen hundred? Ain't thirty-two bob a week enough for any reasonable woman? I wanted to be a happy man. You wouldn't let me. I wanted to live a quiet life. You wouldn't let me. I never loved but you, Molly, I never loved but you!"

She was sobbing and shaking so that I couldn't help pitying her, but I had to carry it out to the end.

"I didn't go running after other men's wives!" says I. "I was true to you, Molly. All the time I was away I was thinking of you and nobody else. I was all alone in the country. I didn't go sneaking after women, married or single, as some puppies do! Says I to myself, 'I'll keep away from Molly a bit; I'll give her time to git over her sulks; perhaps she'll come round; perhaps she won't nag so; perhaps she'll try to make the best of things; perhaps she'll be sorry not to have me with her.' It is lonely, ain't it, living all alone, with no one to love and take care of you? You was sorry, Molly, wasn't you?"

"Y—y—yes, dear Tom!" says Molly.

"And you did wish me back, didn't you?" says I.

"Y—y—yes, dear Tom!" says Molly.

"But not as I am, Molly, not as I am," says I, and I waved my hand, which I'd rubbed over quietly with the tips of the matches. When Molly saw the blue light, she give a scream, and fainted dead away. I let her be. It wasn't the first time she'd fainted before me, and I knew she'd come to in time.

"Now, you," says I, to Dick Pawson, "you mean sneak, to come after a dead man's wife before he's in his grave! I told you the next time I caught you in my house you should remember it. You shall! What do you think of that, for a ghost?"

And I hit him hard one side of his head, and then hit him harder on the other, to set him right. He was too frightened to squeal; all he did was to tremble and shake. Then I jumped on him, and dragged him by the neck out into the passage. All the time I had hold of him I punched him and kicked him. I blacked his eyes, I set his nose bleeding, I loosened some of his teeth, and I wound up by kicking him from the street door into the gutter. He picked himself up, and ran off, howling.

I went back to Molly. She was still laying on the ground. I lifted her up,

carried her into the next room, laid her on the bed, and waited in the dark till I heard her coming to. Then I slipped away, and stole out of the house.

The next day it was all over the neighbourhood that Tom Blindweed's ghost had appeared to Dick Pawson and Molly, and had given Dick Pawson a beating that'd make him sore for a month. It got into the papers, and I read about it. It was funny the things the paper said. There was letters from people who believed in ghosts, and who told all sorts of stories of what had happened to them, and their mothers, and grandmothers. The fellers that call theirselves spiritualists wrote columns and columns, and said, wasn't that a proof? Some of them had called up the ghost of Tom Blindweed theirselves, and asked him questions, and heard from him that it was all true. But I dare say, gov'nor, you've read all about the fuss that was made.

I kept anug, watching from my winder. No one suspected me. I watched and waited for a week, and Molly never come out of the house. I had talks with the landlady of my lodgings about it, and she told me that Molly was frightened to stir out, and that she kept in bed the best part of the day. Then I thought it was time to put an end to it all.

I went out one morning, walked a long way to the other end of London, stepped into a barber's shop, and had myself clean shaved, and then come back to this street. I was recognised instanter, and it made me laugh to see the way old acquaintances first looked at me, and then run away from me. One man plucked up courage, and spoke to me.

"It can't be Tom Blindweed," says he.

"Why can't it?" says I, not letting on that I knew anything.

"Why can't it?" says he. "'Cause you're dead, you know."

"Git out," says I, treating it as a joke. "Come and have half a pint."

He did; and in a very little while I was regularly mobbed. I took it good-humouredly, and chaffed and laughed, and then managed to give 'em the slip, and make my way to Molly. She was at home; and when I come in she give a shriek, and covered her face with her hands.

"What's the matter, Molly?" says I. "I've come back, you see. It wasn't right of me going away as I did, and keeping away so long. Give me a kias, Molly, and let us make it up."

She wouldn't let me come nigh her. She was so scared that I thought she'd scream the house down. The noise, of course, brought in a lot of neighbours, and who should come in with them but a policeman a man had called in to take me up.

"What's the charge?" says the policeman.

"Not being dead," says I; and I tells him who I am.

"Quite right," says the policeman; he knew me. "The man that was buried for you wasn't the man he was supposed to be. He's proved to be somebody else. Mr. Blindweed's inquest is a good joke."

With that he went away, and I sent the people packing out of my place, telling 'em I wanted to be alone with my wife. It was a long time, though, before I managed to convince Molly that I was really alive, but when she began to cry softly, I knew it was all right. We passed a happy evening, and for at least a week she was honey. But she's turned again, and I don't think I'm quite free from blame. You see, I couldn't keep my own counsel. I let a word drop here, and a word drop there, and Molly put this and that together, and one day she artfully wheedled a lot out of me and got to know that it was me, and nobody else, who paid a visit to her and Dick Pawson as a ghost. She tells me she'll never forgive the trick, but she will. I'll let her know that a man has a right to become his own ghost if he likes, especially when he's been served as I've been. I'll be master in my own house, or I'll know the reason why. Don't mistake me, guv'nor. I'm awfully sweet on Molly still—just you put that in print; I don't mind all the world knowing it—and if she'll only treat me fair, I'll be as good to her as it's possible for a husband to be. But I ain't going to have my life made a misery. When Molly reads, as perhaps she will, through you, guv', that I don't care the snuff of a candle for any woman but her, and that it only depends upon herself whether we shall live a happy life, I've little doubt she'll show her sense, because, guv'nor, I'm sure her heart's in the right place. And when she gits back her good looks again—which she can, if she makes her mind easy—I'll show you the prittiest piece of goods you can see in a day's march.

Now we'll settle up, if you please. Let me see. I've been pattering away for fifty-two minutes, and how you've taken it

all down in the way you have is a wonder. Three fifty-twos is a hunderd and fifty-six. In pennies, that's thirteen bob. Ten bob you gave me on account; three more 'll make it square. Thank you, guv'nor.

Why, here's Molly!

Molly, my dear, here's a gent who's put me in the way of earning thirteen bob in less than an hour. Take it, Molly, and buy yourself that hat you fell in love with yesterday.

Good-day, guv'nor.

MY WONDERFUL DREAM.

By C. L. PIRKIS

Author of "A House of Shadows," "With Golden Oars on a Silver Stream," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

I CAN see it now as plainly as I saw it when I awoke in the dawn of that winter's morning—a house with many gables, snow-covered, standing amid leafless trees in a snowy garden, overhead a night sky with a great white moon in it.

And—here comes the extraordinary part of my dream—every shadow which that moon threw upon the snow was blood-red; the house with its many gables; the gaunt, bare trees; the low, thickset hedges, seemed printed in crimson on that white snow.

What my dreams were before this snow-picture with its blood-red shadows flashed out on me, I do not remember—I dare say they were the usual fantastic réchauffé of events of the previous day. Nothing followed it, for, with a start, I awakened, bringing back with me from my dreams a sense of utter bewilderment, of which, even in my sleep, I had been conscious.

For a few minutes I lay still with closed eyes, trying to court a continuation alike of my slumber and its weird fancies. All in vain! Neither came back to me; so I racked my brains to find in the events of the preceding day a clue to my strange vision.

The events of the preceding day were easy enough to recapitulate—a hurried breakfast in my rooms in the Savoy; a quick drive to the Great Western Railway Station; then eight unbroken hours in the express to North Devon, during which I scanned sundry Australian papers that the morning's post had brought.

Fellow-passengers I had had none, until the train stopped at Bath, when an elderly gentleman of a sociable turn of mind had

got in, and had travelled with me as far as Exeter. The badness of the weather, by way of a beginning to conversation, possibly received a passing allusion—it had rained continuously during the past week—but with this exception our talk from beginning to end had centred exclusively on the possibility of the construction of an international language on phonetic principles, a subject to which I had never before given serious thought, but on which the elderly gentleman was an enthusiast.

After he had left the train at Exeter, I went back to my Australian papers; but I am confident that nothing descriptive of snow or snow-storms occurred in any one of the columns which I lightly skimmed.

The close of my day's railway journey had found me seated in a comfortable carriage, whirling easily on my way to the Priory, the country-house where my Christmas holidays were to be passed; and the close of my drive had found me seated in a handsome dining-room with a good glass of wine and a tempting supper before me.

In all this it seemed impossible to find a clue to the mystery of my dream, so I gave up the attempt, and tried to dismiss the matter from my thoughts.

This visit to North Devon had been undertaken at the request of my uncle—my father's only brother—Dr. Richard Hardwicke, at one time a leading practitioner in a West End district. Twenty years ago he had given up his practice and had bought an estate in North Devon, where he had settled down as a veritable patron saint of the district, building schools and a chapel-of-ease there, and winning for himself a wide reputation for sanctity and benevolence.

Uncle Richard had acted the part of a father to me—within certain limits—all my life through. My father, early in life, had cut himself adrift from his family; and, after wandering about the world a good deal, had settled down in Australia, and had married there. There, also, I had been born, and there my mother had died when I was about six years old. After this sad event, my father's wandering tastes had seized upon him again; he had returned to Europe, and deposited me in a Parisian boarding-school; and had set off for Spain, where Uncle Richard, on an autumnal pleasure trip, had arranged to meet him. There they met, and there my father had died suddenly of heart-disease. Uncle Richard had brought the news of

his death to me in my Parisian boarding-school; and from that day forward I owed everything in life to him.

He had collected together the remnants of my father's Australian property, and had invested it for me in the English funds. He had given me a first-rate education, and at its close had secured for me an excellent appointment in a Government office. Nevertheless, I could not, during the whole twenty years of my life in England, recall one single kind word that Uncle Richard had ever given me. He had persistently kept me at arm's length; and the impression conveyed to my mind was that all he had done for me had been done because he was unwilling to repudiate the claims of kinship, not because his heart had opened to the orphan boy.

I think if it had not been for Flo, Uncle Richard's only child, the Priory would never have seen me. On the night of my arrival there, every one of its rooms seemed to give me a chill instead of a welcome. That large, handsome dining-room, in which I sat down to my supper, set my teeth on edge with the raw newness of its furniture and decorations.

We were an old North-country family, and had had a "place" somewhere up in the North once upon a time. Yet here had Uncle Richard settled down in the far South; had built a new house, and had surrounded himself with everything that was newest and most modern.

The only thing that gave me anything in the shape of a welcome was a little note from Flo, which the butler handed to me with the intimation that Uncle Richard and she had retired for the night.

This was Flo's note:

"DEAR REX,—I'm sent to bed as usual. Papa is dreadfully crusty to-night. Between ourselves, he has not been quite himself lately—I hope he is not going to be ill. Mind you enjoy your supper; and do, pray, be down in time for prayers in the morning. Snipe for breakfast! FLO."

"P.S.—I've given up all idea of becoming a poor-law guardian, and am going in now for the medical profession."

Flo was exactly eighteen and a half. She was small and slight in figure; with tiny features; large china-blue eyes; and the complexion of a wax doll. She looked as if she ought always to be dressed in Watteau style as a Dresden-china shepherdess, mounted on a pedestal, and put under a glass shade. And she always wore tailor-made gowns, carried a walking-stick,

and for head-gear liked nothing better than one of my old deer-stalker hats!

Her greeting to me on the following morning, when I made my appearance in the breakfast-room, was characteristic. It was :

"I hope you haven't forgotten my neckties, Rex. I can't get anything down here startling enough. Big spots or cable-pattern, that's what I want! Like yours, did you say? Oh, that's far too neat; I wanted something surprising!"

Uncle Richard came up, gave me two fingers, and told Flo that he was ready for his coffee. Flo was the apple of his eye, and, since her mother's death about five years previously, had been the mistress of his household; but for all that he was apt to exact from her the prompt, unreasoning obedience of a child.

Our breakfast that morning was a typical one. We had no sooner seated ourselves at table than the Vicar of the parish came in. He had no sooner had his egg and coffee set before him than in came the Curate, and close on his heels followed the Churchwarden.

"If we only sat long enough at table," whispered Flo to me, "depend upon it the bell-ringers and grave-diggers would present themselves."

There seemed to be a good many matters of parochial importance to discuss that morning, and Uncle Richard's opinion appeared to be greatly deferred to. I looked up at him once, when he was laying down the law on some matter connected with church decoration, and fully endorsed Flo's remark that "he was not looking himself." He was a tall, large-featured man, with cold, restless grey eyes. I had not seen him now for over a year, and during that year he seemed to me to have aged amazingly. There was on his face a harassed, hunted look, which puzzled me—knowing as I did what an easy, prosperous life he led from year's end to year's end.

Flo's look followed mine; then turned upon me enquiringly. To divert her attention I began telling the story of my strange dream of over-night.

Her imagination was caught by it.

"Blood-red shadows on the white snow," she exclaimed. "Oh, you must have been reading Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner!'"

Looking up at that moment I caught Uncle Richard's eye fixed on us. In the very midst of an assurance to the Vicar that he would himself supply new surplices to the choir-boys if the choir fund were

unable to meet the expense, he stopped short, a change of expression passing over his face.

I assured Flo that the "Ancient Mariner" had not been in my hand since, as a small boy at school, I had learnt to hate it through having my parsing exercises drawn from its weird pages; nor could I, I went on to say, in any way trace my dream to its source. Then, in reply to Flo's queries, I gave her in detail my movements of the preceding day, beginning with my start from Paddington and ending with the elderly enthusiast on the international language.

A start from Uncle Richard at this moment shook the breakfast-table.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed in a tone which no one present had ever heard him use before, "these plates are red hot!"

"My dear sir!" began the Vicar, deprecatingly.

"Wallace," said my uncle, sharply, addressing the butler, "take care that plates are never again put upon the table at this heat."

"As I was saying, my dear sir," recommenced the Vicar, "the choir fund is at a very low ebb——"

And under cover of the renewal of their subject of discussion, Flo and I fell back upon our former topic—my wonderful dream.

"It's a case of unconscious memory," said Flo, trying to look very learned, as if she had all the latest scientific theories upon unconscious cerebration at her fingers' tips. "Now I'll explain it all to you as nicely as possible. Dreams are—no, memory is—no, that's not right either. Which way ought I to begin? I'm all in a mist."

Flo, in view of her impending studies for the medical profession, had evidently been skimming some of Uncle Richard's old books on the brain and its functions.

Her jump, however, at a scientific solution of my difficulty, struck a vein of thought.

"I should begin with memory, I think," I answered. "Our memory, unconsciously to ourselves, may retain the recollection of certain facts, and a key-note of association struck, those facts may be suddenly presented to our mental vision although we may have lost the link between the key-note struck and the facts revived. Now on the theory that dreams are the continuation of waking thoughts——"

But here Uncle Richard's voice broke in

with an angry vehemence. "The chatter at the other end of the table is intolerable. Flo, if you want to hear your own voice, go and practise your singing, and leave me to entertain our friends here."

Flo flushed scarlet. It was, however, impossible to disregard so peremptory an order. She at once rose and left the room. I followed as soon as possible. I found her not practising her singing, but feeding her doves in the conservatory.

"Papa has changed so of late," she said. "He has several times lately spoken to me like that. Only yesterday he flew into a passion—yes, it was a downright passion—because I asked him if we were connected with the Yorkshire Hardwicke. Nellie Williamson had asked me and I could not tell her."

I could have paired with this fact a similar instance of Uncle Richard's loss of temper, when some few years back I had put a question or two to him respecting our ancestry, and the possibility of our having distant relatives anywhere "up in the North." I knew that my grandfather had been the only son of an only son, but surely that did not preclude the possibility of a legion of distant cousins.

However, I did not relate this circumstance. I suggested to Flo that possibly Uncle Richard had business worries of which we knew nothing; some of his investments might have gone wrong—or it might be that he was not in quite such good health as usual.

Flo looked up at me with her split peas on her finger-tips.

"Yes, I dare say you're right," she said, thoughtfully. "He has been consulting a doctor lately, and he has, I know, been selling some land that he bought a year ago and meant to farm himself. And Rex, do you know, such a strange thing happened the other day. He asked me—" but here Flo broke off, her face covered with blushes; the words had evidently escaped her unawares.

But I would have the finish of her sentence.

"What was it, Flo?" I asked, catching hold of her hand.

"If I would like to be married," answered Flo, snatching her hand away, picking up the split peas again and feeding her pets at a furious rate.

"And you told him——?" I enquired, anxiously, trying hard to get a view of Flo's face, which was bent low over the doves' cage.

Voices at that moment made themselves heard just outside the glass-door at which we were standing. It was Uncle Richard saying good-bye to his friends.

The conservatory jutted out from the side of the house, and between the greenery of the plants we could command a view of the drive which led down to the gates. The wintry sun-light fell full on Uncle Richard's face, unshadowed by hat; it showed pinched, wan, and furrowed. Flo looked at me, I looked at Flo. That face said as plainly as words could: "I have a secret locked in my heart which is slowly, but surely, sending me to my grave."

The sound of wheels coming up the drive made Uncle Richard pause, and look round.

"Visitors so early," exclaimed Flo. "No one is expected!"

The wheels proved to be those of the "fly" from the village inn, which supplied the necessities of chance arrivals at the little railway station.

Flo, all anxiety to know who were the approaching guests, tip-toed over the flower-pots. I, with my eyes fixed on Uncle Richard's face, saw a sudden, startled look sweep over it; then it grew ashen white, and for a moment he leaned for support against the pillar of the stone porch. The door of the fly was opened and forthwith descended a portly, solemn-looking individual, who would have passed muster either as a retired butler, or an exalted Salvation Army General.

"You scarcely expected to see me!" were the words with which he greeted Uncle Richard in slow, unctuous tones, and with an odious smirk at the corners of his mouth.

Uncle Richard's lips moved, but no sound came from them. He led the way into the house in silence, and the immediate shutting of his study door told us that he and his unwelcome guest were closeted together.

Flo began to think of her morning's occupations, and led the way back into the house. To my surprise she took a pair of spectacles out of her pocket, walked to the nearest looking-glass and fitted them on her small nose in the most coquettish fashion.

"Don't come near me all the morning, Rex," she said, peremptorily. "I am going into the library to study medicine. I told you I was going to tease papa into letting me enter myself as a student at one of the universities that admit women, and I'm qualifying for the preliminary exam."

Naturally I disregarded her prohibition and followed her into the library, for I had no mind to lose half an hour of her society if I could help it. Painting materials and an easel in one of the big bay-windows suggested an idea.

"Flo, I wish you'd take off those horrid glasses," I said, "and do me a favour."

Flo made her mouth into a round O, and walked to the looking-glass.

"Horrid glasses! They're the loveliest things in the way of glasses I could get; and I won't take them off unless you tell me they are most becoming, and I look angelic in them," she replied.

"They are most becoming, and you look angelic in them; but I don't want you to be angelic, I want you to be human, and do a kind-hearted action."

Flo's glasses were off in a moment.

"What is it?" she asked, for something in my tone told her that I was in earnest.

"I wish you would try and paint for me the picture I saw in my dream. I will make a rough sketch of the house if you'll paint in the sky, and the leafless trees, and the shadows. The truth is, the dream haunts me—I can't get rid of it—I feel——"

"That there's a secret and a mystery in the house, and that dream is a part of it," finished Flo in a low voice, speaking the words which I had hesitated to utter.

That sketch occupied us the whole morning. Flo was very patient over it, and I was fidgety to the last degree. Again and again I sketched my house; now it was too high, anon too low; then when at length it was completed to my satisfaction, I found fault with Flo's trees—there were too many, their outlines were not sufficiently defined—and again and again she rubbed out and recommenced. When it came to the painting of the picture, we had a battle royal; Flo, in artistic fashion, wanted to get her snow-effects by neutral tints; I insisted that nothing but Chinese white would represent the snow of my dream. So the roof of the house and the garden slopes were painted a hard, staring white. Across this fell in rigid outline the crudest of blood-red shadows that carmine could produce; but shadows, nevertheless, that were thoroughly consonant with the lozenge of Chinese white which, in a stretch of dark sky, represented a moon.

Flo held the sketch at arm's length.

"Talk about 'the light that never was on sea or shore!'" she exclaimed. "I'll

undertake to say that never moon shed light on such a scene as this!"

In good truth, the picture was not one that might have come fresh from an artist's easel, but resembled rather a hard, staring diagram that a child might have painted.

Yet, such as it was, it was the picture of my dream.

The luncheon-bell sounded. Flo tossed the sketch on to a writing-table, and together we made our way towards the dining-room. As we passed the study door, loud voices fell on our ear.

"You drive me hard," we could hear Uncle Richard saying in tones we could hardly recognise as his.

To which we heard the unwelcome visitor reply:

"I give you no alternative. You may outlive me; it's immediate help I want."

I hurried Flo into the dining-room, my apprehensions thoroughly aroused as to some painful secret in Uncle Richard's past career, for which he was now paying black-mail.

Those apprehensions were in no wise allayed when, about half an hour afterwards, Uncle Richard came into the room looking thoroughly tired out, as if by some physical struggle. We had heard him escort his visitor to the front door, and Flo and I had drawn a breath of relief as the wheels which had brought him died away in the distance. Flo tried to greet her father with a smile and some light remark. He did not seem to hear her. He leaned his head on his hand in a gloomy silence, refusing every dish on the table, and drinking glass after glass of wine.

A more sudden and complete change in a man I had never before witnessed. I don't believe that any one of his clerical friends would have recognised in that half-dazed, gloomy man the good Churchman whose purse-strings were so readily unloosed to the claims of local charities.

Flo was the first to rise from table. Her movement aroused Uncle Richard. He sprang—no, tottered to his feet.

"Come into the library, both of you," he said, "I have something of importance to say to you."

His utterance was slow and thick; his face was growing crimson now.

We followed him into the library. He closed the door carefully, then for a moment steadied himself with one hand against the table.

"Put it off till to-morrow, papa," pleaded Flo, "you are ill——"

He held up his hand to silence her; then turned to me.

"I have had a visitor to-day—a man whom neither of you have ever seen—Robert Daniels; he was my butler when I lived in Harley Street."

He broke off. We waited in silence for what was to follow.

He put his hand to his head, as if he kept his thoughts together with difficulty.

"You may hear of that man again—he is—well—no matter."

Again he broke off, looking vaguely round him, as if he had somehow lost the thread of his talk.

I drew a chair to his side, but he took no notice of it.

Suddenly he turned sharply to me, his face lighting up into sudden animation.

"I've never shown you much affection, Rex, so I don't expect love from you in return—don't interrupt me—but you love her, my little girl, I know. Well, I tell you, you may marry her, if she'll have you—don't interrupt—" Again his hand went to his head; the crimson flush across his brow deepening almost to purple now. His eyes wandered round the room once more. "I had better write it down," he muttered. Then to me aloud he said: "If I give you a sealed envelope, Rex, I can trust you not to open it till after my death?"

He tottered, rather than walked, towards a writing-table standing near the bay-window. On it there still lay Flo's sketch of my dream-picture. It caught Uncle Richard's eye; he stood staring at it like one transfixed. His face became livid, his lips parted, his eyes grew staring.

"In the name of heaven—" he began; then he staggered forward, and would have fallen if I had not caught him in my arms and lowered him gently to the ground.

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE RICHARD never spoke again.

He was laid in his grave on the Christmas Eve to which Flo and I had been looking forward for a whole year as a day of festivity and rejoicing. I had naturally communicated with Uncle Richard's lawyers, requesting them to attend the funeral and produce his will. To my surprise they telegraphed a reply that no will had ever been lodged in their hands, and advised that Uncle Richard's private papers at home should be carefully gone through.

I asked Flo to share this task with me; but she sent down a message by the Vicar's wife, who had taken possession of her, that she would be glad if I would undertake the duty without her. I accordingly set apart a day for searching Uncle Richard's writing-tables and cabinets, but although all his papers were arranged and docketed with a scrupulous exactitude, there was no sign of a will. I was puzzled by the circumstance, but did not think it a matter of much moment, as, of course, Flo would inherit everything.

I was rudely awakened from this illusion. Two days after the funeral, a stranger presented himself at the Priory, stating that he was the legal adviser of Mr. Robert Daniels, at one time butler to Dr. Hardwicke, and that he was anxious to communicate with Miss Hardwicke's solicitors respecting a will that had been left in his hands by her father, and in which he had been led to believe Mr. Daniels held an interest.

The interest which Mr. Daniels held in that will proved to be enormous. When it came to be read it was found that Uncle Richard had bequeathed to his former butler the whole of his estate, "real and personal," subject only to the miserable sum of two hundred a year to be paid to Flo.

I was astounded; then furious. I announced my intention of contesting the will—on Flo's behalf—in every law court in the kingdom. Both lawyers counselled prudence. They laid their finger on a clause in the will which stated that the bequest was made on account of "great and important services," rendered by Mr. Daniels to the deceased.

"You may possibly know something of the circumstances which called for great and important services," said Mr. Daniels' legal adviser with a snigger.

"The question is," said old Mr. Vernon, our lawyer, with a frown, "whether you are prepared to unearth family secrets of which we are all in ignorance—a great deal must lie behind this."

I felt the truth of his words, and decided that Flo must be roused from her stupor of grief, and take counsel with me as to the course to be pursued. The Vicar's wife and I nearly came to hot words over this, but I carried the day, and made Flo come downstairs and see me alone.

She looked very white and stricken, poor child! and I fancied that she seemed to shrink from me. It occurred to me that she thought I was going to urge her to

fulfil her father's last wishes, so I determined resolutely to keep love-making on the other side of the door. It was hard to tell her the story of her father's will. I fancied she would be broken-hearted—not at the loss of the money, but at the slight put upon her who had always been the darling of her father's heart. Strange to say, however—although when she had heard the worst she grew deadly white, and for one moment seemed stunned—the next she had rallied, and in a voice that had all its old friendliness in it, she exclaimed :

“Oh, Rex, there's something behind all this—something we ought to get at.”

That was exactly what I wanted to do—get at the truth without throwing mire on the dead man's memory. With Flo in this frame of mind, it was easy to make her see things from my point of view. On one matter we were thoroughly in accord—namely, that no public legal proceedings should be taken, although, privately, we would gladly avail ourselves of old Mr. Vernon's professional services. The dead man had gone to his grave in the odour of sanctity; we would allow every penny of his money to go to Daniels rather than violate that sanctity by unearthing to public view what might be a dark chapter in his early life. Yet in order to set crooked things straight, and to avert the possibility of scandalous whispers getting afloat, we felt it might be necessary for us in private to turn back to, and read that dark chapter.

Flo was silent while I recapitulated one by one the key-notes to possible clues to the mystery of Uncle Richard's life.

First I adverted to the singularity of the circumstance of his cutting himself adrift from his family and connections.

“We must find out something of our ancestry, Flo,” I said. “That matter, however, can be left in Mr. Vernon's hands.”

To this Flo agreed, and I made a memorandum forthwith that a letter should be written to Mr. Vernon, requesting him to find out for us all he could respecting our family connections “up in the North.”

Next we considered the singularity of the fact that Robert Daniels, though avowedly an old and faithful servant, should never have been seen at the Priory till the last day of Uncle Richard's life. We decided that Mr. Vernon should likewise be commissioned to set enquiries on foot concerning this man and his antecedents.

Then we set to work upon that last day of Uncle Richard's life, and deliberately

passed in review the circumstances which had seemed to excite such unreasonable anger in his mind.

First in order stood my chance allusion to the elderly enthusiast on the matter of an international language.

Next came the relation of my wonderful dream.

And finally, most inexplicable cause of an outburst of vehemence, came Flo's attempt at a scientific explanation of the origin of that dream.

“There is a link somewhere between your dream and an international language,” said Flo, at length. “And it was my attempt to find that link which excited papa's anger.”

Yes, that seemed self-evident. It might be that my conversation with my fellow-traveller had struck a vein of thought, which unconsciously to me, had continued through my waking moments, and of which in one brief flash in my sleep I had become conscious. That is to say, I was conscious only of the goal at which my unconscious thinking had landed me; not of the road by which I got there. The idea seemed consonant with modern theories on the subject of dreams and of unconscious memory.

And pursuing this chain of supposition, it seemed possible that Uncle Richard, at a glance, had seen the connection between my dream and my chance conversation with a fellow-traveller. The missing link might be a recollection of my early days lost to me, but fresh in his memory.

It was easy to get so far in our line of reasoning, but it brought us back to the point from which we had started, namely, what was that missing link, how were we to get at it?

“After all,” said Flo, with a mournful look at the table on which still lay the crude little sketch which had given Uncle Richard his death-shock, “the dream must be the thing on which we ought to concentrate our attention.”

There flashed through my mind a wild idea of relating my dream in the advertisement columns of the daily papers, in the hope that something might come of it. A second thought following on the heels of this, suggested an advertisement of another sort. If the dream and the international language were so closely linked together, why not issue an advertisement offering a reward for theories on the latter subject, and see if any one of them would strike a key-note in unison with my dream?

Flo did not take up with this idea very warmly; in good truth, it seemed a trifle visionary. We had, however, nothing better to put in its place, so after careful deliberation we sketched out the following advertisement:

"A gentleman interested in the formation of an international language, offers a prize of fifty guineas for the best theory on the matter succinctly stated within a hundred written lines. The competition will close within a fortnight from the date of this advertisement."

The advertisement was to appear simultaneously in all the leading London journals, and replies were to be addressed to me at the Priory.

After we had despatched our advertisement, Flo and I were not very sanguine as to its results. Curious results, however, soon followed, though scarcely of the kind we expected. The post on the day following that on which my advertisement had appeared, brought me two letters, one from Mr. Vernon, the second from my fellow-traveller from Bath to Exeter. I opened the latter first, and recognised the signature at the foot of the page; for we had exchanged cards.

"I am delighted, my dear young friend," ran the letter, "to see the interest I have awakened in your mind on an important subject. Your fifty guineas does not tempt me, no, nor would five hundred pay any one to write a hundred lines of common-sense on a subject so thickly set with difficulties. If, however, you are interested in collecting curious theories on the matter, I should like you to go and see a man I came upon quite unexpectedly a little while ago when visiting a friend at Dr. Adam's private asylum, Green Street, near Manchester. The man's name was John Horner; he had been an inmate of the asylum for over twenty years, and they said he was sane on all points save one—an international language. His theories are too long to state here. His great stumbling-block was the difficulty of expressing the difference between past, present, and future time by the theory he advocated. He was puzzling hard over this when I went in, and he said it had occupied his attention for close upon thirty years. The superintendent said, 'he believed if the man could but solve this difficulty his reason would be restored.'" The writer concluded with best wishes for the success of my endeavour.

Flo ran her eye over this while I went on to read Mr. Vernon's letter.

It brought startling news. On the preceding day the legal representative of Mr. Robert Daniels had called at Mr. Vernon's office, and had stated that although his client was perfectly convinced of the legality of his claim upon Dr. Hardwicke's estate, he was yet willing to effect a compromise with Miss Hardwicke, and if she would execute a deed undertaking to pay him one thousand pounds a year, he would at once destroy the will in her presence.

Flo read this page over my shoulder. We both agreed that the appearance of my advertisement might have occasioned this sudden concession on Mr. Daniels' part, though how or why we knew not.

Then I turned over to the other side of Mr. Vernon's letter, and heartily regretted that Flo's eyes were following mine along the page, for it told a pitiful tale of fraud and craft—laid bare, in fact, what we then believed to be the whole of Uncle Richard's guilty secret, but what we were quickly to find was but half of it.

Mr. Vernon stated that in pursuance of my instructions he had instituted enquiries into the family history of the Hardwicks, and that although Hardwicke by the score were scattered about Yorkshire, yet our branch of the family fifty years back was represented only by my grandfather and his two sons, my father, John, and Uncle Richard. John wandered away from home before he was twenty, and for thirty years no one heard anything of him. In the year 1864 my grandfather had died, leaving no will, and Richard had taken possession of his property. A short time before his death he had, at Richard's suggestion, sold his Yorkshire estate, and had invested the purchase-money in the funds. There seemed to be some doubt as to the exact date of the year in which my father had died in Spain; but even supposing that his death had preceded my grandfather's, I was entitled to my share in the property, and Uncle Richard's share would have been proportionately diminished. It had, however, been nobody's business to enquire into the matter. Dr. Hardwicke had a high reputation for honour and integrity, and every one who thought about it had concluded that my interests had been duly considered.

Flo dropped the letter, gave me one look, and left the room. When we had set enquiries on foot respecting the Yorkshire Hardwicks, we had not bargained for such a revelation as this.

I did not see Flo all that day, and when she came down to breakfast the next morning she had recovered her outward composure, at any rate, and was as eager as I was to see if the post had brought any further response to my advertisement.

Two letters lay upon the table. One from Mr. Vernon, conveyed the information that Mr. Daniels, in person, had presented himself at Mr. Vernon's office, and had reduced his demand of yesterday from a thousand pounds to five hundred per annum, as he was anxious, he said, to get matters settled. Mr. Vernon farther stated that his enquiries respecting this man had brought to light the fact that on leaving Uncle Richard's service, twenty years ago, he had set up a store in New York, and it was most likely the failure of this store, a short time back, which had sent him to Europe to levy additional black-mail on Uncle Richard.

The second letter was dated from a small street somewhere in Islington, and enclosed a few sheets of loosely-tied manuscript. The writer of the letter, a Mrs. Oldfield, hoped that they might be of use to me, and added, that if they met with my approval she would be thankful for remuneration, for she had kept them carefully for over twenty years.

I ran my eye over the manuscript, and felt my brain swim and my eyes grow dim. Here, in these pages yellowed with age, lay the hidden link between my dream and an international language! Here, too, the reason for Uncle Richard's angry vehemence on the matter was laid bare to view!

The faded ink, in odd jerky sentences, stated a theory for the construction of a universal language for writing purposes by means of colour, and the signature at the bottom of these, at times incoherent, pages, was that of my father, John Hardwicke.

One paragraph I will give as it stood. After stating that, according to his theory, abstract ideas should be represented by the primary colours, that endless modifications of ideas might be expressed by shades of colour thrown upon the groundwork of another colour, and the absence of all thought or emotion by pure white, my father went on to give an example of his meaning.

"I subjoin here a diagram," he wrote, "that will illustrate the potency of colour to convey impressions to the simplest understandings. Here is the picture of a

house in a garden. I paint that house, that garden pure white, as if snow-covered. Now what is the idea conveyed by that snow-white picture? Is it not that absence alike of thought or emotion, which we call peace? Now, see! I dash blood-red shadows athwart the snow, and what is the idea conveyed? Is it not that within that house dwell all sorts of evil passions—anger, murderous hate perhaps?"

The diagram was not there, but there were evidences that it had been torn from between the leaves of the manuscript. Possibly the book had been tossed to me to amuse me, and, my childish fancy captivated by the bright colours, the picture had been so indelibly impressed upon my memory, that twenty years had not sufficed to obliterate it. There it had lain in the hidden recesses of my brain ready to flash forth at a moment's notice, while the deeper subject which had called it into being, had failed to make any deep impression upon me.

How had the writer of this letter become possessed of this manuscript? what did she know of my father's last hours? were the thoughts that naturally arose in my mind as I reverently laid on one side the faded manuscript.

A journey to London might answer these questions, so I was out of the house and on my road to the by-street at Islington within ten minutes from the time that I broke the seal of that letter.

It was late at night when I knocked at Mrs. Oldfield's door; but my impatience would not let me defer my visit till the following morning. She freely answered all my questions. Twenty years ago, she said, she was English waitress at an hotel in Seville, when Mr. Hardwicke went to lodge there. He was very eccentric in his manner of conducting himself, and used to write nearly from morning till night. One day an English gentleman came to see him, accompanied by his servant. They stayed at the house with Mr. Hardwicke for a short time, and then all three departed together. On the day following their departure, the servant came back to the hotel and asked permission to go round Mr. Hardwicke's rooms, in case he had left papers of any sort behind. He seemed very anxious on the matter, and furthermore stated that the gentleman was hopelessly insane, and that although he persisted in calling himself John Hardwicke, and gave out that he was his—the servant's—master's brother, he was in

reality no relative, but merely a friend, and his name was John Horner.

All this Mrs. Oldfield related in clear detail, and further added that the manuscript which she had sent to me she had found, after the servant had departed, behind a cabinet, that she had retained possession of it, thinking it possible that at some time or other it might be claimed, or that she might in some manner get it into the hands of the gentleman who appeared so anxious about the mad gentleman's manuscripts. After keeping it carefully, however, for twenty years, she had come to the conclusion that no one was likely to claim it, and my advertisement had tempted her to turn the possession of it to her own pecuniary advantage.

Here was a strange story—not one of death-bed hours, and last messages, such as I had expected to hear, but one even more gloomy, if interpreted by later events. Insane my father might have been—possibly was; but what had been his fate after he had been enticed to quit his hotel? Had he been hurried into a nameless grave, or incarcerated in some private lunatic asylum under an assumed name?

Here, in a flash of thought, the name, John Horner, which Mrs. Oldfield had mentioned brought to my mind the letter from my fellow-traveller, recounting his introduction to the inmate of the Green Street Asylum, who held strange theories respecting the formation of an universal language.

But my story must end here. I am not fond of recalling, even in quiet talk with Flo, my visit to the Green Street Asylum, and my first glimpse of a dignified, if absent-looking, old man seated at a table covered with paints and palettes, who was introduced to me as Mr. John Horner. The account of his coming to the Asylum, some twenty years back, was given to me by the medical superintendent, to whom it had been handed down by a predecessor in office. Dr. Hardwicke had brought the man to the Asylum, having previously written to the authorities apprising them of the patient he was about to place under their care. He charged himself with all subsequent expenses, and stated that the man was hopelessly insane, but perfectly harmless. He had, he said, injured his brain in the pursuit of one idea—an international language.

Dr. Hardwicke had further stated that one of the man's crazes was to believe himself to be his brother, who had died years

ago in Australia; his real name, however, was John Horner, as appeared on the certificate. This certificate, it may be added, was signed by Uncle Richard and by Robert Daniels; the latter purported to be a doctor who really bore that name and lived in a North London district.

The secret of Uncle Richard's life was plain reading to me now, thanks to the wonderful dream which had struck the key-note of it. But, for Flo's sake, that secret had to be kept secret still; and thus it came about that when Robert Daniels suddenly disappeared from his London address, he was allowed so to disappear without hue or cry being raised.

An odd thing happened on the day that Flo and I were married. I had arranged with the Superintendent of the Green Street Asylum that my father, with a proper attendant, should for the future live with us at the Priory. Thus attended, he made one of the wedding-party at the church. At the close of the service, as Flo and I knelt before the altar, a long, narrow sunbeam slanted through a side window, and falling full upon Flo's bent head, turned her crown of flaxen hair beneath her white veil into a crown of gold.

My father jumped up excitedly and clapped his hands. "I have it, I have it," he cried, triumphantly; "silver for the past tenses; neutral tint for the present; but gold, and gold only, is the colour for the future!"

THE CARDINAL'S HANDS.

BY FREDERICK TALBOT.

CHAPTER I.

"YES, you can send the girl here," said Miss Bodankin, as she sipped her customary after-dinner glass of claret at her own dinner-table in her own snug apartments at Hampton Court. Snug they certainly were, those old-fashioned rooms, with their oak panelling that reflected the glow of fire and lamp-light in broken gleams from their polished surface; as snug as the richest of curtains, and carpets, and cushions, and the softest of general padding could make them. Old pictures were on the walls, and old oak buffets adorned the dining-room, while through the curtained alcove could be seen an inner drawing-room, bright with gilding and mirrors, and lighted by an array of wax candles

in glittering crystal chandeliers. The small, round dining-table drawn close to the fire, with its array of flowers, cut-glass, and massive silver plate, was a cosy and pleasant sight. But all these pleasant and softening influences had little effect upon the countenance of Miss Bodankin. She sat there stern, uncompromising, gloomy, and if there was any satisfaction to be read upon her features, it was due to the reflection that her solitary guest was enjoying some unhappy moments, as he listened to the remarks of his hostess. "Send the girl here," Miss Bodankin had said. The girl was only his daughter; only all the pleasure and brightness of his life. Still it would have to be done.

Miss Bodankin's solitary guest was her brother George, with whom she had not foregathered for twenty years or more. Twenty years! Twenty years ago Miss Bodankin had been a spinster, aged forty; an old maid, in fact; and she was no worse off now. But twenty years ago she had been under the dominion of a stern, tyrannical father, and often in humiliating straits for want of a little pocket-money. Now she was her own mistress, tolerably well off; she owned to that much, although she never boasted of her belongings. Twenty years ago she had looked upon her brother with hopeless envy and bitter jealousy. They were not children of the same mother. George was the offspring of a young wife, whom old Bodankin had acquired, people said, in satisfaction of a bad debt; and, during the short period of her reign at the old banking house in Harley Square, her step-daughter had regarded her with profound aversion and contempt. And then the boy, George, had always been preferred to the girl—her interest had always been sacrificed for his. She might have married well, had her father consented to open his money-bags a little. But no. George was the pride of his father's heart; everything was kept for him. Crusty and penurious, as far as the rest of the world was concerned, to George the old banker was profuse and even lavish in his generosity.

And now! George must be nearly fifty now; he looked old and broken, but still gentlemanly in the evening-dress that his sister had provided for him. But how had he looked in that threadbare coat and absurd old-fashioned hat, as he had appeared to his sister but the day before yesterday, haphazard in the Palace gardens! Name, and fame, and everything were gone for

George; he was no longer a Bodankin, but simply a man named Fitch, whose wife had a laundry somewhere in Bloomsbury, or, perhaps, Marylebone.

Twenty years ago George had disgraced himself and his family so hopelessly, that his outraged father had disowned him, and cut him out of his will. Mr. Bodankin had no other child except his daughter Olivia, and she—Miss Bodankin, that is—fully expected at her father's death, which happened soon after, to benefit by poor George's disgrace. But no. A bare three hundred a year was settled upon her for life. All the rest of his property old Bodankin bequeathed to his cousin, General Hunter. A great deal of sympathy was felt for the daughter who was thus deprived of a fortune which seemed naturally to belong to her, and as a result of this feeling, interest was made in high quarters, and Miss Bodankin obtained a grant of the comfortable apartments at Hampton Court which she at present enjoyed. The General was, however, a man of punctilious feeling. He was in India at the time, but when he returned, he took steps to transfer all that he had received from his cousin to his cousin's daughter, Miss Bodankin.

When Miss Bodankin accidentally met that disreputable brother of hers, and recognised him after all these years, and saw that she herself was recognised, her first impulse was to give him the cut direct, in the form of a stony, unrecognising stare. Perhaps, had he looked miserable and dejected she would have obeyed this impulse. But, as it happened, he was laughing heartily—he and a handsome young woman who accompanied him, were thoroughly enjoying some good joke. That George should be happy and merry although shabby, while she, Miss Bodankin, a respectable and in every way dignified person, was feeling cross and miserable, struck her as being so flagrantly out of keeping with the Providential order of things, that she felt her curiosity aroused as to the cause. And with that she stopped, and the brother took off his hat as if she had been an ordinary acquaintance.

"Mr. Fitch, I think," said Miss Bodankin, making a ghastly imitation of a smile.

"Walk on, Olive; I will join you directly," said the "soi-disant" Mr. Fitch. The girl moved on, first taking in Miss Bodankin's general appearance in one quick, sweeping glance.

"Your daughter, I presume," said Miss Bodankin, coldly.

"Your niece Olive, my dear Olivia," rejoined Mr. Fitch, with a sarcastic inflection of his voice. "Charmed to see you looking so well! Good morning."

"Stay," said Miss Bodankin. "Now that we have met, I should like to hear something about you. Come and dine with me the day after to-morrow. All to our two selves."

Mr. Fitch hesitated, but finally accepted the invitation. He had a kind of superstitious dread of crossing the barrier that divided him from his former existence, but still he longed to hear how matters had gone with old acquaintances and friends. The visit could hardly have ulterior consequences. He would appear like a ghost, and so depart, content with a single glimpse of the scenes of other days.

When Mr. Fitch rejoined his daughter, he found her possessed with a certain natural curiosity as to his late meeting. "Was it a lady of title he had spoken to—she seemed very stiff and stand-offish—or some one connected with the Court?"

Mr. Fitch replied that the lady was nothing very remarkable; but an acquaintance of days gone by, when his means were greater than now.

"That was before you were married, papa, I suppose," said Olive, "when you could spend all your money on yourself."

"Exactly," said Mr. Fitch, pleasantly. "Your mother takes care that I don't make ducks and drakes with the money now."

Olive laughed. It certainly was the fact that Mrs. Fitch kept a tight hold upon the purse-strings. But that was necessary enough; for her husband had a facile way of getting rid of money, that would have brought him to downright want, if his wife had not been at the helm. He acknowledged to himself that he owed everything in the world to his Isabel. She had rescued him from the grave of a suicide. Her energy and business capacity had brought them a moderate prosperity. He had never contributed much to their success, and after sundry efforts, as strenuous as he could make them but of no particular result, he had ceased to try. But he was very amiable, contented, and agreeable, and Mrs. Fitch was well contented with him for a husband; and, comparing him with other people's husbands, she often thanked her stars that had given her a gentleman for her portion, although certainly had he been capable of bullying and storming about, he would have been more useful in the business. For her work-

girls were very tiresome, and pleasant words were altogether wasted upon them.

The pair had only one daughter, Olive, and it must not be supposed that she roughened her pretty hands in soap-suds, or bent herself double over the ironing board. There were means in plenty to give the girl a good education. She had been a pupil at the nearest high school, and, showing a strong aptitude for drawing, she had become a student at South Kensington. She had shown a pretty taste in colour and design, and now she was engaged at Milbank's pottery, painting cups and vases, and earning a comfortable weekly stipend.

The Fitch's establishment occupied the greater part of an old-fashioned house in a dingy street not far from the Portland Road. Olive had her studio at the very top of the house, where there was a roomy attic with a covered roof, and a good top-light; and here the girl set up her easel and stretched her canvases; for she had ambition, and intended to paint a picture one day, that should appear at the Grosvenor or the Academy. The studio opened upon the leads, and here the girl and her father had made a pleasant kind of border with flower-boxes and trellis-work, and festooned with scarlet-runners and gay nasturtiums, where Mr. Fitch would smoke his pipe with great contentment on summer evenings, and gaze over the roofs that were glowing in the vapourous sunshine; even the roofs and chimneys of what had been his father's house, marked by the tall chestnuts in the square beyond. One busy, noisy street alone divided the scenes of his former life from those of the present; but it served the purpose as effectually as though it had been that deep and silent stream which blots out all remembrance. And sometimes at the sunset hour they would hear the lions roaring for their prey, or the elephants trumpeting on their evening walk, and other mysterious sounds from Regent's Park way, all of which gave a kind of romantic tinge to the familiar scene.

And it so happened that the corresponding room on the adjoining leads was also occupied as a studio—and by a very handsome young fellow, who was in training as a sculptor. He did not live in the house, but in one of the squares to the westward, but he spent all his spare time here modelling in clay or covering the walls of the room with charcoal sketches of groups and figures. A friendship had naturally sprung

up between the two artists—each criticised the other's performances in a friendly but searching manner. It was Mr. Fitch, indeed, who had first made the acquaintance of the sculptor, and who had discovered the loose rail in the iron palisading that divided the roofs. But the acquaintance once formed, the young people grew more intimate and friendly day by day, till autumn came, and the scarlet-runners and the nasturtiums began to droop, and the air upon the leads to grow foggy and chilly, and Mr. Hunter, the sculptor, was off to Rome for the winter, promising to write often and tell his little friend all the news of the studios.

"Ah, papa!" cried Olive, when the young man had departed; "why can't you take me to Rome, too?"

"Exactly," said Mr. Fitch, jingling the few loose coins in his pocket. "But come, my girl, if we can't go to Rome, we will go to Hampton Court; there are pictures there, and, I fancy, a statue or two."

But the day happened to be a Friday, which, if it does not deserve its ordinary reputation, is, at all events, an unlucky day at Hampton Court; for the galleries are all closed, and housemaids and brooms are in the ascendant. But Olive and her father were happy enough in roaming about the gardens, till, in a sunny nook in the old private gardens, they came across Miss Bodankin.

And this brings us to Miss Bodankin's dinner-table, and to the understanding between her and her brother that Olive was to be sent to her "on trial."

CHAPTER II.

OLIVE had paid a fortnight's visit to Miss Bodankin, and, on the whole, the visit had been a success. The girl had enjoyed herself, at all events, and she had made friends with the people about her. Miss Bodankin's rooms had seemed so much the brighter for her presence, that, when she had gone, the old lady felt quite gloomy and depressed.

"I will have that girl for myself," muttered Miss Bodankin, as she sat down to her writing; for she kept a diary, if you please, and when any little event occurred, such as Olive's visit, she made a summary of the impressions it had caused, and entered it carefully in the volume. "George is a fool," she said to herself, "and does not deserve to enjoy any of the good things of life."

His daughter should come and live with her, and brighten her weary pilgrimage, Miss Bodankin decided. She would adopt her; the girl should be Miss Bodankin, and inherit all that she had to leave. Not that she intended to die just yet. Her grandmother lived to be ninety, and so might she—that was thirty years to come yet—and by that time Olive would be nearly fifty, and old enough to look after things. For she should not marry; Miss Bodankin would take care to guard her from such a fate as that. And then Olive could adopt somebody in her turn, and in this way the line of Miss Bodankins could be continued into perpetuity.

Strengthened by these thoughts, Miss Bodankin forthwith wrote a letter to Mr. Fitch, to the effect that she was pleased with his daughter, and would like to adopt her. Olive would be treated as the future Miss Bodankin; she should have masters, models, or whatever she might require for her artistic studies. Miss Bodankin would not object to spend a few years in Rome, if that were judged advisable. If the girl behaved dutifully and properly, Miss Bodankin would give her a handsome allowance—say three hundred a year, for dress and pocket-money—and would leave her amply provided for. Miss Bodankin only exacted one condition, but that was indispensable: "Olive must hold no further communication with her former relatives and friends from the time she became a member of Miss Bodankin's household."

When she had sealed and despatched the letter, Miss Bodankin began to wonder how George would take it. He would give up his daughter, she felt sure; he was one of those weak, yielding creatures who give up everything. He would have certainly come to ruin sooner or later, even if his sister had not given him a last little push over the abyss. That was a little circumstance which did not appear in the diary, but it recurred to Miss Bodankin sometimes in the silent watches of the night.

This night especially, having dismissed her maid, and being snugly ensconced in bed—a shaded lamp giving a mild and gentle light, and a fire of logs flickering cheerfully on the tiled hearth. Miss Bodankin having composed herself to drop quietly asleep, was, instead, confronted with a vision of those other days. It was her father's voice she heard, speaking in

strangely agitated tones: "Go to George, before he leaves the house, tell him, beg him, to come and ask my forgiveness, and all shall be forgiven." And then she saw herself standing irresolute on the stairs, while her brother descended step by step, his face whitened with despair. "George had been so often forgiven," she whispered to herself; "let him pay the penalty now." And then the hall-door had closed behind her brother with a loud bang.

And a door had banged somewhere at that moment—Miss Bodankin heard it—an unusual sound at night, for walls were thick, and doors were solid in the old Cardinal's Palace, and few sounds were heard from outside.

Tradition said that the room which Miss Bodankin occupied as a bedchamber, had once been Cardinal Wolsley's private room; the Cardinal's hat was carved somewhere on the stonework of the chimney, and the broad, black oak mantelshelf was enriched with carved work of his period. Some people might have felt the associations of the place to be a little eerie, but Miss Bodankin was not a superstitious person. Still, that oaken staircase did creak and groan most unaccountably at times; and the servants had at times heard footsteps and the sound of voices, when there was nothing to account for the same.

However, there was nothing in the slamming of a door to excite any great apprehension, and Miss Bodankin was wooing sleep once more, when another scene presented itself vividly to her mind. Again she heard her father's voice: "Go and seek George, and bring him back to me." And she had known where to find him well enough, for he had written to her and told her of the girl who had picked him out of the gutter, and who loved him well enough to marry him. And she, Miss Bodankin, had gone to her father and said: "You need not trouble yourself about George, he has married a girl from the streets and she will take care of him."

That was the piece of news which gave the finishing stroke to her father, and, if it was not quite the truth, still she thought it was at the time. And what advantage did she get by the matter? Why, none at all; she had gained absolutely nothing by George's disgrace. All her present comforts she owed to General Hunter's sense of honour and love of justice, and this had nothing to do with George and his disgrace.

Still, even about this last-mentioned transaction there was some hidden circumstance, the recollection of which made Miss Bodankin's pillow an uneasy one. And all the time she felt as if some one were reading her hidden thoughts, and making out first one point and then another, as if it were a Judge who was summing up the case against her. And this impression grew so strong in her mind, that at last she called out, quite loudly in intention, but in reality in a strangled whisper: "Not guilty, my Lord;" and then, with a feeling of terror upon her, sat straight up in bed.

The light from lamp and fire still cast a soft glow over the room, and what Miss Bodankin saw she saw with perfect clearness. There, upon the black oak mantelshelf, rested a pair of hands. They were red hands, too; not red with blood, but as if encased in red gloves—fine silken gloves, curiously stitched and marked. The hands were carelessly crossed one upon the other, as if the figure to which they belonged were standing in meditative attitude by the fire, half leaning against the chimney-piece. Miss Bodankin closed her eyes and reasoned with herself. "It is some optical illusion, like those you see in the advertisements," she argued to herself. "I wore yellow gloves to-day. I must have looked at them as they lay on my dressing-table, and now I see them yonder reproduced in red." She opened her eyes again; the red hands were still there. That alarmed her; but she kept her eyes fixed upon them, and, after awhile, one was removed, and then the other. The floor creaked, the stairs creaked, down below a door slammed again, and all was still.

Next morning, Miss Bodankin sent for her medical adviser, who found her rather feverish, and prescribed a pill and draught. One or two friends, hearing that she was unwell, came in to see her. The last to leave was a sprightly young widow, the latest and best addition to the little community.

"My dear," said Miss Bodankin, nervously, as the gay little lady was about to depart, "You know everything; pray tell me—it is some absurd gossip of the servants—but did you ever hear of the appearance of two red hands?"

"My dear Miss Bodankin!" cried the other, "you have been here all these years and don't know that? Why those are the Cardinal's hands! Why they should appear, and no other part of him, I don't

know ; but so it is. They are not often seen ; but let those who see them look out. Crossed, they are simply a warning ; clasped, they mean — well, something dreadful. They say the dear man always clasped his hands and said a short prayer before he sentenced anybody to death. The moral is, that we should all be very good and virtuous, lest at any time we should see the Cardinal's hands. I never expect to see them, don't you see ; so good-bye, dear Miss Bodankin, till to-morrow."

Miss Bodankin blanched a little at the story she had heard ; but she was of a stout, resolute spirit, and as she took her pill and draught that night, she said :

"Here is something that will exorcise the Cardinal." And, indeed, the night passed without alarm, so did many succeeding ones.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Olive reached home, after her visit to Miss Bodankin, she found the change at first a little depressing. There everything had gone so smoothly. Here the wheels of life went round with creaking and groaning. Her mother was worried and impatient ; her father looked shabby and unkempt in contrast with the trim-looking people about Miss Bodankin ; and the prospect of getting up early in the raw morning and making her way to the pottery through the mud, was anything but inviting. But there was balm in Gilead after all—in the shape of a letter awaiting her, a letter with an Italian stamp, a letter from Rome. Mr. Hunter had promised to write ; but such promises are often forgotten ; and this letter was a famous redemption of his pledge ; for it was long and amusing, and what was better still, decidedly tender in some of its passages. The writer was longing for the sympathetic companionship which had been his delight in times gone by. Rome, minus Olive, was hardly equal to Marylebone, plus Olive.

"Sometimes, my dear Olive," the letter went on, "I regret that we are not rich, and that I have to look to my art for future pence as well as fame. We nearly were rich once, my father tells me. A half-cracked fellow left him a large property, cutting his own children out altogether. My dear dad very properly refused to benefit by such an iniquitous robbery. I honour him for it ; but all the

same I wish the rightful heirs would will it back again. What delightful castles in the air one might anchor to terra firma with a few bags of gold !"

Yes, it was a nice letter, and Olive proposed to answer it at once ; but not till she had recovered from that slight disillusionment which is the opposite of homesickness. Now when she returned from the pottery next evening, her father had been some time in possession of Miss Bodankin's letter, sealed with the family seal, in which she made her proposal to adopt the girl as her own. He had a presentiment that the letter was coming, but it was a shock to him when it did come.

He was to give up his daughter. She who had trotted by his side as a little fairy minx, the school-girl whose lessons had been puzzled out with his zealous assistance, the young woman who was such a gay and loving companion, she was to vanish from his life as completely as if she were dead. But he felt that he must make the sacrifice. Olive would be restored to the position that he had forfeited. Life would be sweet and pleasant to her, and she would soon cease to regret the friends of her youth. Just now, if he showed her Miss Bodankin's letter, Olive would revolt with indignation from the condition that she was to give up her father and mother, but Mr. Fitch determined to suppress that part of the letter. When once she had got into the current of her new life, she would be easily weaned from all old associations, a process that might safely be left to Miss Bodankin to carry out.

Mrs. Fitch, beyond a few natural tears, had no objection to offer to the proposed plan ; and her husband, seeing no further rocks ahead, prepared to spread it before his daughter's eyes in its most alluring form. Olive was certainly dazzled and attracted, as she could hardly fail to be ; but it gave an added pang to poor old Fitch's troubles to see how eagerly she entered into the plan. "Shall we go to Rome this winter ?" was her first eager question. But if her first impression was only of what she should gain, as her excitement wore off she thought also of what she would lose. And before bed-time came she stole up to her father and put her cheek against his, and whispered :

"It's all nonsense, this, dear old dad. What do I care about Miss Bodankin ? She is a generous old soul to make such an

offer; but, after all, perhaps I should never make a good artist, and then see what a disappointment that would be for everybody."

"But I have written to say you are going," replied Mr. Fitch, in feigned anger. "And there is nothing more to be said about it."

In reality, Miss Bodankin did not care two straws whether Olive became a good artist or not; and this Olive soon discovered when she took up her permanent abode at the Court. To amuse Miss Bodankin was to be the great end of her existence. To walk or drive with Miss Bodankin; to read aloud to her, and send her to sleep in the afternoons; to decorate the dinner-table, and arrange the flower-vases; to sing and play a little after dinner, and take a hand at piquet or bezique; these were to be the chief employment of her days, and the odd moments of her leisure she might spend at her easel.

But if here was bondage, Olive's chains were well gilded. She might order as many dresses as she pleased, and Miss Bodankin was lavish in her presents of jewels and ancient lace, and of hoarded family treasures. And the people about were very pleasant and sociable. The sprightly widow, Lady Orby Craggs, took a great fancy to Olive, and was always running after her, full of some new scheme of passing the time. All the younger people, too, were more or less artistic in taste, and Olive found herself in great request from her acquaintance with the technicalities of the potter's art.

But as the charm of novelty wore off, Olive became a trifle low-spirited and even unhappy. She thought regretfully of her ancient freedom, of the camaraderie of the workshop, of the companionship of her ally the sculptor. And Ned Hunter had not written again, although she had sent him a nice long letter soon after she arrived at the Court. She did not know that Miss Bodankin exercised a strict censorship over the letter-bag in its out-goings and in-comings, and that she had made up her mind that Olive should hold no further correspondence with any of her old set.

But when Miss Bodankin came upon Olive's letter addressed to Edward Hunter, Esquire, —, Rome, she gave a guilty start. Was it possible that in this name she was only to read a coincidence? She opened Olive's letter and read it. Then she felt reassured. This was only some artist with whom the girl carried on a

Platonic correspondence. Let it go into the fire.

Olive's low spirits had an irritating effect on Miss Bodankin. Like one who buys a piping bullfinch that will not pipe, she felt herself injured in the transaction.

"Send me home for a week or two, Miss Bodankin, please," said Olive, when reproached for her want of nerve. But that was not convenient at the time. It never would be convenient if Miss Bodankin had her way.

Meantime the winter passed away, spring came on, and then summer, the early summer when London—anyhow, western London—is so attractive, when the trees are in their freshest of green, and the houses festooned with flowers; when the streets are filled with a gay and luxurious traffic, and when music and the footsteps of the dancers are heard from all the booths of Vanity Fair.

Poor old Fitch watched the scene from afar, from his booth on the housetops, as he smoked a solitary pipe. There was no bower there now, the old flower-boxes lay there in a heap, with last year's mould all caked within them; he had not the heart to touch them. There were signs of life, too, in the studio next door. The place had been cleaned and furnished up, and now the proprietor had arrived; and wrapped up in his working apron, he, too, came out into the sunshine and looked about him. Espying Mr. Fitch, the young sculptor gave him a cheery greeting. "But where is Olive," he cried, as they shook hands through the railings; "what have you done with the child?"

"Alas!" said Mr. Fitch, dejectedly, "I have sold her to the Philistines."

"What do you mean?" demanded young Hunter, fiercely.

"What I say," rejoined Mr. Fitch. "An elderly lady, rich and respectable, has taken charge of her; and, my boy, we shall never see her any more."

"I mean to see her, anyhow, and learn why she never answered my letters. So give me her address, Mr. Fitch, please."

Mr. Fitch shook his head. "I can't do it, my boy. I am bound in honour not to say. And what good would it do you? Go your way and forget each other."

But the young man would not hear of such an end to his attachment. Still he could make no impression upon Mr. Fitch. Day after day he came to his studio hoping against hope, to see the adjoining door opened, and to hear Olive's fresh young

voice singing at her work. But the place remained silent and deserted. He had nothing in the way of a clue to guide him. No one at the Pottary had heard a word from her since she left. He sought her in all her former haunts and among her old companions in vain.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE morning when Mr. Fitch was immersed in a cloud of tobacco-smoke in his wife's little bureau, nominally engaged in putting her accounts into order, one of the girls in some confusion announced a visitor, a certain General Hunter. The General was small and rather wizened, with a wrinkled, good-natured face, and he took his seat encompassed by light articles of clothing, white, and newly starched—as Mr. Fitch afterwards observed, like a cherub among the clouds.

"I wait upon you, Mr. Fitch," began the General, politely, "on behalf of my son. I will own to you frankly at the outset, that it is not quite among such surroundings—charming as they may be—that I should have expected him to look for a wife. But I find that his affections are irrevocably engaged. And as I said to Edward, if the young lady be—as I have no doubt she is—good and amiable, and her parents—as I have no doubt they are—honest, respectable people, I shall not be found the stern, unforgiving parent."

"Exactly," replied Mr. Fitch, a little irritated by the General's extreme politeness. "But that is just what I am. And as such, I have already vetoed your son's pretensions."

"Here we come to the point," rejoined the General, with veteran coolness. "My son demands the opportunity of hearing from the young lady herself what she thinks of his pretensions; and I am told that you refuse him this opportunity."

"So I do; and so I mean to do," replied Mr. Fitch, aggressively.

"Then, by Heaven," cried the General, "I believe that you have some evil purpose in concealing your daughter, if she be your daughter. Come, sir, who are you, an escaped convict, or what? I don't believe you are what you seem to be."

"I'll tell you who I am," said Fitch; "as good a man as you. I am George Bodankin at your service, late of the Foot Guards."

"Ha!" cried the General. "I have you there, my fine fellow. You don't

come that over me. I happen to know. George Bodankin died fifteen years ago. There was a paragraph in the newspapers about it. He was killed in a skirmish on the borders of Zululand while serving in the mounted police."

"Exactly," said Mr. Fitch, musingly. "I remember concocting the paragraph with Ned Smith, a penny-a-liner, in the back parlour of a pub. I was apprehensive of former creditors, and I thought this little paragraph would put them off the scent."

"Upon my word," said the General, looking at Mr. Fitch with an expression of contemptuous pity; "I half believe you are George Bodankin. But, no. I did not rely upon newspaper paragraphs alone. I wrote to George Bodankin's sister, acquainting her with the purpose of my inquiry. She replied: 'I have every reason to believe that the paragraph as to my brother George is correct. His end, you will be glad to hear, was accompanied by sincere if tardy repentance.'"

"It runs in the family, that talent of lying," said old George, with a sneer. "But to end the matter, and convince you of my identity, I can show you a letter from dear Olivia, dated at the time the paragraph appeared, when, as it happened, we were in great distress; threatened with an execution among the flat-irons, and all that. I appealed to her for aid, and here in this drawer I have kept her reply ever since, as an example of sisterly kindness."

Mr. Fitch or, as he ought now, perhaps, to be called, George Bodankin, produced from a bundle of papers an old letter in faded ink and handed it to the General, who perused it with some emotion.

"I believe you now, George," he said at last, "and I am sorry for you. That lying paragraph of yours cost you ten thousand a year, for I fully intended to convey your father's estates to you had I known you were alive. But we must think of the young people now. After all, for some things I am glad. But tell me, where shall I find Olive?"

"You had better go and ask Miss Bodankin," said old George, gloomily.

CHAPTER V.

IF the young summer was pleasant in London it was not unkindly at the Court. The chestnuts in Bushey Park had been seen in their glory of perfumed blossom

for awhile, and had resumed their ordinary aspect; but trees were in full leaf, the sward in velvety softness, and sun and shade played charmingly about the old walls of red brick, and the breeze blew with delicious freshness. Miss Bodankin and Olive had just returned from a round of visits, and now they were to settle down quietly for the rest of the summer. Such, at least, was the elder lady's intention.

Olive had taken to gardening since she returned. There was a little strip of ground at her disposal, and the young gardeners of the establishment were ready and even eager to dig and delve for her, and bring her choice plants and seeds. And a little bit of ground she could call her own was more to the girl than acres upon acres of public gardens.

She was busy planting and arranging one morning when the shadow of something was thrown across the flower-bed, and, looking up, she saw a young man's head and shoulders appearing above the low hedge of yew.

"This is a private garden, young man," said Olive, severely; and then she saw the dark eyes and brown face smiling at her, and she sprang joyously over the border. "Oh, come in, Ned," she cried; for it was her friend the sculptor. "I am so delighted to see anybody from the old place."

"Anybody would do, then?" said Mr. Hunter, with a shade of dissatisfaction in his face. "But if you were so glad to see a body, why didn't you write to him?"

"I did write, Ned—a nice long letter, and I was quite hurt you didn't answer; but those foreign post-offices are to blame, no doubt. But we shall have all the more to tell each other."

There was plenty to be told, no doubt, as the pair walked up and down the prim gravel walks, and out and about the formal alleys of box and yew. All that had happened since they parted was talked over and discussed, and then Olive revealed her own little plan for the future.

"I'm so glad you came, Ned, for I want you to help me to run away. Not with you exactly, so do not look so shocked; but to run away home; back to my crust of bread and liberty."

"You want that?" cried Ned, delighted. "What, back to the old studio, and to the roofs and chimney-pots, the sketching club and the workshop?"

"Yes, indeed, Ned. I am tired of all this vain show; and I have lost faith in Miss Bodankin."

"Still there is a better way than that, Olive, dear: let me take you away."

Further report of this conversation is not forthcoming; but it is to be supposed that some satisfactory result was arrived at, for, on the following day, there presented himself at Miss Bodankin's door a visitor whom she could not well refuse to see—no other than General Hunter himself.

The interview was a long and stormy one. The General had come with the olive branch in his hand. He had become aware that he had conveyed the Bodankin Estate to Miss Bodankin, misled by false representations. And he was advised that, on due proof of the circumstances before a court of law, the Court would probably order the conveyance to be cancelled, and the property restored to him. But he did not wish to take harsh measures. His son and Miss Bodankin's niece had formed a mutual attachment. Let Miss Bodankin provide handsomely for Olive, and settle the property so that at her death it should pass to them and their descendants. And with that arrangement he should be perfectly satisfied.

Miss Bodankin's rejoinder breathed war and defiance. She knew of no false pretences. She held the property, and she would hold it to the last gasp—to her last sixpence. If the General was prepared to ruin himself over the business, so was she; and as for a matrimonial alliance between her adopted niece, who was no relation in reality, and the General's son, she respectfully declined the proposition altogether. If Olive chose to leave her, she might leave her—she would leave as a beggar, without a rag to her back, for even her clothes were Miss Bodankin's property.

There was nothing more to be said, and the General took his leave in some perplexity. Miss Bodankin's position was a strong one, and to assail it the General must jeopardise everything he had in the world. But the effect of the interview upon Miss Bodankin had been mysterious. She felt that some relentless Nemesis was upon her. Her legal position might be strong, but what was her moral one? How if unseen judges were at hand, who could read the heart, and to whom the voices of the dead might be raised in evidence? Miss Bodankin half resolved to put the

seas between her and the imaginary accusers; but she felt too much shaken and unnerved to make the effort. She took to her bed in the room with the stately carvings and old oak chimney-piece, and she sent for her medical adviser, but would see no one else.

Again the doctor found Miss Bodankin rather feverish, prescribed a draught and pill, and promised to call again next day. Miss Bodankin ordered her maid to sit up with her, and, soothed with the thought of having taken all necessary precautions, fell into a heavy slumber.

In the dead of the night Miss Bodankin awoke with a start. Something had slammed downstairs, and disturbed her. She sat up in bed and listened attentively. Her maid was snoring gently, fast asleep by her bedside. No other sound could be heard, till, presently, creak, creak—she fancied she heard a footstep on the oaken stairs. Miss Bodankin was not one to be frightened with shadows. If there were anything to face she could face it. But a tremor came over her which she could not check, and though she strained every nerve to vanquish it, the tremor seemed to master her, and hold her in its grip.

"I expected it!" she cried. "It is all a delusion. That foolish story has put it into my head."

But though she tried to speak boldly, she could not hear her own voice. And there against the black oaken mantelpiece rested the two red hands; but this time they were not crossed, but clasped. And, strive as she could, there was no avoiding the sight of them.

Next morning the doctor was sent for in haste. Miss Bodankin was shaking like a leaf, and was talking, as her attendant thought, incoherently. She was collected enough, however, to tell the whole story to the doctor, who laughed at her pleasantly about it, but noted it in his own mind as a serious symptom; and when Miss Bodankin told her people to send for her lawyer, he told them privately that not a moment should be lost. And then Miss Bodankin sent for Olive, who was very anxious and distressed, and bade her telegraph for her father.

By the time the quondam Mr. Fitch arrived, the lawyer had come and gone, and the doctor was again in attendance, for Miss Bodankin had become suddenly worse. She was almost speechless when her brother came to her bedside, but she recognised him at once and faltered out:

"I did rob you, George, forgive me; but you were your own worst enemy."

"I forgive you, Livie," replied George Bodankin, sobbing. "I've been a happier man than if I'd had your thousands."

Miss Bodankin's last will and testament, which had been made a few hours before her death, left all she possessed, with the exception of a few legacies to faithful servants, to her niece, Olive Bodankin, otherwise known as Fitch. And no one was found to dispute that disposition of her property. But nobody could accuse General Hunter's son of being a fortune-hunter, when he married the rich Miss Bodankin.

As for old George, he had no mind, even if he had been able, to resume his former position in the world. His "missus" would not have felt at home in the upper circles of society, nor perhaps would George himself, whose tastes did not lie in that direction. But Mrs. Fitch had saved a nice little sum of money; and she sold her business advantageously, and with her husband retired to a little farm down Harpenden way, where it is said George owns a promising colt or two, and some famous prize stock in the way of cows and pigs, the gift of his loving daughter, who often runs down to see how they are all getting on.

As for the Hunters, although they possess an old house in the country to which they occasionally repair, yet their chief affection is for the slates and chimney-pots. And they have just purchased that capital mansion, not very far westward of the old studios, formerly occupied by the celebrated Apelles Robinson, completely fitted up with studios, workshops, and galleries, where there is a fine collection of marble as yet unworked, and with every facility for exercising the sculptor's art. One little room, which is especially Mrs. Hunter's, is almost encrusted with specimens of modern English pottery, most of them the gifts of, as well as designed by, the girls in Milbank's Pottery on the occasion of their old comrade's marriage. And with her husband's approval, Mrs. Hunter has founded several handsome scholarships for girls in training for any of the arts and crafts.

And so it happened that Miss Bodankin did more good after her death, than she had ever thought of doing in her life, and all owing to the Cardinal's Hands.

A COLD CHRISTMAS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Gerald," "Alexia," "Red Towers," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

POOR little Mrs. Tom Featherstone, small, pale, plain, and melancholy, stood at her window one Christmas Eve, looking out into a snowstorm. Twilight was coming on; all the air was thick with snow; only the nearer slopes of the great park were visible, and the large oaks and beeches looked grim and grey.

The fire lighted up a rather large and dismal room, furnished in the gorgeous taste of thirty years ago, with a great deal of gilding and blue satin. Mrs. Featherstone had her associations with the room, for she had been born in it. Her father, having made an immense fortune in the Potteries, had bought West Hall, in the beautiful country which lies not far from the scene of his triumphs, and had decorated it to please his young wife. His son and daughter were both born there. Afterwards, his wife found it too dull, and he bought another large place in Kent. He died, and his wife died, while they were still middle-aged people. West Hall was left to their daughter Charlotte, and the house in Kent to their son William; each having also a very large fortune in money.

William, an excellent fellow, found it necessary to watch over his sister with a great deal of care; for she was a weak girl, and easily influenced. No one could admire poor Charlotte much; and it appeared to William so unlikely that any man could honestly fall in love with her, that he made up his mind she had better not marry at all. He himself, having married young, had already three or four children; thus there would be no difficulty in finding channels—natural, and reasonable, and right—through which Charlotte's money might flow.

But, about eighteen months before this Christmas Eve, William's calculations had all been upset, and his opinion of his sister lowered to a distressing degree, by the greatest piece of weakness, combined with obstinacy, that she had ever committed. Tom Featherstone proposed to her, and she accepted him, and held to her foolish choice, in spite of all William could say. Tom was handsome, interesting, and a little younger than herself; he

brought romance and sunshine into Charlotte's colourless life. All her relations were matter-of-fact people, contented in a placid, Dutch sort of way, having everything that money could give them, and wanting no more. In Charlotte, as Tom Featherstone was clever enough to perceive, there were capacities beyond this. She was shy, sensitive, generous; if once her love was gained, there were no limits as to what she would do for the object of it. So this ruined gambler, this hard block of selfishness with a soft outside, made love successfully to Charlotte, and for three months—two before her marriage and one after it—the heiress was perfectly happy. They had spent last winter on the Riviera; it was at Cannes that Tom's perfections had first begun to fade.

When her husband had proposed spending this second Christmas at her old home, West Hall, she had consented in the weary way that had become a sort of habit with her now. She had now the manner of a very stupid woman; duller even than when she was a shy, self-conscious girl. The poor nature, which had been kept in a hot-house for a few weeks, and then had flowered into such passionate happiness that her old friends hardly believed it could be Charlotte, was now fading fast away in this freezing outside air. Her eyes and cheeks had grown bright; they were now pale and dull; she had grown thin, lately, and stooped a little; her clothes no longer interested her, and she had taken to dressing badly. What could it matter, if Tom did not notice what she wore! The poor soul had a piteous way of watching him, a sort of incredulous look, as if she could not quite believe in her unhappiness. She was so like a dog in disgrace, that the sight of her, one day, made her brother quite furious, and he vowed he would never go to see her again. It was too degrading, especially as, even now, a kind word or a smile from Tom would brighten her in a moment. It seemed that she had no self-respect left, and hardly any individual life of her own.

Charlotte Featherstone stood at her window, chilly and sad-hearted, in a gorgeous gown with a great deal of red plush about it. She was thinking of the sunshine of last winter—how sweet and warming it was at first; then what a dreary glare it all became, when Tom began to be rough and indifferent. She had thought it all over and over again, in a morbid sort of way, till she was quite

sure, not being accustomed to make friends, or to interest herself in other people's lives, that no woman had ever before been so unhappy. Yet, even now, she went on telling herself that Tom had cared for her once. That she knew, nothing could alter that; no one could take away those three months out of her life. Perhaps his coldness was her own fault; she was perhaps too shy, too stupid, to keep his love when she had it. Not pretty enough? and yet he used to say—she turned away from the window—from the pitiless, driving snow—and walked up to a large glass and looked at herself. The sight was not satisfactory; and she turned away from it after a moment, and, after wandering round the room, came and stood by the fire.

"I suppose I have gone off very much," she said to herself. "Well—he was in love with me once—and perhaps, if I could only manage to be cheerful and jolly—but it is so hard!"

At this point in her reflections somebody knocked gently at the door, then opened it, and Tom Featherstone came in. He had a folded paper in his hand, and the quick glance that he darted round the room was an odd contrast, somehow, to the deliberateness of his other movements. He did not look like a brute. He was a tall, slight man, rather dark and pale, with the sort of face and look that some people call "interesting." He could look very cold, sardonic, and unpleasant, or very eager and delightful. He was a person who always knew his own mind, and when he had a special object in view, he devoted all his faculties, without any reserve, to that object. Thus, for instance, his love-making had been first-rate of its kind; and if he had not succeeded equally well in his other gambling speculations, this probably was because personal charm had not so much to do with them.

"Oh, there you are!" he said. "Alone for once."

"I think I generally am alone," said Mrs. Featherstone.

"You always have a lot of maids and people about. Look at the weather; snowing hard. Those fellows won't be able to get here on Monday; all the roads will be snowed up, if the line isn't blocked. My shooting-party is knocked on the head, I think."

"I'm very sorry."

She stood, pale and cold, looking into the fire. He came close to her, speaking

and moving gently; but with the hard, quick look in his eyes which seemed to belie the rest of his appearance.

"Well, are you pleased?" he said, after a moment of silence.

She looked up at him, and there was something pathetic in her eyes which only made him a little impatient.

"Pleased?" she repeated.

"Don't you remember telling me, one day at Cannes, when we were there first, that you would like to spend Christmas at West Hall?" he said, rather hurriedly, with an unmoved face.

"Oh yes," she said, wondering. "Yes—but——" she stopped, for she knew by sad experience that nothing irritated Tom so much as any appeal to the past, even if he had himself led up to it.

"Well, here we are; you have got your wish," he said. "Now I want to speak to you. Sit down. I have been thinking that you would like to give me a Christmas present—and so you had better know what I want."

Charlotte could hardly understand the curious frozen feeling that came over her while he talked. She sat down by the fire, unconsciously obeying him. She was always thinking, poor thing, that happiness might come back some day, and expecting it at unlikely moments. The mere miserable facts of Tom having come specially to her room to look for her, of his alluding to last winter, of his asking for a Christmas present, might have had some hope in them, if it had not been for his hard, business-like manner. That frightened her, and made her feel more like an image than ever.

"Yes, Tom," she said. "What do you want?"

"I have been losing money lately, and I want some more," he said. "I shall be all right in a few months; but I am rather hard up now, and, thanks to William, I can't get at any decent sum of money without your consent. There are those thirty thousand pounds in Dock Shares, which you can sell out if you choose, and make over to me. If you will sign this paper, the thing is done. I can settle the rest."

Tom Featherstone said all this deliberately, standing on the hearthrug, and looking down at his boots. After a few moments, as his wife made no reply, he gave her a quick glance. She was very pale, her eyes were cast down, and her hands were tightly joined together. She

was rather a painful spectacle, frightened and stony. It was too hard on him, Tom justly considered, to depend for supplies on a woman like that. As she did not move or speak, he suddenly walked across the room, lifted a small writing-table from its place in a corner, carried it to the fire, and put it down beside her chair. Then he unfolded his paper and laid it on the table, dipped a pen in the ink, and stood waiting. No look, no answer, no movement from his wife.

"Come, you may as well sign," he said, feeling proud of his patience and politeness. "I'm really in a hole, and I shall be awfully obliged to you." As this appeal was without visible effect, he went on: "Don't be a screw. You have more money than you know what to do with, and if any one has a right to it, surely I have. If your relations had not been so preciously careful, it would all have been mine long ago. You would have given every penny into my hands when we married."

"Yes, you are right; I should," said Charlotte, very quietly.

"Then what on earth is to hinder you from making me a present now?"

"You were satisfied then; you did not seem to want it then," she murmured. "It was so different—don't you remember? It was not the money you cared about then."

"Wasn't it?" he said, with a cold little laugh, irritation getting the better of prudence. "You really are an innocent person. What did you suppose I cared about, if not the money?"

Mrs. Featherstone's pale face flushed crimson, and her eyes actually flashed as she looked up at him, so that he was almost startled.

"You said——" but something seemed to choke her, and she could not go on.

"Said!" he repeated, laughing again.

"One says a good deal; the question is, what does one mean?" And then Mr. Tom checked himself, realising that his candour was carrying him a little too far. "Come, Charlotte," he said, with matter-of-fact crossness, "what is the use of our quarrelling like two babies over a few thousand pounds? Sentiment is out of the question, and the past is over and done with; better not rake things up now. Don't make a fool of yourself; behave like a reasonable woman; and sign this paper."

Again there was one of those provoking pauses. Then she said:

"You married me for my money, and nothing else. I was cheated; I was deceived. Oh, I know I am very stupid; but one cannot understand these things."

"My dear, what do you suppose heiresses like you are generally married for?" said her husband, patiently.

She sat crouched in her chair, hiding her face in her hands. It struck him that the room was dark; he lighted two candles, and put them on the writing-table. Then he spoke to her again.

"There's no hurry about understanding; you will have plenty of time for that. What you have got to do now, is to sign this paper."

It seemed as if she did not hear him. After waiting a moment, he went nearer to her, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Come, don't keep me here all the evening," he said.

She got up quickly, shaking off his hand as if it was something venomous.

"There, that's right; don't be a fool," he said. "Put your name here."

A strange, new strength seemed to have come to the little woman in this depth of her misery. She had conquered the terrible agitation which had seized upon her, and she spoke to her husband quite calmly, standing there by the fire.

"No," she said, "I am not going to sign that paper."

"Why not?"

"I do not choose to give you thirty thousand pounds of my money to gamble away. If you thought that by lying and cheating you would get everything you wanted, you were mistaken. I did love you once—yes, and trusted you, and would have given you everything—life itself; but now I don't love you any more, and will not. You may get money for your amusements in any way you can—not from me."

"But you must obey me! And if I order you to sign this paper——"

Charlotte smiled, and shook her head.

"I don't know how you will make me obey you," she said.

Tom afterwards thought that he had been a great fool, and reproached himself for not having tried persuasions and soft means from the beginning. They would have bored him very much, but they were the only way to manage Charlotte. He had, however, never dreamed of her refusing his request, so that he was unprepared for such an emergency, and his

impatience had betrayed him into the brutal candour which seemed to have ruined his cause.

He took a few turns up and down the room, thinking over the matter. At last he came back to his wife.

"Look here," he said, "you will think better of this by-and-by. You are in an infernal temper with me at this moment, because you have expected too much, and generally made a fool of yourself. I am going away now, and shall take the paper with me. You will stay in this room till you change your mind. It will be understood that you have a bad headache, and want nothing to eat. When you come to your senses, and feel rather hungry, you can ring the bell. The paper and I will then come back; you will sign; and it will be all right."

Charlotte made no answer, but turned her back upon him. After waiting a moment, he took up his paper; went out of the room with his usual light, quiet step; and shut and locked the door.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. FEATHERSTONE knew that her husband did not expect her resistance to last very long. She also knew that he did not understand her in the least—that he reckoned entirely without the hidden obstinacy and strength which lay at the foundation of her character.

Charlotte, slight and pale as she looked, was a hardy woman; she thought she could bear a good deal of starvation. All her morbid passion and brooding was over now; she felt like a block of ice. Thinking over the situation calmly and coolly, she told herself she would rather die than yield to Tom now. He might have the satisfaction of starving her, but never, never of seeing her sign that paper, and then of laying hands on the coveted thirty thousand pounds. And she saw no way out of her difficulty, except through starvation. Tom had taken away the key. Her room was high up in the rambling old house, which was very lonely, very far away from outside help, especially in this world of snow. He could not have chosen a better place for extorting his Christmas present.

There she sat by the fire till the dressing-bell rang. The uncurtained windows grew dark; the fire went down, and the room was cold; but she did not move, or take any notice of these things. The bell re-

called her to this present world, however, and still more the footstep on the stairs, and the knock at the door, which followed it. It was her maid, and now some explanation was necessary. She had never liked her maid much; neither were any of the servants fond of their mistress, who was cold, inconsiderate, and rather haughty in manner. Mr. Featherstone was more popular in the household than his wife.

Charlotte felt that it would be a certain degradation to confide in her maid, and determined to play the part that Tom had arranged for her; to be unwell, and to want nothing. After the knock had been repeated twice, she went towards the door and spoke; the pain and strain in her voice seemed to corroborate her words.

"I don't want anything, Meacham," she said. "I am not well; I am not coming down to dinner."

"Won't you take anything, ma'am? Can't I do anything for you?" asked the maid.

"No, thank you, nothing."

"Shall I tell Mr. Featherstone, ma'am?"

"Mr. Featherstone knows."

She said no more; and the maid, after waiting a minute, went wondering away.

As her retreating steps sounded on the stairs, Charlotte felt a sudden desolation which was almost unbearable. Had she sent away her only chance of help? Would not Tom be shamed out of his cruel, cowardly behaviour, if the servants knew of it? But then again she despised herself for the thought.

Walking round the room in a sudden restlessness, she noticed, almost with a start, a white heap on a side-table. Earlier in the day she had been packing up Christmas cards; it had been rather a depressing business, reminding her of old days and old friends, of people and things that used to matter a good deal in her life before Tom Featherstone came on the scene. The cards were all ready, all directed, but not stamped or fastened down; there was also a parcel, a book of German Christmas pictures, which she was sending to William's little boy. William was angry with her, it was true; but she was the child's godmother; and she meant to do much more for him than William now expected. These pictures had attracted her; though by a modern artist, they were quaint and mediæval in style, and that very day she had spent some time turning them over, before she carefully, and with a sort

of pleasure, wrapped up the book in paper, and tied it with string. Those pictures had brought something of the old forgotten Christmas feeling to her heart, though they had not made her any happier, or the sorrow of her life any easier to bear.

"I suppose he will let my cards go to the post," she thought; and then, as she glanced over them, the idea came: "Could I get at William? Could I put in a note anywhere?"

But then, was it necessary? Was it really possible, after all, that Tom seriously meant to persecute her in this way? She walked about the room a little more, asking herself questions, before she determined to ask her brother for help. And then, so cautious had the poor thing grown, so distrustful of the man who had deceived her, that she would not fasten down any of those envelopes lying there. Tom would probably examine them before they left the house.

She went back to the fire, to her writing-table, and wrote a note to the small child, her nephew.

"DEAR LITTLE WILL,—Your poor Aunt Lotty wishes you a happier Christmas than she is having herself. You can't imagine anything so strange. She can't go out of her room, and she can't have any dinner on Christmas Day. Wouldn't you like to send her some of yours? She does not think she will ever see you again, except some day, if we ever get to heaven, where all the pretty angels in your book come from. Ask your father what he thinks about it, and whether the snow is too deep on the way to West Hall.

"Your loving aunt,

"CHARLOTTE FEATHERSTONE."

Having written this, Charlotte unpacked her book and laid the note open between the leaves, on the picture she thought the prettiest. Even then, with some odd remnant of the happy sentiment of childhood, she lingered over those quaint upright angels with their musical instruments.

"If the child helps me out of this," she said, "I will leave him everything I have," and then she carefully tied up the parcel again. Then the dinner-bell rang; and then, as she had half expected, Tom's well-known step came up to the door.

"Are you better?" he said. "Are you coming down?"

"No," she answered; and her voice sounded, even to herself, like some hard, strange voice she did not know. "But come in, please. I want to speak to you."

He instantly unlocked the door and came in, his precious paper still in his hand.

"I thought you would be more reasonable soon," he was beginning; but a scornful little movement from her silenced him.

"I am not even hungry yet," she said. "I want you to send my cards to the post, and this picture-book for little Will. You see they are all open—and they want stamps."

He took the pile of envelopes into his hand and glanced over the directions.

"None for your brother?"

"Do you think William would care for a Christmas card from me?"

"Well, he is just the sort of fellow who would like to shake hands all round at Christmas time. Your own notion seems to be quite the contrary. You will very soon have quarrelled with everybody belonging to you."

"Perhaps Will's picture-book may just prevent that," she said, without looking at him.

"An olive-branch. And you won't oblige me yet, then?"

"I am ill. I told Meacham so, when she came to the door. Please take my things for the post, lock the door, and leave me alone."

"I don't know that the postman will come," he said, "the snow is getting so deep. And they are sure not to get the things to-morrow, you know. All the trains will be late to-night to begin with."

"I dare say they will," she answered, "and your soup will be cold."

He stood a moment with his hand on the door, staring at her.

"Charlotte, you are a fool! You don't really mean to starve yourself rather than sign that paper?"

She was silent.

"You won't have anything, you know. The servants will bring you nothing—do you understand?" As she made no sign—"That money I must and will have, and if I can't get it by fair means I will by foul. I swear I will."

"Thanks. I quite understand you," she said, very coldly. "At least, go away and leave me in peace."

Then he left her and ran downstairs.

The hours went on, and she sat alone by her fire. Once she went to the window and opened it, and put out her hand into the cold, wet snow piled on the sill. She looked up, and saw the stars; the snow had

ceased falling, and the clouds were rolling away. She thought dreamily whether she could escape from this house, steal away through the snow, find her way through the park, over those lonely hills, down the deep, dark lanes that lay between West Hall and the outer world. But though she had her share of endurance, she was a timid woman, unaccustomed to braving the weather; and she also dreaded the thought of being pursued and caught. Besides, how was she to escape from this locked room?

About ten o'clock her maid came again and knocked at the door.

"You can go, Meacham," she said, "I don't want anything."

"Won't you let me in, ma'am?" said Meacham, who was beginning to be a little frightened by her mistress's behaviour, realising vividly all the things she must want, whether ill or well. "There must be coals wanted, I'm sure," she went on. "Won't you let Sarah come in, ma'am, and make up the fire?"

"No; I want nothing," said Mrs. Featherstone's voice from within.

It crossed her mind to wonder whether Tom had calculated on the power of cold, as well as that of starvation; but she was quite resolved that no one should ask him for the key.

Meacham went away; but she thought it her duty to go to her master, and to tell him she was afraid there was something serious the matter. Mrs. Featherstone had locked herself in; she would take nothing; she would not even let the maids come into the room.

"All right," said Tom, behind his newspaper. "You can go to bed, Meacham. I know all about it. Your mistress will ring if she wants anything."

The household gathered from all this that there had been a very bad quarrel, and that Mrs. Featherstone, whose temper was at all times none of the best, had shut herself up in a tremendous fit of sulks.

Though poor Charlotte had not the satisfaction of knowing it, her cards and her picture-book had gone safely to the post. But they did not make much way that night, for the snow had drifted into the tunnels, in that cold and hilly country; so that Master Will Hartley, at his cheerful breakfast the next morning, announced that Aunt Lotty had forgotten all about Christmas.

"Poor Aunt Lotty! I wonder if she is enjoying herself, snowed up with dear

Uncle Tom at West Hall!" said little Will's father.

"Perhaps the snow's so deep that she can't get any breakfast, and perhaps it's so cold that she's lost her memory," suggested Will, whose father and mother thought him a child of remarkable imagination.

CHAPTER III.

THAT was a strange Christmas Day. It began with a sharp frost, so that the roads were almost impassable, and the post was very late in reaching West Hall. Tom Featherstone went up to his wife's room with a bundle of letters in his hand, when he had finished his own comfortable breakfast. All the morning, like the servants, he had been listening rather nervously for her bell. He began to be conscious that this was an uncomfortable business, that Charlotte was showing a side of her character he had not suspected, and that he was making rather a fool of himself by treating her in this way. At the same time he was inclined to hold on as long as possible, being very unwilling to lose the chance of the money.

Her room looked miserable enough, when he unlocked the door and went in. It was in disorder; the fire was out; the white glare of frost and snow streamed in at the windows. Charlotte, in her red gown, was standing at one of the windows, tracing the frost patterns with her finger, like a child.

"Well, have you repented?" said Tom. "Here are a lot of letters for you." As she did not turn round, or answer, he walked up to the window. "Come, this joke has gone far enough," he said. "Do what I ask you, and come down to breakfast. What do you mean by going on like this?"

"Thanks; I don't want any breakfast. The joke may go a little farther," she said, with such a cold ring in her voice, that it might have come from one of the icicles outside.

"What are you waiting for? Do you think I shall give in? Look here, Charlotte," he said, his tone softening a little, "I thought you were fond of me. I never expected this sort of thing, you know."

"I may have had my thoughts, too, once upon a time," said Mrs. Featherstone.

"You drive me to be disagreeable," said the injured Tom.

He went on arguing for some minutes, keeping his temper admirably, and speaking

with so much moderation, that no one would have guessed him to be guilty of starving his wife into surrender. Her coldness, however, added to the chill of the fireless room, was soon too much for him.

"One can't talk in this ice-house," he said. "Come down with me. There is a jolly fire in the dining-room. Come down and have your breakfast, and sign the paper there."

"I will not sign the paper," said Charlotte.

There was a doggedness in her tone which made him flush with anger.

"Then you don't want any breakfast," he said. "Very well. But you need not be frozen, so I shall send for them to light the fire."

A moment afterwards Mrs. Featherstone's bell pealed loudly, to the sincere relief of Meacham, who found this sort of thing quite too much for her nerves. As she hurried upstairs, followed by the housemaid, she met her master coming down.

"How is my mistress, sir?" she asked, anxiously.

"No better. She will have nothing to eat. But the door is open, and you can go in and light the fire," answered Tom.

"Well, I'm sure—I began to be afraid there was something wrong with her head," muttered Meacham, as he passed on.

But when she reached her mistress's door, it was shut, and Mrs. Featherstone answered to her knock:

"You can go away; I don't want anything."

Meacham could not help trying the handle of the door.

"Won't you have the fire lit, please, ma'am?"

"No. You need not try the door; I have bolted it," answered Mrs. Featherstone from within.

"If she likes to punish herself, she can," was Tom's reflection, when he found that he, as well as the servants, was shut out from his wife's room. "No doubt she'll come round in time. She won't hold out for ever. But who could have guessed that that quiet little creature had such an infernal temper of her own!"

He could pay her no more visits, and waste no more arguments, without breaking open the door, and he did not wish for the scandal that this would occasion among the servants. He thought with some satisfaction that she was doing for herself in their opinion; Meacham certainly could

not believe that she was quite in her right mind. He thought that, with a little more patience, he was tolerably sure of his thirty thousand pounds.

He went quietly upstairs again and locked the door, having kept the key in his possession all the time. He stood for a moment, listening, but all was dead silence within the room. His prisoner was no doubt safe, however, and he went back with renewed resolution to his comfortable fire.

So that Christmas Day passed, a heathen day enough at West Hall. Yet, perhaps, the angels may have felt some pity for that wretched little soul in her cold, gorgeous room; half-frozen, mentally as well as physically, in misery that might have found some desperate way of ending itself, but for a little faint hope in a distant child and his book of Christmas pictures, and a faith beyond that in an uninteresting brother's love.

There was no more snow, but the frost continued through that day and night, and through all the next day. Neither was there any change in the circumstances at West Hall. Mrs. Featherstone did not ring her bell, and did not unbolt her door. Her husband did not trouble himself, that second day, to go near her room at all; only Meacham, who was beginning to feel seriously frightened, went and listened there constantly. When she spoke to her mistress, the answer was always the same: "I want nothing." Latterly the voice was a little smothered, and seemed to come from the direction of the bed. At last, late at night, there was no answer at all, and after waiting a few minutes, afraid to make a noise, the maid hurried down to the library, where Mr. Featherstone was reposing in front of a large fire, smoking, with various bottles at his elbow, and a French novel in his hand.

Meacham walked into the room and stood before him. All her good feelings were aroused on behalf of her mistress, whose state she thought her master could not possibly realise. His indifference was too evident.

"If you please, sir, I think it is my duty to speak," began the maid, stiffly. "I don't like the responsibility of my mistress being shut up like this."

"It is her own doing," replied Tom.

"She will ring when she wants anything." "Excuse me, sir," persisted Meacham; "but it ought not to be allowed to go on. Two nights and two days has Mrs. Feather-

stone been shut up there, without fire or food—and when I went to the door just now, and spoke to her as usual, she didn't answer, and I could hear nothing."

Some sort of change came over Tom's face. "He looked ever so wicked, and frightened too," Meacham told her fellows afterwards.

"Asleep, most likely," he said. "She bolted herself in, you know; it was her own doing. I can't help it; it is no use coming to me. You see, yourself, she won't let me into the room, any more than you."

"If Mrs. Featherstone is left there longer, sir, she will be ill from cold and hunger," said Meacham, very solemnly; and her manner would have made the most stupid person understand both her suspicions and her fears.

Suddenly, in the silence of that frosty night, there was a noise outside of wheels and horses' feet crunching the ice and snow. In another moment the great door-bell pealed through the house, ringing long and loud, as if the person who pulled it expected the household to be asleep. At the first sound Mr. Featherstone started violently in his chair.

"What's that?" he said.

He looked just then so savagely angry, that Meacham thought it best to retreat for the present. She escaped into the hall, where an additional element of mystery—to her a most comforting one—was being let in at the heavy old door. It was the sturdy, solid, good-humoured Mr. William Hartley, who stepped quietly into the house, saying to the butler:

"Is Mr. Featherstone at home? How is Mrs. Featherstone?"

The butler stared, and hesitated. Meacham, in the background, clasped her hands together for joy, and had almost rushed forward to pour out her anxieties, when she was silenced by the appearance of her master. He came out of the library, looking curiously white, but his manner was quite easy and agreeable.

"This is unexpected," he said, shaking hands with William. "Glad to see you. You must have had a beastly journey. Come in and get warm. Dinner, Roberts," he called out to the butler.

William glanced at him rather cautiously, came into the library, and looked round for Charlotte.

"What has brought you in this weather?" asked Tom, regarding him with a kind of puzzled stare.

"Well," said William, "I had a few days to spare, and Charlotte said, some months ago, that she hoped I would run down some day, and I thought I should like to see old West Hall again. But it has been a cold journey, certainly."

"Why didn't you telegraph?"

"Well—I knew you were here, you see, and I thought it didn't matter, and I should have been here three hours ago, if the line had not been in such a state. Never knew it so bad. Where is Charlotte; gone to bed?"

"I rather think she has," said Tom. "The fact is, she has not been quite well the last few days, and has kept upstairs a good deal. So I'm living bachelor fashion, you see. I'll go and tell her you are come."

"Don't disturb her," said William; but Tom insisted, and left him there by the fire.

Stepping lightly to his wife's door, Tom listened there for a moment with some anxiety. William's most enraging arrival had followed so closely on the warning hints of Meacham, that he had hardly taken them in. Now—"suppose anything has happened!" flashed through his mind very uncomfortably. However, he was reassured by hearing certain soft movements within the room. He knocked gently at the door, and then said, through the keyhole:

"Charlotte, are you up?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Come down at once, then. Your brother is come. By-the-bye, did you expect him?"

"How should I? I have not heard from him for weeks."

He could make nothing out of the low, even voice, which seemed to have no feeling in it of any kind. He could see that there was candle-light in the room. He unlocked the door and knocked again.

"Will you let me come in?"

"No."

"Look here. I can't speak outside here; but suppose we forget all about this stupid affair. You had better have a cup of tea, or something, before you come down."

"No, thank you."

As Tom went downstairs he had time for one or two thoughts on the subject of his future conduct. "I must make it up with her," he thought. "I must get round her again somehow, and pretend it was all a joke. I don't think she will tell William—not to-night, at least."

On his way downstairs he met Meacham, hurrying up.

"You can go to your mistress, now," he said. "She is coming down to see her brother."

Meacham's suspicions were confirmed by finding the key in the lock on the outside; Mr. Tom had been a little thoughtless in leaving it there. But this made it none the easier to get into Mrs. Featherstone's room, for the door was still bolted, and she would not open it.

"Thank you. I have everything I want," she said.

Twenty minutes later, when William, partly reassured, and very hungry, was sitting down to his dinner, the dining-room door opened slowly, and Charlotte walked in. She was dressed in her red gown, trimmed with plush; it looked too large for her shrunken little figure. Her eyes were burning and shining; her face was as white as death, except a small scarlet spot on each cheek. She came in gravely, and stood still, like a little statue; staring, not at William, who got up to meet her; not at Tom, who stood motionless on the hearthrug—but at the food on the table.

Then she screamed some unintelligible words—the butler, who followed her into the room, declared afterwards that they were "Give me some soup"—and fell down unconscious, in a sad little red heap upon the floor.

Tom stood as if he were frozen; the maid, who had been lying in wait outside, rushed in from the hall, and William Hartley turned furiously upon his brother-in-law.

"You scoundrel, what have you been doing to my sister?"

That terrible Christmas, with its torture of body and mind, was followed for Charlotte by a long and dangerous illness, from which her friends thought that she would never quite recover. But she very slowly struggled back to strength again, under William's kind roof, nursed by his wife, who now described her sister-in-law not as a fool, but as a heroine. The whole story was never very clearly told; for Charlotte, having half confided it one day to her brother, broke off short and would say no more; but he and his wife understood that it was an unprincipled attempt to extort money on the part of Tom Featherstone. They supported Charlotte strongly in her resolution never to live with her husband again, an arrangement to which Tom was forced to agree.

A few months later, when Christmas came round again, Charlotte Featherstone very nearly quarrelled with her faithful brother William, peace being only kept by the intervention of his wife, who generously took her part, and told him she was behaving nobly. The bone of contention was once more thirty thousand pounds, which this blinded and obstinate woman insisted on giving as a Christmas present to the man she had once loved.

After that, Charlotte Featherstone's spirits rose in a wonderful way; she became fat, benevolent, and fairly happy. Her nephew Will adores her, though he cannot quite understand why she does not like his pet Christmas picture-book with all the angels. Her faithful servant, Meacham, who means to live with her for the rest of her days, tells everybody the tragical story of that Christmas at West Hall, and states her conviction that a few hours more of cold, starvation, and agony, would have found Mrs. Featherstone lying dead, and Mr. Featherstone taken up "for manslaughter at least," says Meacham.

THE THREE MONKS.

By SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

DEEP in a Tyrol valley the grey old Priory stood,
Hard by a rushing river, at the edge of a great pine wood.

The Despots' laws and the Spoilers' sword, had been
hard on the brotherhood;
But three old monks sang Matins now, at the foot
of the Holy Rood;
But three old monks sang Vespers now, when the
sighing south wind wooed
The sunset to dazzle softly down, on the sylvan
solitude.

Out from the pine-wood's shadow came the flock of
mountain sheep,
Their shepherd was piping to them, as they gathered
from noonday sleep;
He sang as a careless youth will sing, as he came
his watch to keep,
He sang to the streamlet as it rushed, down from
the craggy steep,
He sang to the rustle of the leaves, he sang to the
torrent's leap.
The old monks heard the mellow strains; they
paused to smile, to weep.

They said, "our rites are poor and bare, our voices
weak and old,
For the noble notes where the praise of God in the
Church's words is told;
It is not that our high hopes falter, it is not that
our faith grows cold,
But the strength in our hearts is passing, and few
are left in the fold."
So they took from their scanty treasure chest of its
little stores of gold,
That the boy, for hire, should chant the rites when
the chapel bell was tolled.

At dawn, and at noon, and at evensong, as the long
days lingered by,
Before the grey stone altar rose the rich young
melody;

Rose up in long harmonious strains, up to the summer sky,
And the three old monks knelt listening, with shut lips and reverent eyes,
A little sad that no more they dared the sweet old hymns to try;
A little glad that the Lord they loved should be praised so worthily.

At last, to each of the three old monks, at night a vision came,
An angel stood in either cell, and he called on each by name.
He looked on each with a gentle gaze, a gaze of loving blame.

He said, "From the chorus that rises up, from earth to the great white throne,
To blend with the song of seraphim, three precious notes are gone!
The strains that are bought, in the heavenly choir have neither space nor part;
Our Lord has missed from His house built here, the music of the heart."

Humbled and happy the three old monks next morning sought the shrine,
Where, by feeble faithful fingers kept, stood the Lamp 'neath the solemn sign,
They bade the merry mountain lad go back his flocks to tend,
And at Matins, and Prime, and Evensong, till Death called, a welcome Friend,
From the three old quavering voices rose the chanted prayer to Him,
Who only loves the praise of the heart to join with His seraphim.

BRIGGS, JUNIOR.

By H. F. ABELL.

CHAPTER I.

"WHACK! whack! whack! whack!"

The sound of a merciless cane on a passive body; a most unorthodox sound with which to usher in Christmas morning; then exit from the study of the Reverend Donald McStinger—preceptor and Principal of the Tusculum House Academy for Young Gentlemen, situate at the village of Barncombe, in Devonshire—Master Samuel Briggs, very red-faced, his mouth compressed so that the lips were perfectly white, his little fists clenched until their knuckles were of the same colour, but with never a tear in his eye, and, considering the nature of the punishment he had undergone, walking with tolerable erectness and straightness.

"That will cure ye, ma fine young fellow, a' think," remarked the gentle preceptor of youth, a fiery-headed, pimply-faced little Scotsman, standing five foot nothing. "And that'll teach ye not to go tumbling into ponds where ye've no call to be."

Poor little Samuel Briggs! A fortnight previously he had seen his shouting, laughing, joy-maddened school-fellows whirlaway

in post-chaises for the Christmas holidays; his own cousin, Malthus Briggs, senior, amongst them; and had been left alone in the desolate, dripping, fog-laden playground with the prospect of spending five long weeks at Tusculum House.

This was in the year 1790. Briggs junior's father, Captain Julius Cæsar Briggs, had, a few months before, fallen gallantly at the head of his crew on board the French seventy-four "Soleil," and the little fellow had been left to the mercies of the Captain's brother, Malthus Briggs, a wealthy Bristol merchant who lived in grand state in a big house, and who was a type of the overbearing, purse-proud, successful trader. Young Malthus Briggs, son and heir of the great merchant, was, as has been said, also a pupil at Tusculum House. He was a pasty-faced, jowly boy of a gluttonous and usurious disposition, who hated and bullied his little cousin as an interloper and a starveling, and had in no small degree helped his father to decide that Briggs, junior, should remain at school during the Christmas holidays.

Briggs, junior, went out of the study and into the great bleak schoolroom; carefully shut the door after him; sat down at his own desk; and, unable to control his feelings any longer, buried his face in his hands and let the pent-up cry come out—bursting, bubbling, streaming forth in an irresistible torrent till it scoured the ink-stained desk, and, of course, his cuffs and poor little red-chapped hands.

"There now! there now, Briggs, junior, there's a little lovey, don't! Don't cry now! He's a nasty, ill-tempered, red-haired little savage, he is, and I'd like to claw his ugly face, that I would!" said a gentle voice in his ear, whilst a pair of gentle hands disengaged his own from his face.

Briggs, junior, jumped up. A pretty, fresh-faced servant girl was standing by him, and the tears were in her eyes too.

"I'm—I'm not crying, Susan. It's all right—it's all right!" he gasped, and manfully tried to give the lie to his tear-stained cheeks and the sopping ball of his pocket-handkerchief.

"No, of course not," said Susan. "You're a brave little man. Come along now. Your clothes are nearly dry, and I've something so nice to give you in the kitchen."

And with almost maternal tenderness she led him away into the domestic regions of Tusculum House.

The kitchen was decked with holly, and mistletoe, and evergreens, "although," as Susan said, "master said as how it was all nonsense making a mess and a litter just because it was Christmas time, and told us not to do it, which me and cook and the others said we'd give notice if we wasn't allowed to enjoy ourselves one day in the year." There was a mighty frizzling and steaming in the neighbourhood of the fire-place, and the stalwart Devonshire cook was bustling about, and three or four other maids were bustling about, all with red and shining faces, so that it was palpable that, at any rate, the domestics of Tusculum House were not going to be deprived of their Christmas fun.

"Lor, Master Briggs, junior!" said the jolly cook, wiping the perspiration from her face with her apron. "Has he been at 'un again? It's a shame says I, iss, it's a shame. But now sit ee down, Master Briggs, junior, and eat thicky mince pies, and never let me hear your voice until they be both eat."

"And what made ee go tumbling into the Black Pond, Master Briggs, junior?" asked Susan, who was seated by Briggs.

"Well," said the youngster, as well as he could with a mouth full of mince-pie, "it was like this. There was a frost last night, and I thought the Black Pond might be strong enough to bear a little chap like me sliding. So I went to have a look, and I got there, and I was getting over the fence when I saw a little girl on the ice. She didn't see me, and I was glad, because I thought she might belong to the Hall, and Squire Adams is very strict about trespassing in the park. Well, and she was dressed in furs, and had a red hood on, and a red dress; and she had black eyes and curls; and she got on the middle all safe, when all of a sudden she tumbled down, and the ice broke and I couldn't see her. So—I ran on, and I got in and I pulled her out, but I thought we were both going to be drowned, for she clung so tight to me; but I got her out and laid her on the grass, and her eyes was shut and she was as white as snow. Then I rubbed her hands, and she opened her eyes, and presently she got up—at least I lifted her up, but she said she was all right, and she said, "Thank you, little boy," but I was as big as she was, and she gave me a penny which I didn't want to take, and then she ran off as her clothes was wet through, and—and that's all."

"And old Ginger thrashed you for it, did he?" said Susan. "That'll be little Miss Doris from the Hall, that's who it will be. Just let him tumble into the Black Pond, I wouldn't pull him out!"

"Nor me!" said the cook.

"Nor me!" echoed each of the other servants.

"But he doesn't know where I tumbled in," said Briggs, "and nobody mustn't know, not for anything, for Squire Adams is very particular, and says he'll put all boys in prison who trespass on his grounds."

Further discussion of the topic was interrupted by the loud ringing of a bell.

"The front-door bell," said Susan, and hurried away to answer it.

Presently she reappeared.

"Master Briggs, junior, there's a gentleman come to see the master, and will you please go up into the drawing-room. But wait—wipe them crumbs away, and let me straighten your hair a bit."

Thus prepared, Briggs, junior, ascended to the stately drawing-room, wherein were seated his master, and a large replica of Briggs, senior, in the shape of a corpulent gentleman with an unhealthy face and a brown wig, attired in a fur-lined coat thrown open so as to display a waistcoat of marvellous pattern, beneath which swung a large bunch of gold seals. This was, of course, the great Bristol merchant, Mr. Malthus Briggs.

"Samuel," said his uncle, "I came here with the intention of bringing you away to share in the festivities of the season at Jamaica Lodge."

Strange to say, Briggs junior's face did not light up in the smallest degree at the prospect thus dangled before him.

"Well," said the great man; "have you nothing to say?"

As Briggs, junior, had nothing to say, he said nothing, but stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the carpet pattern.

"No? Well, as you do not seem disposed to express delight or thankfulness, I am relieved of a disagreeable duty. Your beloved preceptor here gives me a very unfavourable account of your conduct, and has hinted that a little wholesome solitude might bring you round to a proper frame of mind. It grieves me as much as I know it grieves him, but our path of duty is plain. Your cousin Malthus desires me to present you with a sixpence on his behalf, but——"

"I don't want Briggs senior's sixpences," said the hardened little sinner.

Schoolmaster and uncle exchanged glances of despair.

"Very well," said the great man of business, severely, "I shall report your message to Briggs, senior, as you call him, and I shall return him a donation he can ill afford, and I have no doubt that his gentle reproaches will fall on your head when you meet again next half."

Briggs, junior, had no two opinions about the falling of the reproaches upon him in due course; but whether they would be gentle, or whether they were likely to fall on his head, was a question the solution of which he kept to himself.

"You can go, Briggs, junior," said his master.

And he went.

To do the reverend gentleman justice, he did not trouble his charge again that day, for he, in company with his rubicund better-half, and two rubicund female likenesses of his own image, drove off to keep the Christian festival in the company of fellow-countrymen at Exeter, and the junior Briggs was left to his own devices, an arrangement which suited him excellently.

He had his Christmas dinner in the kitchen, in spite of orders that he was to be served with that meal in the gaunt solitude of the schoolroom; and a capital dinner it was, with speeches, and toasts, and songs by members of the company, in which he played by no means an insignificant part, treating the company to "Dicky of Taunton Dean" in fine style, and showing the gardeners, and stable-boy, and the servants how to perform the chorus of "Auld Lang Syne," as he had many a time seen it performed by sailors on Bristol quay.

Then when tobacco and something strong were introduced, Briggs junior's tact hinted to him the convenience of his departure, and, having thanked everybody for their kindness, he started for a walk.

There were only two houses of note at Barncombe—Tusculum House, and Barncombe Hall, the residence of Sir Hercules Adams, an Exeter merchant of great wealth and acknowledged position, whose brother was Ranger of Exmoor, and whose family had lived about Totnes and Bowdon for centuries. Sir Hercules was very grand, and very proud, and very high and mighty generally. His Hall was a sort of select world of itself, shut in by broad acres of woodland, strictly preserved and jealously defended—by an army of keepers, and an array of traps and spring-guns and thun-

deringly-worded notice-boards—against the incursions of the vulgar.

Towards one of the keepers' lodges Briggs, junior, went. He knew every one around—keepers, gardeners, coachmen, footmen, grooms with their wives and children—and was a universal favourite, for, although he was but a little ten-year-old schoolboy, there was something about him which, just as it disgusted the high and haughty, endeared him to the poor and simple. There was not one of them who would not have done anything to please the cheery little man.

It was getting dark as he reached the lodge, and Nature was dank and dismal enough; but through the red curtains of the lodge there streamed forth cheery light, and the silence outside was broken by sounds of song and laughter proceeding from within.

Briggs, junior, hesitated; for, although only Briggs, junior, he was a little gentleman, and had a gentleman's reluctance to intrude where he was not wanted.

However, he knocked, and on receipt of a cheery "Come in!" timidly pushed the door open.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," he stammered, as he found himself confronted by a party of men, women, and children, seated round a roaring fire, with a table laden with dessert handy.

"Come in, sir. Come in, Master Briggs, junior, sir, and welcome!" said half-a-dozen voices. "Very glad to see you o' Christmas night, sir. No, sir; no intrusion. Come in!"

So Briggs, junior, entered, not a little abashed at the attention shown him, and deposited himself on the very edge of a chair which was set in the very centre of the company.

"I only came in to ask after the little girl who tumbled into the Black Pond this morning," he said.

"That was Miss Doris, sir," replied the head keeper, "but was you the young gentleman that pulled her out, sir?"

"Why—I happened to be—but, Morris, you won't say anything about it to the Squire, will you?" said Briggs. "I was trespassing, you see, and he might—"

"If so be Squire knew as how it was you what pulled Miss Doris out, sir, he'd do and say what I do: he'd shake your hand and call you a reg'lar out and outer, that he would. Squire be a strict man, but he's just, and he dew love Miss Doris."

And Mr. Morris shook Briggs junior's hand, and every one else followed his example, and then glasses were filled with port-wine negus and his health was drunk—probably for the first time in his life.

"She's all right, sir," said the keeper, when the ceremony was concluded. "Wet through, and a bit queer, but all right."

"You won't say anything about it, though," pleaded Briggs, whose terror of Squire Adams was only second to his dread of his schoolmaster.

Then they settled to singing and story-telling, but Briggs was all eyes and ears for his neighbour who was home on leave from the fleet at Plymouth, and who told such stories of fights and adventures, and sang such a rattling song about "Captain Edwards and the bold Benjamin O!" that Briggs, junior, felt an irresistible longing to start there and then for Dartmouth or Plymouth and offer his services.

"I tell you what, sir," said Bill Morris the quarter-master, "you're cut out for a sailor, you are, sir. Your father died for his King and country, nobly a-fightin' 'gin the foe, as the poem says, and you're the one to take his place."

"But they wouldn't take such a youngster as me," said Briggs, junior.

"Lor! wouldn't they, though? Glad to get 'em. Young blood, that's what they says, young blood is what we wants. Why, I shipped aboard the 'Boyne,' Captain Hughes, before I was your age; ay, and got my first wound before I was in my teens."

And Briggs, junior, pondered over this, although he said nothing.

So they went on talking, and laughing, and singing, and story-telling, until supper-time, and Briggs, junior, would fain have bade them good-night, but they would not hear of it, and so he sat down with them and made as good a supper as if he had had no dinner at all.

After which it suddenly occurred to him that he was only a schoolboy at Tusculum House, and that his bed-time was nine o'clock.

So he rose, and, pointing to the clock in the corner, which proclaimed the hour to be ten, hinted at immediate departure, adding that, as he had received already one thrashing that day, he ran a very fair chance of earning a second. He got away from the lodge with a good deal of difficulty, and, saturated with Bill Morris's sea stories, felt brave enough until he came in sight of the great black, lightless mass

of Tusculum House. Then his heart sank, and he could not help wondering if Duncan, or Jervis, or Nelson, or any other of his pet heroes ever felt as he did now, before they went into action.

Of course he did not make for the front door, but crept round to the kitchen entrance.

Pretty Susan answered his feeble tap at the door.

"Oh, Master Briggs, junior, sir," she said, "master is in a way about you. He came home an hour ago, and he says, says he, 'is Master Briggs in bed?' and I says, 'yes, sir, I believe so;' but lor, he goes up to the bedroom and he comes down again using language frightful to hear, and he——"

"Has Master Briggs returned home yet?" was at this moment roared down the kitchen stairs.

In answer to which, our young gentleman presented himself. We draw a veil over the last act of this Christmas Day. Suffice it to say, that the same descriptive monosyllables with which we opened this chapter might fitly close it.

At ten o'clock the next morning a liveried servant from the Hall presented Squire Adams' compliments, and he would like to see Master Briggs, junior.

But search as they might, no Briggs, junior, was to be found.

CHAPTER II.

ON the morning of December the first, 1803, the "Old Noll," privateer, ten guns, seventy men, Commander Briggs, sailed into Dartmouth harbour, bringing in tow three French vessels. Considering that she had been reported sunk off Saint Kitts, with all hands, and the name of Briggs had been expunged from the list of the living, her arrival caused no little excitement and rejoicing.

Most famous of privateers was the "Old Noll"; most famous and fortunate of captains was her commander. She had been out six weeks, and during that time had fought eleven pitched battles, had sunk the famous French privateers, the "Susanna," of Calais, and the "Grand Turk," of Saint Malo, and had taken twenty-three prizes, of which she had sunk, burnt, or taken ransom for all but the three she now brought with her. She anchored in mid-channel amidst salvoes of artillery and loud cheering, and ten minutes later a small gig put off from her, out of which leaped

on to the quay a smartly-built, brown-faced young fellow, in whom it would have been hard to trace any resemblance to the poor little schoolboy we left at Tusculum House thirteen years ago.

He hurried through the crowd who wanted to shake hands and congratulate him—his password being "fifty prisoners below deck"—passed up the main street by the Buttery Walk, turned into the agent's office, and found that his prisoners would have to go on to Totnes lock-up, as there was not an empty cellar in Dartmouth.

He returned at the same pace, jumped into the gig, and in half-an-hour's time from the moment of dropping anchor, fifty as desperate and ugly-looking villains as ever slung yard or stoppered a topsail-sheet were on their way to Totnes lock-up under a heavy guard.

Little did Samuel Briggs think that all these movements of his were being watched by the keen, although fishy and bloodshot eye of his dear Cousin Malthus, who had of course heard the news of the resurrection of the "Old Noll" and her Captain, and had gone out to verify what to him, for most particular reasons of his own, were very unwelcome tidings.

"Curse him!" he muttered, as he bit his nails to the quick. "This will upset all my arrangements. I must lose no time and secure my prize."

So he hailed a double-sculled boat, and promised the men a couple of crowns each if they would land him at Totnes Bridge within the two hours.

Arrived at the famous old bridge, with a couple of minutes to spare, he threw the men their money; walked rapidly up the steep street; struck off to the right, down a passage by the churchyard wall, and pulled up at a mean-looking house, at the door of which he knocked with some impatience.

A very pretty girl with dark eyes and dark curly hair, but with a thin, sad face, and very plainly dressed, answered his knock.

"Well, Doris," he said, "is your father within?"

"I believe so, Mr. Briggs," replied the girl.

Mr. Malthus pushed past her into a little back room, wherein, at the window, sat the poor, bent, shrivelled ghost of the once proud Squire Adams of Barncombe Hall.

"Ha, Mr. Briggs, glad to see you, glad to see you," said the old gentleman, with a

forced smile. "Any news in Dartmouth, sir?"

"None that I know of," replied Malthus Briggs. "I've come to hear your daughter's ultimatum."

"Well—there she is—ask her, ask her, I can do nothing," said Mr. Adams. "Doris, Mr. Briggs has come to ask you, once and for all, if you will marry him, and save me from utter ruin and disgrace."

"I can't answer, father, indeed I can't—just yet," said Doris.

"But why not, Doris?" said Briggs. "Surely you can say yes or no."

"If I say no," said the girl, "you refuse to help my father against his creditors, he will be imprisoned, and imprisonment will kill him. If I say yes, I am acting a lie, for I am virtually acknowledging that I will love, honour, and obey you as a girl ought to acknowledge to the man who is to be her husband."

"My darling, remember that you owe your life to Mr. Briggs," said her father.

"I know it, I know it, father; and I have thanked him over and over again for it, although it has not brought me much happiness," replied Doris. "But—but—there! I do not love Mr. Briggs as he deserves to be loved by the girl he will make his wife."

"Small wonder!" thought the old man in his heart as he looked at the common, over-dressed, puffy-faced millionaire before him, and then at the graceful, refined girl. "Egad! Twenty years ago a fellow like that would never have had footing in Barncombe Hall."

There was a silence. Briggs stood at the window biting his nails; Doris sat looking abstractedly at the small fire in the small grate; Squire Adams was gazing as abstractedly out of the window over the old Priory orchards. Suddenly the sounds of cheering and the tramp of many feet were heard.

Malthus Briggs ran to the door, followed by Doris. In reply to his enquiry as to the cause of the excitement, a man said:

"Whoi, they'se be French prisoners for the lock-up. The 'Old Noll's come to life and Captain Briggs with him," and ran on to join the crowd.

"More privateer work," said the Squire, when they told him. "I hate the word privateer. Privateers ruined me, as they've ruined many another man, and, by George, they ought to be swept away by law."

"Well, Miss Doris—my answer," said Briggs, presently.

"Give me until this time to-morrow, Mr. Briggs," she said.

Malthus considered. Delay was what he most wanted to avoid, and yet—an idea seemed to flash across his mind—he granted the girl's request, and went out.

"Father," said Doris, when the door had closed behind her suitor, "I'm going to Dartmouth to-night. Don't be alarmed, I can take care of myself, and it's for our good."

"How can that be?" asked the old gentleman. "You can't raise ten thousand pounds to settle with my creditors."

"Wait; I have put off Mr. Briggs. Do you know what has happened?"

"Only that a lot of poor devils have arrived here to die of cold and starvation in the lock-up."

"And that they are the prisoners of a Captain Briggs."

"Well, what of that? Briggs isn't an uncommon name."

"No, I know it is not. Don't say any more. I will be back early."

A couple of hours later—that is to say about five o'clock—Doris went out into the cold, dark, frosty night. Her road to the river-side, where she would take water to Dartmouth, led her past the line of ancient buildings once forming part of Totnes Priory, but now used as grammar school, town hall, and public lock-up.

A single sentry was pacing up and down with fire-lock on shoulder, and uttered a pitiless joke to her as the cries and imprecations of the poor fellows inside, without light, without warmth, and without ventilation, burst forth.

She hurried on, keeping well under the wall to avoid observation. Suddenly, on the opposite side, she saw the figure of a cloaked man stealing swiftly and stealthily in the direction whence she was coming.

She shrank into the angle of a projecting buttress, and he passed on. Presently she heard a stifled cry, the rattle of some metallic object on the cobble stones, and the fall of a heavy body.

Peering forth, she could just make out by the dim light of a suspended oil-lamp, the figure of the sentry lying on the stones and the cloaked man bending over him. Then, terror-stricken, she fled.

By seven o'clock she was landed on Dartmouth quay; but so strange and weird a scene was here presented to her that she hesitated to proceed. The whole of the broad area was covered with men and women who were dancing and singing

by the light of half-a-dozen bonfires. The centre of attraction was a ship's boat, hauled up high and dry, into which a wild group of men, attired in the picturesque nautical dress of the day, were dipping bowls, and glasses, and mugs, which were passed about and emptied amidst cheers, and songs, and laughter.

Of course she saw what it was. The privateersmen were spending their hard-won prize-money in the orthodox fashion, for such scenes were the usual sequels of successful cruises; and a sea-dog, with an advance note for, perhaps, five hundred pounds in his pocket, could hardly be expected to be happy and content so long as it remained unspent.

Whether her curiosity had pushed her too far, or whether she had been carried along by the crowd, Doris found to her terror that she was almost up to the front rank of the carousers, and, before she could retrace her steps, a big fellow, with a red-cotton cap on his head, a long pigtail, and petticoat-like breeches, had seized her by the arm, and singing out:

"Here's a Dartmouth lass! Drink luck to the 'Old Noll,' and confusion to Johnny Crapaud!" would have forced a mug of rum to her lips, but that a stronger and steadier arm pushed him aside, and the voice of its owner said:

"Avast there, Jem Coombe! Avast, my hearty!"

At which the giant gave a clumsy salute, put the mug to his own lips, and kept it there until it was empty.

"You mustn't mind 'em, miss," said her liberator, "they've been knocking about at sea for six weeks, and they think they deserve a bit of fun. Where are you going? Where shall I convoy you?"

Doris looked up with some surprise, but there was something in the tone and the manner of the speaker which reassured her, and she replied:

"I want to see Captain Briggs, of the privateer."

Her protector laughed, and gave a whistle expressive of surprise; then he said:

"May I ask what you want to see him for?"

"Well, partly on private business——"

"Private business! That's queer."

"Yes, and partly to tell him that as I came through Totnes just now I saw the sentry over the French prisoners knocked down."

"Hey! Hey! What's that? Excuse

me; that means a rescue. Tell me where I may call on you to-morrow morning and thank you for this information."

Doris hesitated for a moment, then she said:

"That isn't necessary; but if you would tell me where I am likely to find Captain Briggs, of the 'Old Noll' privateer, I shall be sufficiently rewarded."

"I am Captain Briggs," said her companion, doffing his hat.

"You are! Well—Oh, I'm so flurried! At what time could you meet me at Totnes to-morrow?"

"At any time you like. Say at mid-day. Where?"

"Opposite the Seven Stars Inn."

"Thank you. I will be there without fail. May I ask if you return to Totnes to-night?"

"Yes, if I can get a boat."

"I will get you one. May I offer you my arm?"

And Doris found herself being guided through the crowd towards the water on the arm of the most famous privateer Captain of the day.

"'Old Noll' gig shoy!" sung out Captain Briggs; and in reply the same smart craft we saw earlier in the day came alongside. Doris, wrapped up in a boat-cloak, was comfortably seated in the stern-sheets, the Captain gave his directions, and in another moment the girl was being rowed over the dark waters of the river as fast as four pairs of lusty arms could drive the oars. The dark figure of the Captain, with his hat in his hand, was discernible until a bend in the river hid him from sight, and, unaccountably, Doris felt more light-hearted than she had felt for many and many a long day.

"Here's a nice piece of business, Doris," said the squire as the girl entered the cottage. "The keys of the lock-up have been stolen from Cutty Langdon's house, the lock-up opened, the Johnny Crapauds all let loose, and Bob Copplestone, the sentry, found lying on the ground with a broken head. There'll be pretty work at Dartmouth to-night, for the privateersmen will be all drunk, the Frenchies will get aboard their craft, and be off before any one can stop 'em."

"I don't think they will, father," said Doris, kissing the old gentleman, "the Captain of the 'Old Noll' has been warned and will be ready for them, although, poor fellows, I am sure I would help them to escape if I could."

"Well, be that as it may," replied the squire, "what is your news, child?"

"We'll have that to-morrow, father," replied Doris. "It's late now; but you can go to bed happily, for I think it is good news."

Punctually to the hour of mid-day, Doris hurried down to the Seven Stars Inn. There, leaning against the support of the projecting bow-window and surrounded by an admiring group of natives, stood the famous Captain of the "Old Noll" privateer, in his laced uniform, knee-breeches, and a sword at his side. Doris coloured up as she advanced to meet him, and instantly felt that she had seen his face before. He saluted her with stately courtesy, and she led the way to her father's cottage.

"Captain Briggs," she said, presently, "I'm going to take a great liberty."

"Take it, by all means, madam," said the Captain.

"I'm going to call you—Master Briggs, junior."

Had Totnes Tower fallen over the street at that moment, it could hardly have produced a more startling effect upon the Captain than did this brief announcement.

"Why—good Heavens!" he exclaimed, stopping short, "I haven't heard that name for years."

"Not since you were at Tusculum House School; not since you pulled a little girl out of the Black Pond!" laughed Doris.

"And you are she! Doris Adams, daughter of Squire Adams, of Barncombe Hall!" he exclaimed. "Well, well! If I've thought of you once during my voyages, I have a thousand times. I'm so glad—so glad."

"I can never forget that day," said Doris, "and we all wanted to see you and thank you, and reward you; but you had gone."

"I ran away to sea," said Captain Briggs. "But, Miss Doris, it's still stranger that, as I saved your life, so you should have saved mine."

"I save your life!" exclaimed Doris. "Why, how could that be?" The Captain opened his waistcoat and showed, suspended to a bit of ribbon, a battered copper coin.

"That was the penny you gave me as my reward," he said, laughing. "I've worn it round my neck ever since. Well, a French bullet once flattened itself against that penny, which would otherwise have gone to my heart—so you saved my life."

They found Squire Adams walking up

and down the little garden in a palpable state of perturbation and excitement, but the clouds all vanished from his face when Doris appeared, followed by Captain Briggs, radiant and handsome; and the meeting between the poor, broken-down old Squire and the young sailor was of the most cordial and enthusiastic nature.

"That lying rascal will be here in a few minutes," said the Squire.

"What lying rascal, sir?" asked the Captain.

"Why, a man bearing your name who has been passing himself off as the Briggs, junior, who saved my Doris's life; who is madly in love with my child, who is very rich, and who—you tell the rest, Doris, I cannot."

So Doris told the Captain how her father had been ruined by the capture of his trading vessels by French privateers; how he was crippled with debts; how Mr. Briggs had appeared on the scene, and, posing as the little boy who had jumped into the Black Pond thirteen years before, had offered to relieve the Squire of his difficulties in return for the hand of Doris, and how he was expected momentarily to receive his final answer. Captain Briggs looked grave.

"That must be my Cousin Malthus. I heard that he succeeded to my uncle's fortune. We never got on well together, but I never thought he would have done this sort of thing."

But time went on, and Mr. Malthus Briggs did not reappear, and the idea struck all three that, having heard of the arrival in England of the genuine Briggs, junior, and fearing exposure, he had got out of the way.

"Did you have much fighting with the French rascals last night, sir?" asked the Squire.

"Short and sharp," replied Briggs; "one fellow made a dead set at me, a fellow in a cloak, and I had to knock him overboard; the other chaps——"

At that moment a white-faced servant-girl rushed into the room, crying:

"Oh sir, oh Miss Doris, there's a body been browt to the door!"

They hurried out, and there on a rude stretcher lay the dead body of Malthus Briggs, surrounded by a silent crowd.

"The man I knocked overboard!" whispered the Captain in a voice of horror; "I did not recognise him, of course, as my Cousin Malthus. Depend upon it, he it was who planned the

escape, and the attempted recapture of the prizes."

Of course—we need hardly write it—Doris Adams fell in love with the dashing young Captain, and married him; the old Squire got clear of his debts, not with the Captain's hard-earned prize-money, but with the fortune of the unfortunate Malthus, which Briggs, junior, inherited as next-of-kin. The Christmas of 1804 was kept at Barncombe Hall in good old style, and amongst the guests who assembled to drink the healths of the Squire and the newly-married couple were not a few who remembered the new master of Barncombe as Master Briggs, junior.

OUR LASS LETTY.

By L. WALKER.

I ANSWERS to the name of Tommy Trot, which, considering my calling, and how navvies hang after a joke, might be mistook for a nickname. But it ain't, for my father was Trot before me, and, when I was married, that was the way I was wrote down in the parish book.

I'm not going to give you a story about myself—though I had my share in it—but for the right understanding of what I'm about to tell, it'll be best to let you know I'm a navvy carpenter, and that I've rose to be a foreman in the employ of Messrs. Lyne, Rayles, and Co., contractors. For that firm I've worked man and boy for five-and-forty year, and, if that ain't stifficate enough for any chap's respectability, I should like to know what is.

I mention this because of some things I shall come to by-an'-by, and because some folks has thrown blame on me and my missus for what was more bad luck than bad management.

Some years ago our firm contracted to make a branch line for the Great Western down south, and I was sent from London to be boss carpenter and storekeeper at a place called Carchester, which was head-quarters; so me and my missus and our lass Letty come down to live in the yard.

I suppose every one knows what a contractor's yard is like; how the engine-sheds and the workshops, and the forge and stores is kep' there; and how a foreman lives on the spot to be accountable for things, most gen'rally in a hut built o' purpose; and for those who don't know the ins and outs of

a navy's hut, I'd just remark that it ain't by no means a makeshift place, but as comfortable a one-storey house as any one could want. And our hut was so roomy, and the look-out through the trees across the moors and down to the river was that pleasant, that Queen Victory might 'a' envied us.

Me and my missus was very proud of our lass Letty—in truth she was a lass any one might 'a' been proud of. It's hard to tell azactly what she was like, though I'd safely bet a week's pay that you wouldn't meet with her equal for good looks and pretty ways, not on a long day's tramp—the rest you must fill in accordin' to fancy.

We'd plenty of place in our hut for a lodger or two, and as we'd the room we thought we might as well have the company; in fact we were scarce settled when the foreman at the forge spoke to us for one of his strikers, who, he said, was a stiddy chap and had been on a job wi' me afore.

That was how we came to have Jim Talbot for a lodger. There was another and sometimes two others, but they count for nothing; while Talbot—but there, I mustn't put on too much steam at the start.

What struck us, first and foremost about Talbot, was his quietness. He'd nothin' to say for himself; nor did he seem to care about hearing other folks talk, which runs sadly agen my grain.

"Talbot," I says to him about the second night at supper, "warn't you on the Chester job?"

"I was, Mr. Trot," he says back.

"I scarcely recognised you," I went on. "It's only three years ago; but you've changed fit to puzzle your own mother."

To this he made no answer; but I'm a bit 'quisitive when I begin, and I wouldn't be choked off. I began again:

"You never seed him, missus, for you wasn't at Chester; but would you believe that then-a-days he was as chatty and joky as e'er a one? Now, three year a'nt changed me. I feels innardly, and I looks out'ardly, much the same as I did at Chester; so I nat'rally wonders why Talbot looks ten year older."

"P'raps he've been laid up," says the missus. "That ages a man quick enough."

But still he sat as mum as you please, eating his frizzled pork.

"You wouldn't think neither," I says next, "that he was a favourite with the gells, and that he dressed up every evenin' to go a-courtin'." At this he glanced up,

and I saw I'd fetched him. That pleased me. "I heard afterwards as you'd married her; but p'raps that were just what she wouldn't do."

But the missus wasn't quite so much for chaff as I was, and when she saw Talbot lookin' riled, she says:

"Let him alone, master, can't you? S'pose he has left his heart behind him, there's no need to be plaguing of him.

He'd just finished his supper then, and, as he put down his knife and fork and pushed back his cheer, he looks me full i' the face.

"I've made shift," he says, "to mind my' own business this good while, and I ain't beginnin' to want help in the matter jest yet. I shan't ask no questions of any one in this hut, and them as werrits me must run their chance of a civil answer."

Then he got up and walked out of the house.

"Well done!" says I, "I see we've got to be taught who's boss here."

Then, to my surprise, my lass spoke up quite sharp.

"And why shouldn't he take his own part? If any one was to bait me like that I should let them know what for, too."

It were nothing unusual for our Letty to call me to order—that was why the missus said I'd spoilt her—so all I said was:

"Nay, Letty; if you're going to take you surly chap under your wing, you'll have your work cut out, for it strikes me he won't take kindly to cossetting."

Now my lass was just twenty, and more than one smart-looking fellow, earning his five-and-twenty or thirty shillings a week, had come looking arter her; but she'd always been as highty-tighty as a Duchess, and they'd none on 'em got far into her good graces.

The missus and me talked it over sometimes, for, though we didn't want to part with her, we did want to see her settled comfortable. Yet we weren't sorry to see that she meant to pick and choose, for we had saved a bit o' money, which was to come to her on her wedding-day.

Startin' a job is allus a busy time for the head men, so I were hard at it all day, and in the evening I were took up with thinkin' the work over, and puttin' down accounts, as well as with talkin' to Mr. Francis. If it hadn't been for that, I might 'a' noticed what was going on, and perhaps I mightn't.

Anyhow, one Sunday, after dinner, as I was taking a look round the yard, the missus comes to me and begins:

"Master, I don't know what you'll say to the matter, but it strikes me as Jim Talbot and our Letty are thinkin' o' keepin' company."

I was fillin' my pipe, and I were that took aback, that I snapped the bowl clean off; then I laughed, and said:

"Come, missus, that won't do. The lass didn't turn up her nose at Joe Willet and Ginger Tom, to let a sulky-lookin' fellow, that's only a striker at eighteen shillin' a week, get round her at last."

"She's turned up her nose at a good many, I grant," answered the missus, "but that she's let Talbot get round her ain't just the way to put it. As fur as I can see, it's her as has come round him. He begun by taking no notice of her, and whether that vexed her, or whether she's reely took to him out o' contrairiness, I can't say; but this I can see, that they're beginning to keep company, for they've gone this very afternoon a-walkin' together down the moors. Now, what do you say to that?"

If I'd said all I felt, I should have said I wasn't best pleased; but I saw the missus was riled, and that made me want to take Letty's part, so I said:

"Well, there's no need to flurry yourself. A Sunday walk ain't like callin' the banna. Moreover, Talbot's stiddy enough, if he is sulky."

"Just hark to him! Now, look you here, master, I've got my eyes open, and I knows what our Letty is when her mind's made up. I should be main sorry to part wi' a sober lodger like Talbot, and run my chance of gettin' a rowdy in his place; but I won't have him dangling after the lass, nor the lass dangling after him."

Now I hadn't been so busy of late that I didn't know what the missus was drivin' at with all the objectshuns to Talbot, and why she was so wroth wi' Letty for gettin' a bit taken with him. It's no use beatin' about the bush, so I may as well say right out that it was all on account of Mr. Francis.

I never rightly understood why Mr. Francis were sent to Carchester; our contract was so small that we didn't want much of a staff, and Mr. Francis was certainly quite a soopernoomery. However, we was very glad he was on the job, for he was a real favourite with the men. His full name was Francis Lyne, Esq., and he was nephew to the senior partner; but he was as free as free with the men, and give himself none of the airs that Chapman, the

agent, did. I'd used to think it was a bit o' jealousy on this account that made Chapman keep his eye so sharp on Mr. Francis, and lose no opportunity of hauling him over the coals.

Mr. Francis used to take it main easy, nevertheless—more than half the week he'd not come on to the works before eleven o'clock—but I weren't his timekeeper, and perhaps if he had more to do he'd 'a been there earlier.

Anyhow there was no love lost between the agent and Mr. Francis, and the cashier held with the agent, and Mr. Francis, who was engineer, were left pretty much to find friends for hisself, which ain't easy to do in a place like Carchester, which is very high and mighty towards strangers which ain't of its own pertickler kidney.

I said I wouldn't beat about the bush consarnin' Mr. Francis, yet here I am, telling every reason why he were hard up for company, just as if I was ashamed of his coming to our hut so often, which I wasn't—quite the contrary.

He began with coming to talk business with me; but his manners was sich that he made us forget the difference betwixt him and we, and he soon got into the way of stopping to smoke a pipe, or take a hand at nap, with no ceremony whatever.

But while we smoked, I could see that his best attention was not given to my stories, and when our lass walked across the house, his eyes followed her with a look that told plainly what the attraction was.

And one morning when I came sudden to the house for a foot-rule, there he was in our bit of a yard smoking a cigarette, while Letty was feedin' the chickens. There'd been other things too, which a blind man on a gallopin' horse might have passed by, but which had been plain enough to me and my missus, and made us feel uncommon proud. You see, we thought so much of the lass that nothing and no one would have been too good for her in our eyes, not even Mr. Francis; for after all, a railway man is but a railway man, and it was but a matter of a few rungs on the same ladder.

This was why the missus was so put out that Sunday afternoon, when the lass went philandering down the moors with Jim Talbot.

I've never seen any good come of arguying with womenkind, so instead of saying anything further, I fetched out another pipe, and strolled off towards the cutting, as if the matter was ended.

Yet I was a little bit uneasy, for ther^e was summat about Talbot I didn't azackly relish; so before I'd walked many yards, I thinks to myself: "Why shouldn't I take a walk down the moors too? and if I comes across the lass and Talbot, and plays gooseberry, it might be a cashalty such as will happen in the best riggilated courtships." So I turned and was crossing the yard when who should I see but Mr. Francis coming along as if he were on the look out for some one. "He's after the lass," thinks I, "as per usual," and I were all the more aggywated that she should be wasting her time. But apparently, whoever Mr. Francis were looking out for, he didn't take it amiss that I ketched his eye.

"Hello, Trot," he calls out. "Glad you're on view—and where's Letty?"

"She's out a-walking, Mr. Francis."

"Dear me, Trot," he went on, with a kind of sigh. "P'raps it's as well for me that I don't find her every time I hope to;" then he sighed again and says: "Trot, I know what I'd do if I was my own master."

"Well, Mr. Frank," I answered, "surely if any one's their own master on this contract, you are—or ought to be."

Then he began to roll up a cigarette slowly and carefully, as if it mattered very greatly to get it taut and even.

"Trot," he says, presently, and, considerin' it were Mr. Francis, his manner were very hesitatin'. "Trot, there ain't a man on the job who's so little his own master as I am. I suppose you've heard that the gov'nor packed me off to this stupid hole because he was put out wi' me."

"No, Mr. Frank," I says, though I had heard some sich tales, and hadn't quite believed 'em. "No, I allus fancied you was a prime favourite wi' the firm, same as you are wi' the men."

"Ah, Trot," he goes on, "tain't every one has so much good sense as plain navvies. It'd be a long story if I told you where and how the split began. In fact, it's best forgotten. It was a trifling matter; no harm, you know."

"I'll bet it were no great harm," I said. "Moreover, the firm can't contract for old heads on young shoulders. I only wish there was more like you."

"You're a good fellow, Tommy; if I didn't feel sure of that I shouldn't talk to you as I do; and you say you didn't know the governor had had a crow to pluck with me."

"No, Mr. Frank, I didn't."

"Yes, and I should be at the London office now, if it hadn't been so."

"Well, sir, it's an ill wind that blows no one any good; if you was on the London job, you wouldn't be here wi' we."

I wanted to bring him round to speak of the lass again, and what he'd do if he was his own master.

"I'm glad you appreciate me, Trot," he makes answer; "but I don't think I shall be with you much longer, leastways, unless things take a turn."

"Heaven bless us, Francis." (I called him so, sometimes, when we was privater and confidenshaller than usual.) "Whatever is amiss? Don't you let Chapman be too many for you. We should be main sorry to part wi' you, my lass Letty and all."

"Not so sorry as I should be to part wi' you—and her. Dear me, Tommy, why ain't things as they ought to be? But the fact is, I shall have to show a clean pair of heels to the whole concern if something can't be done. Look you here, my friend"—and he draws out of his pocket an envelope, which looked as though it meant business—"look at this confounded lawyer's letter; all about a paltry ten pounds or so, which I can no more pay than I can fly."

"Well, sir," I says, "why don't you draw your salary for next month? You must be drawin' monthly more'n that amount, I makes so free as to guess."

But he shook his head, and looked very gloomy.

"That won't do, Trot; my salary is overdrawn a little, and that fool Chapman is so infernally particular."

"Well, Mr. Francis, other young men gets money—there's plenty of people ready to 'commodate a gent like you."

"No doubt there are, Trot," he answers; "but there'd be a lot of writing backwards and forwards,"—I thought he were wrong, but I didn't contradick him—"and I can't afford the waste of time. I've been hard up before, but never so bad as this. I've thought it all over, Trot, and I think the best way will be to go off altogether, so I've come to say 'good-bye' to you and Letty."

"Sakes alive, Francis! dont'ee talk like that. I've always held you to be such a plucky young gent. You ain't going to smash altogether because you run off the rails a bit. I see how it is, you're low about the gov'nor, and so you gives way to despairin' thoughts. But you know I'm real fond of you, and it ain't hard to see that you have a hankerin' after my lass, so if you'll allow me to take the liberty of helping you, I'll gladly do it."

"Thankee kindly, Trot," he says, still very gloomy. "I'm not proud, I'd not call help a liberty, but the only help equal to the emergency would be a clear twenty pound at the shortest possible notice."

"And that I'm game for, Mr. Francis," I cries—for I had some money for timber by me—"if you'll do me the honour of accepting the loan of it for two or three months, by which time, no doubt, your balance with the cashier will allow you to put all straight between us."

"Trot," he says, looking hard at me, "you don't mean you'll advance me the cash, and keep it dark!"

"Upon my soul, I will, and truly glad to be able!"

"Heaven bless you, Tommy!" he says, with a tremble in his voice. "You little know how grateful I feel for what you are doing."

So Mr. Francis had his twenty pound that Sunday arfternoon, and a cup of tea with us, which Letty poured out, while he sat by her and whispered a lot of things into her ear, which made her say more'n once:

"Come, Mr. Francis, dont'ee talk such rubbish, sir; you don't mean it, you know."

To which he would answer:

"Indeed I do, Letty, and a good deal more, too."

After tea, he went away, and the missus talked of going to church, for which I weren't quite inclined.

"I'll stay and smoke another pipe," I said, "and the lass'll stay and bear me company."

So she stayed, and the missus started early; she had a bit o' gossiping in view as well as the sarmin. Letty were unusual quiet, and I, with my head full o' Mr. Francis, and what his row with the gov'nor could be about, sat in my arm-chair with my eyes shut, sometimes dozin' off altogether. Presently the house-door opened, and I knew by the step that Talbot had come in.

"Hush!" says Letty, softly, "he's tired; he's dropped off to sleep."

"All right," he answers, in the same tone, "I don't want to make no noise."

Then he sat down, and the thought came into my head sudden, that if they thought I was asleep I should find out how far things had gone between them, which would be an easier way of finding out than by asking her—for when does a woman tell a man more than she means him to

know?—and agreeabler than puttin' the question to him point-blank. But for a quarter of an hour they sat as mum as mutes, till I thought they'd spotted my trick and were goin' to get a rise out of me. Then the lass says:

"You're very silent, Jim." Here I gave a bit of a snore to encourage his answer; but no answer came. "And so you was this arfternoon out a-walking," Letty went on. "What for did you say we'd have a walk if you'd got nothin' to say?"

"I had summat to say, Letty."

"Precious little," she said, and I could tell by her voice that she felt sore. "Did you call that saying anything?—you didn't speak six times. I declare I'd rather ha' gone out alone, and now it gives me the fidgets to see you setting there with your eyes fixed on me, as if I was sommat curious. I shall go along to meet mother, and if father wakes up, you can tell him where I'm gone, and why."

"Nay, Letty, dont'ee go. What I've got to say must be said, though I couldn't get it out this arfternoon. I'm a straight-forrard chap, Letty, though I am a bit quiet. You believe that, don't you, lass?"

His words shamed me a bit, for I wasn't acting the straightforrardest of parts just then; but he wanted to speak, and she wanted to hear him, and, if I'd waked up, they'd 'a both bin disappointed.

"Yes," said Letty, "I b'lieve you're the right sort, though you don't get on wi' father and the rest."

"Now," Talbot went on, "there's no harm in a man keepin' his own business to himself, nor his own troubles—that's what I've allus tried to do, and I wouldn't tell no one but you what I'm now goin' to tell, and I tells it to you becos—well, p'raps you'll understand why."

"Jim," says the lass in a whisper, "you couldn't tell your secrets to no one as 'ud take better care of 'em than me."

"Well, then, Letty, I came to lodge here as a single man might, and there's nothing about me that looks at all married; but yet, Letty, I've bin, that is I am, married, and I've got a wife as I'm bound to."

"Jim!" she says with a kind o' gasp, "Jim! it ain't true."

And I was so struck of a heap that I calls out:

"Talbot, what's that you're sayin'?"

He looked a bit flabbergasted at me joining in; but Letty, she took no notice of me. Her eyes were fixed on him, and her face was white to the very lips.

"Letty," I said, very coaxing, "Letty, come to your old dad."

I don't know whether she even heard me.

"Jim," she said again, "it ain't true."

"It is, my dear," he said, so tender, that I shouldn't 'a thought it possible from him. "It's quite true."

"And if you've a wife," I cried out, "why have you been philanderin' about wi' my lass and doin' your level best to make a fool of her?"

He might 'a blazed out back at me, but he didn't; he only looked at Letty very sadly, and it was her as did the blazin'.

"He ain't done nothing wrong," she said. "If I'm a fool, it's by my own fault, and none of his."

"God bless you, Letty," he said. "I wish I'd told you before; but I didn't see no just cause till a day or two back, and I don't bring it up for the sake of talking."

"Was it the gell at Chester?" I asked.

"Yes, Mr. Trot, it was. We was married there, and after a bit I went to London to get a better job. I let her stay with her mother becous of the baby that was coming. When I'd got all ready I wrote for her to come; but her mother wrote back that she warn't well enough to travel, and that there'd be no little 'un. I waited and waited, and at last I went to see her."

I were sorry for him—his voice went so shaky—and Letty's tears ran down her face.

"And what did she say?" I asked.

"She warn't there; the house was shut up, and the neighbours said they'd been gone a couple o' months; they told me lots more which it were no good my knowing then, and which were no help to finding her."

"Perhaps she's dead," said Letty, softly.

"Nay, lass, I don't think so. I've a sure and certain feeling that I shall see her again. I've left off fretting for her, and I've left off loving her, but I ain't left off looking out for her. I don't know who 'ticed her away; but perhaps, some day, he'll cast her off, and then if she's hard up I hope she'll do naught worse than look for me—d'ye see, Letty?"

"Yes, Jim, I see;" then she got up and went and stood by him. "I've been a silly fool," she said, "but you mustna' think very bad of me."

"Nay, Letty," he says, "who is there could think bad o' you?"

"Talbot," I said, "shake hands; my feelin's towards you have changed considerable."

With that we all settled to keep our own counsel, and to speak no more about the sad trouble; also I give the missus a tip that she needn't be in any fear about Talbot sticking up to our lass.

As to Mr. Francis, after I'd lent him the money, he come to see us much more reg'lar, and two or three times he asked me quite serious what I should think of him for a son-in-law. But though I would have had him sharp enough, Letty was not of the same mind.

"I won't have anything to say to Mr. Francis," she said each time, "nor shall he say anything to me—no, not if he was nevvly to ten contractors."

I must say I were mortal disappointed to hear her put it like that, feeling that if she would but say "yes" to him, he'd make the best of husbands for her; but Letty is a woman which knows her own mind as akkyrate as my foot-rule.

I knew, moreover, that she was very unhappy just then; though she never made any complaint. It wasn't Mr. Francis either as worried her; he counted for nothing in the trouble that was making her paler and quieter than she'd ever been before. We'd never spoke of Talbot's story again, yet I knew that was the trouble that was with her, for she was a staunch one to love, and she'd loved in the wrong place; and she was as proud as a Princess, and her pride had got a hard blow.

As the autumn wore on the weather turned very bad. It froze as hard as iron, and every now and then there'd come a downfall of snow in a driving north-easter. The moors, which had looked so green and gay, were bare and bleak, and the river ran black betwixt the frozen snow on either bank. Nat'rally we couldn't get on to the work, and those whose daily earnings went from hand to mouth began to look pinched and blue, and my missus, which had a warm heart, gave away all she could spare, and more—but I don't blame her.

It was, indeed, hard times, but when Christmas came we tried to forget how hard in a bit of merry-making, and I made so bold as to ask Mr. Francis if he'd come too, for he was going to spend his Christmas at Carchester.

"I'll come gladly, Trot," he said. "I should have a dull time if I didn't. The

governor is still in the sulks with me, and I'm not going home to be humbugged by the womenkind into eating humble pie."

"Right you are, Mr. Francis, and don't you fret, the guv'nor 'll come round in time." For in truth it did seem uncomprehensive that any one could be hard on such a nice young chap.

So it came that Mr. Francis and the missus, and our lass and me, and one or two more—which Talbot wasn't one—sat down to a fine goose and apple sarse in my hut at two o'clock on Christmas Day. I should like to tell of all the jokes we cracked, and the songs we sung, and the healths we drank, and how we all larfed till we could larf no more; but I've other and more important things to say, so I passes all that over.

We'd sat a long time round the table, and the short day was closing in the earlier, because the snow was fallin' thickly outside, when our Letty says:

"Wasna that a knock at the house door?"

"No," says some one, "it were the wind."

"Nay," said Letty, "there it goes again," and she went straight and undone the door which opened into the houseplace, and let in a blast of nor' easter and a cloud o' driftin' flakes. "Who's there?" she said, peering out.

There was a faint voice in answer, to which Letty said "What?"

Then when the faint voice had spoke again, the lass says: "Yes, he's here, come in."

Now I've lived in East London, so I know what a wretched-looking woman is like; yet at the sight of the poor, gaunt, drenched creetur as followed Letty into the house, I felt all the pity of my natur' risin' hot and strong. What her clothes might 'a been, if they hadn't clung to her soaked through and through, I can't say, but her face was enough; the piteous, hungry, driven look in her eyes; the deathly colour of the skin which covered her cheek-bones, was somethin' too horrible to a man, sittin' in his warm house, with a good dinner inside him.

"Come to the fire, missus," I says, takin' her for one of the many starved out. But she took no notice. She looked round at us, lookin' hard because the light was fallin', then she stretched out her hands and says:

"Francis, don't be angry with me."

With that we all turned to Mr. Francis. I fancied he had gone pale.

"Frank," she went on, "I've tramped all the way. I'm nigh mad wi' cold and hunger—don't be angry with me;" but still he said nothing.

"Mr. Francis," said Letty, "why don't you speak to her? Who is she?"

"Upon my word," he says, "I can't tell you; but I should think it's some poor creature who is out of her mind." His voice sounded odd—but why shouldn't it? it was an uncommon queer predickment. "I suppose," he went on, "that because I'm the contractor's nephew, they think I can work wonders."

Then Letty struck a light, and I saw her eyeing Mr. Frank very suspicious, while the woman stood with a desperate look on her wan face.

"Come and have a morsel to eat, missus," I said, "you'll feel better for it."

Again she didn't heed me.

"Francis," she said, "in Heaven's name, have pity on me."

"I assure you," he said, "that I am truly sorry for you; but I am not in a position to do much for you. However, here is something that will pay for your supper and a bed."

So sayin' he reached out half-a-crown to her; which, at the moment, and considerin' the odd, wild way she'd come down on him, I thought very generous. But instead of taking the money, the woman lifted her hand and struck him a blow across the face, such as I couldn't have thought her strength equal to. Then, without one more word, she was out in the night again, and all our callin' couldn't fetch a word or a sign from her. So we shut the door, and looked from one to another very puzzled.

"Surely, Mr. Francis," I says, "you've a notion who it is?"

"I've a very clear notion," he answered, "that she is a dangerous mad-woman. I know she's made me feel uncommonly queer. I shall go round and speak to the police, and see if something can't be done to take care of her."

I offered to go with him, but he wouldn't hear of it; nor would he sit down round the fire again, so we had to let him go; and that was the last time he passed our threshold. After he'd gone we talked it over, and one said one thing and one another—all but Letty, who shook her head and kept her lips tight shut.

I don't know where Talbot had been

spending his Christmas Day; but, anyhow, about nine o'clock he'd had enough of it, and were on his way home. He opened the door, and putting in his head without coming any further, he says: "Mr. Trot, just step out here w' your lantern, will you?" I'd rather have stopped inside, but dooty is dooty, and I thought something must be amiss from his manner. So I took down the lantern and followed him into the yard. The snow had left off falling, but the wind was busy with it still, ketching it up by armfuls in the open places, and whirling it around and about till it was heaped against the sheds, and fences, and timber-stacks, in all the queer shapes you can think of.

"What is it, Talbot?" I asked.

"This way, Mr. Trot," he gives back, leading me towards the gate. "There's some one been makin' too merry this Christmas, and if we don't give 'em a lift indoors they'll never make merry in this world again."

Then I saw a woman lying face downward, partly covered by drift, at the roadside; it looked, as Talbot said, as if she was incapable. Between us we turned her over, and the light fell upon her face; the eyes were closed, but it was something chillier than sleep that had come over her.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, and truly it was a sight to shock any man.

"Bless us all!" I cried, too, "if it isn't the woman what came after Mr. Francis this artemoon."

"Came after Mr. Francis?" says Talbot, as if he couldn't believe what I said.

"Yes, mon," I answered sharp, "came beggin', and then threwed his charity in his face. She must ha' been mad, and now I fear she's past help; let's look sharp and carry her into the house." Which we did.

"Father," says Letty, in a scared voice, "what are you bringin' in?"

"Letty," I answered, "it's yon poor wretch of a woman. Whoever she is, and whatever she wanted, we shall never find out now; for she's come to the end of her wants and troubles."

"Letty," says Talbot, "it's her I told you of. She's come back at last."

Now there are certain things in the end of this story that I'd rather not tell, for no words o' mine can say how sore I was grieved about Mr. Francis. Perhaps he'd have brazened it out, if it hadn't been for the letter Talbot found in his dead wife's

pocket, which bore witness against him at the inquest, so that every one knew how he had 'ticed her away from her home, and then deserted her.

After the inquest Mr. Francis was seen no more in Carchester (nor on any other job of Lyne, Rayles, and Co.), he went away, too, without bidding us good-bye; which I weren't surprised at.

However, when I heard every one dealing out hard words about him, I wouldn't—for the sake of old friendship, which might be broken off, but couldn't be wiped out—I wouldn't be the one to speak of the debt betwixt him and me. Perhaps, in the weightier matters that cumbered him, it slipped his memory altogether; anyhow, that twenty pound is still owing to Letty's wedding portion.

But she doesn't know it; and she wouldn't care if she did. It'd take a good deal more than ten times twenty pound to make Letty unhappy, now that she and Jim Talbot are man and wife.

DOCTOR CORNELIUS.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Consett," "The Lady Nanoye," "Gretchen," etc.

CHAPTER I. A STRANGE MASTER.

ON a wild, wide waste of moorland the house stood. Surely a drearier habitation man had never chosen, or one that spoke of loneliness and desolation in plainer language of silence.

As I got out of the old lumbering fly, I found myself confronted by a low stone wall and a weather-stained wooden gate. Behind me, in the red glow of sunset, stretched the moor, with the dull colouring of gorse and heather springing into life in the sun's rays; but here the light failed to illumine the black garden wall, and only the sougning of the autumn wind made sign or stir in the oppressive stillness.

I rang the bell, and heard its cracked and rusty peal sounding and echoing with a loudness that startled me. The gate opened, and the man drove in and deposited me and my modest baggage at the porch of a low-built, two-storeyed house. It seemed to have been originally built on a little patch of reclaimed land, and then to have been walled in to preserve its privacy. A few ash trees had made feeble attempts to grow in the dreary enclosure; but weeds and gorse seemed to have monopolised what might have been a garden, and the only relief to the dark,

weather-beaten porch, was a climbing monthly rose that seemed to cling with desperate tenderness to the bare, bleak wall it beautified.

The door was opened by an old serving man—a grey, grizzled being, whose age might have been anything from sixty to a hundred. His appearance did not prepossess me. I felt my small stock of courage oozing rapidly away, so I put to him the somewhat unnecessary question:

“Is this where Dr. Cornelius lives?”

“Of course it be,” he said in an uncouth dialect. “Driver must have told ‘ee that.”

“I am the new housekeeper,” I said, timidly; “he expects me, I believe.”

“Oh,” grumbled the man, “he expects summ’un of woman folk. You’d best come in, and I’ll tell him you’ve come.”

I paid the fly-man, and saw my box put down in the hall, which opened directly from the porch. It was small and dark, and panelled throughout with black oak, and had a wide open fireplace, where now smouldered a dull peat fire. The man bade me sit down, and then took himself off to find his master and announce me.

I shuddered as I looked around at the uninviting place, and began to repent somewhat of the impulse which had made me accept the post of housekeeper and companion to a young lady, in answer to an advertisement which had appeared in an Exeter newspaper, and had finally led to my engagement by Dr. Cornelius, of Combe Wyvil, Dartmoor.

It seemed a very long time before the old man returned. When at last he made his appearance, he looked even more unamiable than at his departure.

“You be to coom to maister in study,” he said, shortly. “I’ll show you where it be.”

I rose quickly, and was ushered into a dark room, lit by one window, through which a few rays of the lingering sunset still streamed. A room with a faint, mouldy smell about it, as if for long it had been shut away from pure air; a room lined and filled with books, mostly ancient and leather-bound. Look where I might I saw books—piles and piles of them. This was what first attracted my notice. Then my eye fell on the solitary occupant of the room. A man sitting at the table, who lifted his head and looked at me calmly and scrutinisingly; a man whose face—worn and furrowed as it was—impressed me less with its sense of power and intelli-

gence, than with the idea of its fierceness and want of self-restraint.

Our eyes met. His betrayed nothing. Mine had probably not learnt the secret of so much self-control. He turned slightly and glanced at an open letter lying by his side on the table.

“Mrs. Drew?” he said, interrogatively.

“Yes, sir,” I answered, quietly, noting that it was my own letter to which he had referred.

“Pray be seated,” he said. “I must explain what I require. After that, I hope you have sense enough to go on your own way without troubling me.”

I took the seat in silence. His voice did not prepossess me. It was harsh, cold, metallic. His long, white fingers trifled restlessly with the pen they held.

“You told me,” he went on, “that you did not mind a dull life. I hope you spoke the truth. I live here quite alone, except for old Zeal—the man you have seen. But, to-morrow, I am expecting a visitor—a young lady. I am her guardian. She is leaving school. She must live here. You will have to see to her, and—and be a companion, as I said in my advertisement. I wanted a practical woman, and an educated and refined woman. Your letter pleased me; it seemed to say you possessed these qualifications. You may do what you please as far as regulating the household goes. I will take one meal a day with—my ward—that will be supper, which you will have served at eight o’clock every evening. Zeal sees to all other requirements of mine. He will show you your room. Next to it is the one for the young lady. Get what you want to eat and drink, and keep your own hours. That is all I have to say.”

I rose to my feet. He was folding up the letter, and replacing it in its envelope. “I understand you, sir,” I said, quietly. “I hope I may be able to perform these duties satisfactorily. At what hour to-morrow does the young lady arrive?”

“About nightfall,” he said. “She is coming from France. She will break the journey at Falmouth. You will receive her and see to her requirements. There is no need to disturb me. I will see her at eight o’clock.”

I thought he was a very cold and unfeeling guardian, but I made no comment—only bade him good-night, and left the room.

I closed the door and stepped into the cold, dim passage, which led back to the

hall. Glancing round, I saw, fixed to the wall above the study door, an oak bracket, on which was a human skull. A shudder of horror ran through my veins at sight of the uncanny object. I hurried on, and was relieved to find that the grim servitor had made up the fire. On a small table before it were two candles in tall, old-fashioned silver candlesticks, and some preparations for a meal. In a few moments the uncouth factotum made his appearance.

"I've made 'ee some tea," he said, "and toasted some cakes. There be a haunch of cold mutton in the larder—if you be hungered."

"Thank you," I said. "But I should like to see my room first. Will you show me the way?"

He gave a grunt; then shouldered my box and led the way up the shallow staircase. Reaching a landing-place on which several doors opened, he pointed to one and said briefly: "There it be. I'll fetch a candle; but, mayhap, fire 'll light thee."

"Oh, yes," I said, opening the door and feeling gratified at the blaze of burning logs which greeted my sight. I walked in and threw off my bonnet and cloak. The bed was a large, gloomy four-poster, and the furniture of the room most primitive and old-fashioned; but I had not lived my forty years without a fair percentage of hardships and trials, and I was at present too tired and spent to be over-critical.

A liberal application of cold water soon refreshed me, and piling on the fire some more logs, of which there was a plentiful supply in a large basket, I took my way downstairs to the hall or parlour, which seemed to be the general sitting-room of the house.

I made an excellent meal after my long journey, and at its conclusion the old man showed me the rest of the house—which was very, very old—and had a curious history of its own, which I learnt long afterwards.

There was a coat of arms carved over the fireplace in the hall; and there were a few old portraits, cracked and blackened, and almost unrecognisable. Another room, the dining-room, was large and low, and contained a deep bay window looking out on the moor. The ceiling was of oak beams, black with age and massive. It was sparsely furnished, containing only a long, low table, and a few leather-covered chairs; but a massive oaken sideboard or buffet stood at one end, and, according to old Zeal, had been there long before his master took the house.

Altogether it was a dreary place. I asked the old man how long his master had lived there, and he said, "nigh on twenty year." He also informed me that he and his old woman had lived with the doctor about half that time, but that the said "old woman" had departed this life a matter of six months or thereabouts.

I saw no more of the doctor that night, and finally took myself off to bed, where, after tossing and tumbling about for hours in distracted wakefulness, I at last fell asleep.

I woke next morning with that sense of strangeness and forlornness which is almost inseparable from new surroundings.

My room looked hideous and dreary in the bright sunlight, and I was glad to get up and dress, and then make a raid with broom and duster and set to work to make it at least clean and habitable. I found old Zeal in the kitchen getting the doctor's breakfast ready. He informed me that I could wait on myself now that I was here to stay, and I cheerfully agreed to the suggestion, for I knew that nothing but constant occupation could ever keep my nerves and mind in a rational or equable condition amidst such dismal surroundings.

The day went by rapidly enough, for I had the young lady's room to prepare and the house linen to sort and arrange—and a precious state that was in, as I need not tell any one who knows what it is to leave a house to man's care. Then I had my diary to write up—always a habit of mine from my school days—and by that time it was getting dark, and I put on my black gown and a white apron and went downstairs to the hall and tried to make it look as cheerful as possible, though, indeed, it was but a hopeless task.

I had not set eyes on my master all day, and was therefore considerably startled, when suddenly the door opened and he walked in. I rose from my seat at once, but he waved his hand impatiently.

"Sit down, woman; sit down," he said in the harsh, rough tones which had jarred on me the previous evening. "Never notice my comings and goings for Heaven's sake!"

He began to pace to and fro, glancing from time to time at the tall eight-day clock which stood in a corner; and I resumed my seat, and worked steadily on at the sewing which I had brought down with me. It made me nervous and uncomfortable to see that tall, restless figure pacing to and fro in that monotonous tramp. Suddenly he paused near my side:

"How long," he said abruptly, "have you been a widow?"

"Two years, sir," I answered him, with one rapid glance at his face, which looked like an iron mask, so stern and set it was.

"Two years," he muttered. "Were you happy—was he a good man—did you love him?"

"Yes," I answered, a little unsteadily, "we loved each other dearly, and were very happy. Of course, we had troubles, and sorrows, too; but still——"

"Don't talk that cant of 'mutual sympathy,' and 'sharing them together,'" he cried, fiercely. "It is impossible, I tell you—impossible! Who should know better than I? Ay, who? Women—what know they of love, of truth, of steadfastness? Folly, I grant you; and trickery that weaves a shroud for every honest man's faith; but love—pah! The devil that shaped them to be our tempters, took care that they should have fancies, not feelings; emotions, not passions, wedded to fair face and guileless lips."

I stared at him in blank amazement. Of all men on the face of this earth I could not have pictured one more unlikely to have given love a thought, or to have considered womanhood save in the abstract light of science or speculation.

He did not seem even to note or remember my presence. Some hidden feeling, stormy and deep, was at work in his nature. A strange convulsion writhed his face and transformed his features. He looked positively appalling, and I watched him in mute horror as one might watch the movements of a murderer in the helpless nightmare of a dream.

Yet suddenly, by some strong effort of will, he recovered his self-control, and drew up his tall figure, and all the passion died out of his face. At the same moment the loud, harsh peal of the gate-bell announced the arrival of his expected ward.

I rose and laid aside my work as he came up to the fireplace, and leaned against the oaken mantelshelf with his head bent down towards the flames.

White and still as an icy mask, it looked, save for the glitter of the eyes. I felt that had I been the young lady, I should certainly not have thanked the fate that consigned me to so unprepossessing a guardian, and hastened to open the door.

CHAPTER II. GUARDIAN AND WARD.

I FOUND myself confronted by a slight, young figure, heavily cloaked. The light

fell on a beautiful, colourless face, with eyes singularly dark and mournful in contrast to their youth.

She came into the hall as I stepped aside, and looked round with a hesitating air, and yet, it struck me, with a sense of recognition of familiar things.

The doctor turned round, and for a second's space the two pair of eyes flashed mutual challenge at each other. It would be hard to say which face was the paler, for his was like a marble mask, and the girl's was, as I said before, startlingly colourless in contrast to her dark eyes, and the soft, brown hair which swept back from her brow in natural ripples and waves.

I did not wish to appear intrusive, so I returned to the door and assisted the flyman to bring in the shawls, and wraps, and luggage.

When I again entered, the girl was standing before the fire, holding out her small, ungloved hands to the warmth of the blaze. Her face betrayed no emotion; she glanced at me with serene indifference as I offered to show her her room. Then she turned towards her guardian:

"Will you excuse me, doctor?" she said; and her voice was very clear and sweet, but cold, and somewhat foreign in its accentuation of the words. "I had better call you 'Doctor,' I suppose? It is less formal. If you have no objection?"

"No," he said, looking at her curiously from under his heavy brows; "I have no objection."

"I am very tired," she said. "It is a long journey."

She began to unloosen her heavy cloak in a mechanical way. Her eyes wandered over the room, the furniture, the surroundings. Then her cloak fell off, and she tossed it carelessly aside, and raised one small hand and pushed back her hair, while her face took a bewildered, remembering look.

"It seems——" she said; "and yet it can't be. But it seems as if I had seen this room before—as if——"

The harsh laugh of Dr. Cornelius broke abruptly across the thread of her thoughts. I saw her start and shiver at the sound.

"Fancies, my dear young lady, fancies," he said. "Unless a dream has for once been prophetic."

"A dream!" she echoed; and her hand was passed to her eyes. She stood there motionless as a statue for a space of thirty seconds, then her hand dropped. "I suppose it was a dream," she said, and took

up her cloak, and made a sign to me to lead the way.

At the foot of the stairs I looked back. Dr. Cornelius was watching her; and if ever I saw hate and horror in a human face, it was there on his.

A sort of terror and foreboding came over me as I followed that slight girl's figure up the shallow, oaken stairs—alone in the world with a guardian who hated her! What tragedy lurked around that friendless young life? What had she ever done that this strange man should have the ruling of her fate?

I led the way into her room and lit the candles, and brought her warm water, and all the time she took no notice, but just stood there looking into the fire, seemingly deep in thoughts that had nothing to do with her present surroundings.

At last I spoke. Then she seemed to remember where she was, and turned her head and looked at me.

"This is a dreary place," she said. "Who are you? and what makes you live here?"

"My name," I said, "is Martha Drew. I came here as housekeeper and attendant to a young lady—yourself, miss. I only arrived yesterday."

"Is that all?" she said. "Then you know no more of the place or of my guardian than I do?"

"No, miss," I answered. "Dr. Cornelius advertised in an Exeter paper, and I replied to it, and he engaged me. That is all I know of him."

"He does not seem the sort of man one would ever quite—know," she said, hesitatingly, "and I don't think he likes me."

"You have only just met," I said. "How can you possibly tell?"

"Those are the things one feels," she said. "And I—I know directly when people like me, or are repelled." The beautiful young face softened, the firm lips grew tremulous. "Very few do like me," she went on presently. "They think me cold, and hard, and unsympathetic; but I am not. It is only—only—"

Again she broke off.

"I have been educated at a convent," she said. "Everything in my life has tended to repression. It is dreadful to feel perfectly friendless and alone; and oh——" with a shudder as she looked around her, "what am I to do here? It will be worse than the convent, I think. There were the girls and the sisters—human companionship—but now——"

"I will be your friend, my dear," I said, compassionately, "and it may not be so very dreary for you after all. There are other houses and places in the neighbourhood, and you may soon find acquaintances; besides," I added, cheerfully, "you are young and pretty. Depend on it, you will soon have some one finding that out and offering you a more congenial home than this."

She looked at me. A faint, very faint colour came into her white, clear skin.

"You mean that I might marry? Oh no, no."

"Why not?" I said, cheerfully. "More unlikely things have happened."

"Not to me," she cried, passionately, and her head drooped and was hidden in her clasped hands. "My life is different—it always has been—it always will be. Misfortune, pain, coldness, neglect—that is all it has had. There is something, some secret, some mystery about me. I don't know its nature; but I know it exists."

"Surely," I said, "that is fancy. Why should there be a mystery about you? Don't you know your history?"

"I have been told," she said, "that my mother was an evil, cruel woman—but she is dead—and my father, he died soon after—mad—so my guardian told me. He was his friend, and he promised to take charge of me, and I think I was only three or four years old when I was sent to the Convent at Saint Malo. But there was always something about me—a black shadow which marked me out as different to the other girls—the girls with happy homes, and fathers and mothers who loved them. No one has ever loved me."

The pathetic, hopeless ring of the closing words brought the tears to my eyes. Involuntarily I approached, and my arms were round the trembling figure.

"Oh, my dear," I cried, "I wish I could comfort you. I am not a lady born and bred as you are. I am only a woman who has had her share of life's sorrows and troubles—a childless, lonely woman. Don't be offended if I say that my heart went out to you in sympathy the moment I saw your face; and what honest hands and heart can do for you I promise to do. Say you believe me."

She lifted her head and looked at me, poor child, with her lovely dark eyes swimming in tears. Then suddenly she threw herself into my arms, sobbing as if her heart would break.

So we became friends, strange and un-

likely as it seemed, and after a short time we both grew accustomed to the dreary house on the moor and to the monotonous ordering of our days as they passed along.

Of the doctor we saw scarcely anything. He was either in his study, or driving out in the queer, crazy vehicle that old Zeal called the "chaise" to see patients, we supposed.

It was a very dull existence for a young girl, and I used to wonder how long she could possibly endure it.

It seemed a sin that a being so beautiful, so young, so richly gifted, should be buried alive in this fashion; and yet, as time went on, it struck me that Dr. Cornelius was too unpopular among his neighbours for any hope of social intercourse to lighten the dreariness of his young ward's life. She stood apart from all the common joys and interests of youth, as if ostracised by Fate, or crime; and a certain morbid and unhealthy state of mind was the inevitable result.

As the dreary autumn days passed on, and the first touch of winter fell cold as the drifting snow-flakes on the lonely moor, my heart ached to see how pale and silent she grew, and how listless and dreary were the moods from which I vainly tried to rouse her.

Often, I saw her guardian's eyes watching her with cold and critical speculation. He seldom spoke, and she was always depressed and reserved in his presence; nevertheless, I could see that the girl had for him a certain inexplicable attraction.

One evening, while the strange unsocial meal was going on, and I, as usual, was in attendance on them, I was startled to see the girl grow suddenly deathly white, and fall back in her chair. I sprang to her side, but the doctor was before me, and put me roughly away.

"She is only faint," he said, and I watched him uneasily as he felt the pulse and looked with calm, silent eyes into the girl's ghastly face.

Presently her eyes opened; there was fear and mortal terror in them as they met his cold gaze. Her lips moved. It seemed as if something against which she struggled vainly and terrifiedly was impelling her to speak.

"Why did you tie the handkerchief so tight?" she said. "And yet, she stirs—she moves—she is crossing the moor, now;—she— Good Heavens! she is coming here."

The ghastly terror of his face was some-

thing awful to see as he seized her by the shoulder and shook her roughly to and fro.

"Are you mad, girl, or dreaming?" he cried; but his voice was hoarse and shaking, and great drops of sweat were breaking out over his brow.

She closed her eyes once more, and I, unable to bear the horror of the scene, came forward again and loosed her dress at the throat, and dashed water on her face. He did not interfere this time, only stood aside and watched. Presently she recovered, and sat up with a start and a gasp for breath.

"Oh!" she cried in terror. "I felt so ill. I—I seemed dying with the shock, and horror, and agony. What was it?"

Involuntarily I glanced at the dark and lowering face; her eyes followed mine, and I felt her trembling as suddenly she turned and clung to me with the desperation of helplessness.

At the same moment there came a loud, long knocking at the outer gate, sounding strangely distinct in the silence of the wintry night.

I heard the shuffling steps of old Zeal as he left the kitchen and made his way across the stone passage.

It might have been a long or short time before he returned, and came into the hall and abruptly addressed his master.

"There be an accident, sir," he said. "Carriage overturned o' the moor. 'Tis snowing hard. May the travellers coom in and rest a bit, while they rights the horses!"

The doctor muttered something neither hospitable nor complimentary, then stalked off to his study, and we heard him lock himself in.

I took the responsibility of deciding the question on myself.

"Of course," I said to Zeal. "Bring them in. It is a terrible night to be out on those wild moors."

He went away, and I turned again to my young lady.

"Do you feel right again, my dear?" I asked her. "Hadn't you better go to bed?"

"Oh no!" she cried, almost wildly. "I feel as if I could never sleep again—never, never! Oh, Martha"—she caught her breath, and her hand suddenly closed on mine—"do you know," she said, "what day of the month this is?"

"Not exactly," I answered. "You see, my dear, we never see a newspaper, and

neither you nor I get any letters. I know 'tis December—some time, but I can't tell you the precise date."

"It is the twenty-fourth," she said; and her face grew strangely wistful. She rose from the table and moved across to the fire. "The twenty-fourth," she repeated, mechanically. "Christmas Eve. What a Christmas Eve, Martha!"

I said nothing. I went over to the door and looked out at the dark night, and the drifting snow.

Dark figures were approaching over the snow-covered path. I saw one carrying a lantern; its feeble light cut a faint, zig-zag line amidst the gloom. Then I drew aside and waited, as old Zeal, and another man in postilion's dress, supported, across our inhospitable threshold, the feeble, faltering steps of a woman.

CHAPTER III. A CONFESSION.

A WOMAN? Yes, only a woman. Naturally, it ought to have been a man, and a young man, and a handsome man, made doubly interesting by reason of the accident which had left him at our doors.

Then there would have been the elements of a romance, and he and my dear Miss Pearl would in all probability have fallen in love with each other, with the usual results; but this is only a matter-of-fact story and not a romance, and so I can only truthfully relate what happened on that dismal Christmas Eve; the first, and, thank Heaven! the last, I spent in the service of Dr. Cornelius. They supported the traveller in, and assisted her to a seat by the fire. As Miss Pearl came forward and put aside the heavy veil from her face I saw that she was quite a middle-aged woman; her dark hair was streaked with grey; her face was lined and haggard, and now ghastly pale from the fright and shock of the accident.

She sat down. "I am not hurt," she said, faintly. "Only bruised and shaken."

She sank back, and her eyes closed. I brought her some hot brandy and water as quickly as I could, and then the colour came to her face and lips, and she seemed to revive. Miss Pearl knelt by her side and chafed her cold hands. They were small and white as those of my young lady herself. Presently she sat erect, and the heavy cloak fell off her shoulders, and she looked around her at the hall and its occupants.

I was watching her face when I saw the most ghastly terror and dread leap as it were into one expression of recognition.

She started to her feet, and her hands clasped themselves in shuddering horror. "Great Heaven!" she cried, in a low, suffocated voice. "Who has brought me here? Who are you?"

I was too startled to move or reply. Miss Pearl rose to her feet and gazed wonderingly at the terrified face.

"It was an accident, dear madam," she said, gently. "Don't you remember?"

"Remember!" that was all she said in a faint, suppressed whisper; but, oh, the fearful peal of wild and mocking laughter that left her pale lips. Never had I heard such sounds. Never—I pray Heaven—may I never hear such sounds again!

She covered her face suddenly with her hands as if to shut out some hateful sight. "After all these years," she moaned. "After—all—these years——" then she turned almost fiercely to the trembling girl by her side.

"Who are you?" she asked again. "What home have they given you?"

The girl shrank back. As for me, I began to think the woman was mad, and to wish heartily for the return of old Zeal or the postilion.

But suddenly she seemed to collect herself and grow calm.

"I have startled you," she said. "Indeed, I was startled myself. I knew this place long, long ago, when your mother lived here. You are so like her, child, and your face brings her back to me so clearly. Where—where is your father?"

Her voice had dropped to a whisper. She looked round fearfully as if expecting some new shock or surprise.

"My father," answered the girl, mournfully; "oh, he is dead, many, many years ago. I live here with my guardian."

"And your mother?" cried the woman, stormily, between her panting breaths; "what of her? What did they tell you of her?—quick, child—answer me for Heaven's sake!"

"My mother," faltered the girl. "I know nothing of her, save that she died when I was only a little child."

"When you were—only—a little child." Between the broken pause, the echoed words, she sobbed, yet scarcely seemed to know what caught her breath and made her bosom heave beneath the close, black gown she wore. "They told you right," she said, "she died—to you."

"What do you mean?" cried the girl, suddenly. "You knew her, you say. Is it not true she died?"

"As you count death—no. But she sinned. She left you and her home. . . . It was not right, and man's laws are hard; but only your mother knew what shame, and agony, and misery drove her forth at last, resolved to seek the shelter and protection of the only love the world had ever held for her. But her life has been one long, long penance; and now she is a broken-hearted woman with no one to care for her in all the wide earth—"

She stopped abruptly, for the face before her was alive with glow, and colour, and earnestness, and the girl's eager hands were clasping hers in desperate entreaty.

"Oh! If you know her," she cried, "take me to her—tell her that her child will not forsake her. . . . I, too, am alone, and wretched, and unhappy; I have known no love, not in all my life; but a mother—oh, she cannot change—she must care for me, despite these cold blank years. What do I care for—sin! A mother has no sin in her child's eyes, if only she loves her."

Suddenly, without word or warning, the woman fell on her knees, her frame rent and racked by heavy sobs. "Oh, say that again," she cried; "say it again—and I will bless you for those words every hour I live!"

"You!" cried the girl, and looked down in sudden amaze at the kneeling figure. Then as if by instinct some knowledge of the truth flashed clear as spoken words before her. She stooped and flung her warm young arms around the prostrate form, and drew her up to her own height again, and there, holding her locked and prisoned in that close embrace, looked with burning, eager eyes into the upraised face. "Mother—" she whispered half doubtingly, then with certainty and conviction in her trembling voice as she saw the face before her flush, and pale, and the whole figure tremble with passionate agitation:

"Mother, mother, mother, it is you—you yourself! No, don't speak. I know—I know. Oh the sweetness of that word! How often I have said it to the silence and the darkness; but now it is real, it is you. . . ." She kissed her on the brow, the eyes, the sad, sweet mouth, so like her own; but the woman's heavy sobs were all the response to the passionate caresses and the loving words.

"You must not love me, child," she moaned, in bitter self-reproach. "I am not worth it. My own act parted us. Think that I forsook you in your helplessness, your infancy; I—who bore you."

"You have come back," cried the girl in triumph. "I care for nothing else."

The woman drew herself away with sudden, proud resolve. "You must listen to me," she said. "You shall hear my story before you decide."

"I cannot decide to love you," cried the girl, with a low, happy little laugh, "for I do that already, and I don't wish to hear your story. It can make no difference—now."

"Every word you speak is like a knife that stabs me," cried the woman. "But you must listen. I must speak—and then—"

"Then," said the girl, gravely and gently, "I will put your arm in mine, and together we will face the world and live out our lives, for no human law can possibly have power to part a mother from her child."

"Such a mother as I—yes!" moaned the stricken creature. "I never loved your father. He was cruel, cold, suspicious, violent. My life was a daily and hourly torture, until, when I was most tired and most weak, Fate offered me a means of escape."

Her voice broke, a shamed, hot flush crept up to her brow.

"I—I cannot tell you more," she said; "how mad I was—and how weak; but at last I took the desperate resolve to leave my home—and you. I thought my husband had no suspicion. I never knew how he had plotted, and planned, and watched. He dogged my steps; he found me before I had left home an hour, and—when I saw his face, I knew there was madness in his blood—the madness that makes of men murderers. Oh! don't look so sorrowful, my child. I deserved it. He left me for dead—strangled on yonder moor, this very night fifteen years ago."

The girl shuddered; her hands clasped themselves together.

"Oh!" she cried, in a strange stifled whisper, "my dream, my dream. The woman I saw with the handkerchief knotted round her throat!"

"It—it was not tight enough," said the woman, shuddering, "and I recovered and got away in the darkness of the night. But the shock had sobered and saved me. I had stood face to face with death; it helped me to face once more the battle of life. I hid myself; I dared not let a living creature know my name. I have worked, and toiled, and suffered. Good Heaven, how I have suffered!"

"But how came you here to-night?" cried the girl, wonderingly.

"It was an accident, or fate," said the sad, despairing woman. "I never knew we had lost the road. I was on my way to Launceston."

"I bless fate," cried the girl, passionately, as her warm young arms went round the drooping figure; "and we will leave this place, you and I, mother. You shall not be lonely any more. Martha"—and she turned to me—"Martha, you must help us. We will go at once—to-night. I mean it, mother. I am not going to trust her out of my sight for one single moment; and you must help us, Martha."

"Yes, miss," I answered. "Do you really mean to leave here to-night?" I went on anxiously. "It is so cold, and snowing hard, and you are a long, long way from the nearest town."

"I don't care," cried the girl, determinedly. "I will not stop here another night. I feel I must go. You don't mind, mother, do you? And to-morrow, when I am at a safe distance, I will just write a note to tell Dr. Cornelius—"

A low, horrified cry cut short her words. The ghastly fear of the face before her was something to shudder at.

"What name did you say?" she panted.

"Dr. Cornelius. That is my guardian's name," said Pearl, slowly and falteringly.

The woman sank back into the chair trembling, and white as death. "Your guardian—"

She hid her face in her hands, and her figure swayed like a breaking reed.

"He told you that?" she cried. "Oh, child—child—and you never guessed—you never questioned."

"What?" half sobbed the girl, as she threw herself down and clasped the knees that trembled so visibly. "Mother—you terrify me. What is it? Surely no new misfortune?"

"He is your father. He was—my husband."

A low, faint cry came from the girl's pale lips. Then suddenly she started and sprang upright; her hand pressed to her heart; the colour coming and going in her white, terrified face. "Oh," she cried. "He is coming, mother. He must not see you; he must not know—he will kill you. I know it. I feel it."

"And I know it too," cried the woman, as she rose and stood there calm and erect now as a statue of despair. "Let us go at

once," she whispered. "The carriage is there. Fate may befriend us. Come, my child, come."

"Yes, go for Heaven's sake," I cried. "Tell the man to drive to Moorhurst, Miss Pearl. They will take you in. The doctor won't know but what you're in the house, and to-morrow you can get on to Exeter. I will send your clothes."

I snatched up a shawl of my own that hung on a peg near the door and threw it over the girl, and with frenzied haste I almost pushed them out into the porch.

The outer gate was open. I saw the gleam of the carriage lamps on the white snow, and I heard the voices of old Zeal and the driver in the cold, clear air.

The snow had ceased. The two trembling figures, arm-in-arm, crept like frightened criminals through the shadows of the dreary garden. Then softly I closed the door and went within, and found myself face to face with Dr. Cornelius.

There was a look in his eyes I did not like, that I had never seen before. Something furtive, cruel, murderous, I thought in the agitation and fear of that moment.

"Who has been here?" he cried, sharply, as he looked around. "Why are you so pale, woman, and where is my ward?"

"Miss Pearl has gone to bed," I faltered.

"That be a lie," said a voice behind me.

"Miss be in chaise yonder with the lady who was here. Didn't I see her face and hear her voice, too, as she stepped in? 'Don't be afeard, mother,' she says. That was just it. 'Don't be afeard, mother.'"

Like a madman the doctor sprang at the old man's throat, and shook him like a sapling in his grasp.

"Mother—she has no mother!" he shrieked. "She is dead, I tell you—dead. I killed her myself with these very hands."

Then suddenly his grasp relaxed.

"The handkerchief," he whispered, and looked from side to side with a stealthy, frightened glare in his glittering eyes. "It was not knotted tight enough, she said. One knot more—only one knot more!"

Then, as he stood there erect and listening, I heard the sharp crack of the postillion's whip, the loud shout to the starting horses. As if that sound had galvanised the man before me into life and action, he started, and sprang to the door.

"They have tricked me," he cried. "She devils—fiends—they have tricked me!"

And it seemed to me, in my terror, that there was murder in his face, as he rushed out into the black and bitter night.

CHAPTER IV. THE TRAGEDY.

SHALL I ever forget, as long as I live, the horrors of that Christmas Eve?

I sat there by the fire alone, in that lonely house, for the old man had rushed out after his master. After a time the wind began to rise, and I heard the snow and sleet driven in fierce splashes against the window-panes.

The doors creaked, the fall of the wood-ash made me start and shiver, it sounded so loud in the stillness of the house. Midnight passed; still no one returned.

At last I rose. I could bear the silence and inaction no longer. I went to the porch and looked out on the dreary scene. The snow-flakes were whirling and twisting in the strong blasts; above, the clouds were rent and gashed as if by sudden stabs that showed a sheet of blue, or a glimmering star, and then closed fiercely again on the momentary brightness.

At last I heard steps—sounds. I rushed down to the gate. I saw a gaunt figure, white with snow, staggering along beneath the weight of some heavy burden. I did not shriek or cry; I seemed to hear my own voice speaking, without any consciousness of why I spoke.

"What has happened? Who is that?"

The man pushed me roughly aside, and stumbled up the pathway, and I followed.

There, in the lighted hall, I saw the figure in his arms—a woman's figure. The head was hanging over his arm; the loosened hair, half dusk, half grey, fell in rich disorder around the ghastly features.

The man laid her gently down before the fire, and then turned and looked at me.

It was old Zeal. He did not speak—only pointed downwards, and as I stooped to look, I saw on the white, bare throat the marks of strong and murderous fingers.

"She be dead," said the old man—"dead! No need to do naught for her. I knew he was mad. He's had his bad fits afore, but not raving, like he was to-night. She were a fule to come here."

"How did it happen?" I cried, as I

knelt down, and gently closed the staring eyes, and smoothed back the disordered hair from the marble face, that was so like, yet so unlike, Miss Pearl's.

"Maister, he flew after t'chaise; 'twere far on the moor, but he caught it oop, and leaped on the step. As I coom'd oop I heard young miss shriek; but he must have struck her, for there she lay, white and still, on the seat. Then he seized this one and dragged her out. 'Twas all over in a moment like. I coom'd up, and she—she lay there in the snow as you see her, and maister, he stood over and gaped, and mowed, and tossed his arms; and postilion, he started off as if the devil were arter him; and when maister see me, he started off running, too, and I—I just picked oop corpse. And there we be."

I said nothing. What could I say! The tragedies of life are soon over; it is only the consequences that are long-lived.

What could it matter to the poor soul lying there before what had once been her own hearth, that her murderer had been caught in the grey Christmas dawn, seeing that that murderer was only a raving maniac, and could never answer to human justice for the heart he had broken, or the life he had destroyed?

And Pearl! Well, thank Heaven that long before she had recovered from the long and dangerous illness through which I nursed her, the horrible records of that Christmas Eve had had their brief day of publicity, and were over and done with.

It all happened many years ago, and my dear young lady is now a happy wife and mother, with no deeper shadow on her life than the memory of the mother whom she only knew to lose.

Maybe that tragic fate, and that sad history had its lesson for her, for in the school of Fate are many classes, and it is not given to all to learn in the same way.

It may be. I am not a philosopher. Let those who are decide the question, or explain the apparent chance that brought Miss Pearl and myself together under the roof of Dr. Cornelius.

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So many Volumes are now comprised in the current Series of ALL THE YEAR ROUND, that I have deemed it expedient, for the convenience of its readers, to commence with January, 1889, a New Series of the Journal.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

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THE STORY OF HER VICTORY.

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CALENDAR FOR 1889.

THE STORY OF HER VICTORY.

CHAPTER I.

A YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL.

It was late September, and a broad full-moon shone over meadow and moorland, and threw a pallid glow upon the face of the grey-limestone cliffs that stretched along the coast, with their dark fissures and gloomy caves frilled by the wild North Sea. But the sea was placid enough this night, and the moon cast a path of gold across it as the tide murmured softly upon the narrow rim of shingle, and swept into the little creek—a mere gap in the great wall of cliff, where the roofs of the fisher-folk glimmered in the moonlight, and where a clump of masts and sails appeared over the rugged headland.

Above the fishing village the valley opened out into a broad sweep of pasture and park-land, at the head of which stood a stately old mansion, known as Hazlewood; and about the house, with its terraces, gardens, and noble avenues, gathered a dark ring of moors and wild hills. For any benighted on the hills around, the lights of Hazlewood formed a cheering landmark; lights that were a sea-mark, and that shone cheerfully into the eyes of fishermen as they cast their nets into the deep.

On this particular night the mansion was ablaze with light from basement to attic, and a dusky glow pervaded the terraces and gardens, and the dark boaky recesses of the park. For this was the eve of the birthday and coming-of-age of Miss Hazlewood, known to all the country-folk as "bonnie Kate." According to everybody's idea of right and justice, Kate Hazlewood should have then come into full possession of Hazlewood and all its belongings; but things had been ordered differently. Her father, the late Sir John Hazlewood, had married, late in life, a young and handsome wife, and this step-mother of Kate's now held the property for her life, or during her widowhood, so that Kate's succession seemed a distant and doubtful matter.

Since Sir John's death, which had occurred a couple of years ago, little had been seen of the Hazlewoods in their own county. Lady Hazlewood's health required a warmer climate, and Kate had accompanied her stepmother to Italy and the Riviera. But this summer they had returned to Hazlewood, and then, to every one's surprise, it was announced that Kate was engaged to her cousin, Hector Hazlewood, who was generally known as Baron Hector, his father having acquired that title in the course of his dealings as a financier. People were surprised, because it was generally known that a strong

attachment had existed between Kate and young Ronald Carr. Ronald was only a lieutenant in the navy, and the son of the Rector of Blackness, a pariah about twenty miles across, of which Hazlewood formed one of the townships. But he was, or rather had been, the favourite nephew of Admiral Vicary Carr, of Carrholme, who, owing to the discovery of a great bed of ironstone on his estate, had become one of the richest men in the district.

Sir John and Admiral Carr were great allies, and it was understood that the two elders had put their heads together, and agreed to provide handsomely for the young people. But after Sir John's death the aspect of affairs changed altogether. Vicary Carr had intimated to his nephew that he disapproved altogether of his attachment to Miss Hazlewood; and when Ronald declined to give her up, he declared that he would cut him off from his affections, and, what was more serious, out of his will. Something had occurred, too, to prejudice Miss Hazlewood against her lover. Ronald's professional duties kept him apart from her, and he had no opportunity of explaining any misunderstanding. Thus the news of her engagement to the Baron came upon him as a terrible shock.

For many generations the Hazlewoods and the Carrs had been the ruling families in their part of the county. The cadets of the House of Hazlewood had always gone into the army. Sir John had served with distinction in the Crimea and in India. The younger Carrs all went into the navy. Sir Henry Carr, Vicary's younger brother, was a distinguished naval administrator. When the news of Kate's engagement was known at Carrholme, Ronald was serving in the China station. Vicary insisted with his brother that the young man should be brought home, and appointed to an independent command. He was forthwith gazetted to the gunboat *Widgeon*, then engaged in looking after the fishing fleet in the North Sea. It was a sudden change from the spicy breezes of the Eastern seas to the rough blustering gales of the North. But Ronald was delighted at the transfer. He knew every inlet and headland along the coast, and all were dear to him for old times' sake. And then there was the chance that sooner or later he might meet Kate Hazlewood face to face, before she had irrevocably linked her lot with another. All the more pleased was he when he picked out from the naval barracks at Sheerness

the seaman who had been captain's Coxswain on board his former ship, the *Rajah*, and who had been invalided home from a wound received in an encounter with pirates, and when he had saved Ronald's life, as may be hereafter told.* Ronald got Broek his rating as petty officer on board the *Widgeon*. The two young men were of the same "pays;" they were both natives of that same cliffland, along whose coasts they were now cruising; and their lives and fortunes seemed curiously and fraternally intermingled.

It was on this very night when the lights were shining bright from Hazlewood, and sparkled upon the crests of the gentle undulations of the quiet sea, that the *Widgeon* was beating slowly up under steam against the tide, and came within range of the cheerful rays of the festal lamps. The boat had nothing particular to do this night. She was cruising about, taking under her care the boats of the fishing fleet that could be seen like so many dark shadows, gliding here and there, or shining ghostly white in the moonlight; their dark sides lit up every now and then by a phosphorescent gleam as nets were shot, or a draught of fish was taken on board.

To pounce upon any Frenchman, or Dutchman, who might be shooting his nets within the prescribed distance from the shore, was one of the duties of the British gunboat. But there were no foreign craft upon the fishing ground, and the English boats were all busily employed in perfect amity. A steamer's lights were seen in the distance coming along at a great pace, her steam-whistle hooting dolefully over the sea. As she approached the gunboat hailed her, for evidently she was not one of the English coasting craft so common in these waters. She was a handsome craft, taut and trim, and the smart appearance of her seamen in crimson caps and braided jackets, seemed to show that she was some private yacht. She hoisted Russian colours just visible in the twilight, and seemed inclined to pass without acknowledging the hail from the gunboat, which was repeated more peremptorily. "The Cossack, private yacht—Baron Hazlewood. Who are you?" was replied, in excellent English. But the notification of the names of gunboat and commander, seemed to cause a slight sensation on board. A man in evening

* See "The Lieutenant's Story," page 37.

dress sprang to the bridge of the yacht, and gazed intently at the gunboat, which was close alongside. Her commander returned the glance, and the eyes of the two men were riveted on each other for a moment; then they exchanged greetings with grim courtesy, and the yacht passed on at full speed while the gunboat steamed slowly on her course. And as soon as the boat came within soundings of the coast, the lieutenant ordered the anchor to be cleared; and presently the rattle of the chain cable was followed by the roar of escaping steam, and the boat swinging round to her moorings, rested placid and motionless on the tide.

Brightly shone the lights of Hazlewood over the sea. And when all was still the sound of joyous music crept softly over the waters. You might have fancied that you heard the beat of the dancers' feet as the strains of a gay waltz fell lightly on the ear. The sailors whistled a soft accompaniment, and a couple of youngsters, taking each other by the waist, pirouetted gaily about in the limited space at their disposal. Lieutenant Carr, leaning on the taffrail, gazed and listened in melancholy abstraction. Just two years ago he had danced with Kate Hazlewood at her birthday party; they had lingered together in the gardens. There had been words of love, a kiss, or, perhaps, a dozen, who can tell? Her head had rested on his shoulder; for one sweet minute her beautiful eyes had been raised to his with the light of love shining from their soft depths. It maddened him now to think of these things, and to know that she was lost to him.

As Ronald scanned the coast with wistful eyes, another light sprang into existence; a red and lurid light high above the cheerful brightness of Hazlewood; a ruddy tongue of flame that, here and there, caught the frothing crest of a wave and tinged it with a blood-red hue.

"Where away is that light yonder, Brook?" asked Ronald, as he turned to his subordinate, who had just made his appearance on deck.

"It looks like a bonfire on the Topping, sir," replied Gunner Brook; "but I never knew of any one building a fire there. But I've heard my mother talk of fires being seen there; fires that were never built by mortal hands; but then, you know, she is always talking about such kind of fables."

In fact, Philip's mother had the reputation among the country-folk of being not

altogether cannie. She dreamt dreams and saw visions; she read the stars, and was said to be versed in all the mystic lore of witchcraft.

"I have heard mother say," continued Brook in a hushed voice, "that a fire on the Topping meant misfortune to the Hazlewoods. They say that there was a witch burnt there ages ago, and that Hazlewood supplied the faggots, and that the poor old woman cursed the house and all that should issue from it."

"That must be worn out by this time, I should think," replied the lieutenant sceptically.

"May be so," rejoined the gunner, "but I've heard of the big fire that was seen there—ah, it's thirty-three years ago now—all the country was talking about it. And then came news that on the very day, a great battle had been fought in the Crimea."

"It was a fifth of November bonfire, I expect. Inkermann was fought on that day."

"No, sir; it was the twentieth of September," replied the seaman, firmly; "and there was no talk of bonfires then; and it was the battle of the Alma that was fought, and Colonel Hazlewood, of the Guards, was killed at the head of his regiment, and Captain George Hazlewood, of the Royal Fusiliers, was killed too. The old squire never rallied from the shock, and that was how Sir John—he was in the Fusiliers too—came into the property."

"Well, that was good luck for him, anyhow," said the lieutenant, lightly.

"I don't know, sir," rejoined Philip Brook, gravely. "I don't think he was a happy man; and then look at his children, fine sons and handsome daughters, and all cut off—only one son reached the age of twenty-one years, and he died soon after—all cut off—all but Miss Kate. Perhaps you'll say, sir, that's lucky for her?"

"No, by Heaven," said the lieutenant, hastily and bitterly, and he left the side of the ship and took a hasty stride or two along the deck. No, if Kate had not been the heiress of Hazlewood, there would have been no obstacles in the way of winning her. There would have been no miserable intrigue to rob him of her love, and Kate would have been in no danger from that scheming scoundrel who was to marry her. And then a great longing arose in his heart to see her once more, to assure himself that she was acting

of her own free will, and not under the influence of some hideous compulsion. The certainty that she had ceased to care for him would be better than this miserable doubt that now possessed him. And she was so near! The strains of the distant music seemed to take her voice and bid him come to her. The red flame from the hill-top seemed to beckon him: "She is in danger, misfortune threatens her; if you love her, come and help her."

Meantime the fête at Hazlewood went on merrily, with all kinds of enjoyments for young and old. The grounds were thrown open to all the neighbourhood. The great dining-room had been cleared for dancing, and a choral society from one of the neighbouring towns, was giving an open-air concert in the grounds. Then there were refreshment tents scattered here and there, where all comers were hospitably entertained, and in one corner a gipsy woman—or an excellent imitation of one—was telling fortunes with great success, to judge from the laughter and merriment among the crowd about her. But the girl in whose honour was all the merry-making, where was she?

While the merry minstrelsy resounded through the house, and the floors vibrated to the footsteps of the dancers, Kate Hazlewood, in an attitude of utter despair, sat in the little drawing-room reserved for the ladies of the house, an open letter displayed in her listless hands. Two other female figures were grouped behind her who regarded her features with anxious solicitude. One was Lady Hazlewood, Kate's stepmother, who was still youthful and handsome, and might have been taken for Kate's elder sister. The other was still younger, and resembled Miss Hazlewood strangely in general appearance, although of a darker and more Oriental cast in features and complexion.

"My darling," Lady Hazlewood was saying in a tone of remonstrance, "as you are pledged to Hector, what possible difference can it make whether you marry him tomorrow or six months hence? And he has reason on his side. But wait till he comes in person. He will bring you round to his wishes, I feel convinced."

"Yes, there it is," said Kate, her dark eyes flashing fire. "I hate him, and yet I have to do his bidding. Oh, who will help me to escape from him! It is too horrible. I cannot, I will not marry him—and so soon."

"But for my sake," urged Lady Hazle-

wood, "for my sake and for the family honour—oh, don't anger him by any foolish opposition."

Certainly there was something about Baron Hector Hazlewood that made people in general hesitate to thwart him. He had forced his way to society and general recognition by an indomitable will and determination, aided but little by more amiable qualities. True that he was of the ancient house of Hazlewood, and, after Sir John's death, the only male representative of the family. But he belonged to the "good-for-nothing Hazlewoods," as his particular branch of the family tree had been designated by the world in general. His father, a cousin of Sir John's, had been in the diplomatic service at Constantinople at the time of the Crimean War. He was something more than suspected of betraying diplomatic secrets to the enemy, and he certainly departed suddenly from the scene of his mission, and took up his residence on the Russian side of the Black Sea. There he married a handsome Greek girl by whom he had two children, Hector and Irene. His marriage brought him into relationship with sundry Greek merchants trading in the Black Sea, and he eventually became a contractor on a large scale for the supply of the Russian army, and was dignified with sundry Russian decorations and the title of Baron. But eventually he came to financial disaster, and died almost insolvent.

When the girl Irene was a mere child, Sir John Hazlewood took compassion on her, and made provision for her education. She grew up handsome and fascinating, and some years after the death of his first wife, who had belonged to a Russian family of distinction, the middle-aged Baronet fell under the spell of his charming cousin, and made her the mistress of Hazlewood Park. Her brother Hector, however, never obtained a footing there. For some reason or other, perhaps only because brother and sister always quarrelled when together, Sir John had declined to receive him. As Hector was not of a forgiving disposition, it is probable that this slight upon him rankled in his mind. Anyhow, it increased the zest of his triumph when, after Sir John's death, the necessities of his sister brought Hazlewood, its present tenant, and the heiress of the future completely under his control.

When the Baron, at his sister's appeal, consented to look into her affairs, he found

that while she had, during the two years following her husband's death, contrived to spend considerably more than the revenues of the property, those revenues had been considerably diminished by Sir John's latest disposition of his affairs. True that he had provided that his widow, so long as she continued in her widowhood, should enjoy all the income of the estate. But then by a codicil Sir John had directed his chosen trustees to raise the sum of twenty thousand pounds, which was to be handed to his daughter on the day she came of age, for her sole use and disposal. In the event of his daughter's death before attaining the age of twenty-one years, the money was to be paid to Count Sarda, Sir John's brother-in-law, residing at Aloupka in the Crimea, to be by him disposed of to religious and charitable uses at his discretion.

The Baron thought carefully over these arrangements. They were natural enough, perhaps, in one like the deceased Baronet. Sir John would not withdraw his confidence from his wife, but he would make a separate provision for his daughter; and he had adroitly contrived that none of the "ne'er-do-weel" Hazlewoods should have any interest in her death. Another score against Sir John in the Baron's record, was this proof of the estimation in which he had been held.

When the Baron made the acquaintance of his cousin Kate, his plans at once took a definite form. He fell in love with her at once, fascinated by her beauty and her charm of manner. Fascinating, too, was the prospect of the twenty thousand pounds that would be hers at a date no longer distant, and then there was the reversion of Hazlewood in prospect. The Baron told himself that he might make a more brilliant marriage, but none so gratifying to his amour propre. He who had never been allowed to set foot within Hazlewood, would eventually be its master. He would be content to sink his pinchbeck title to become Hazlewood of Hazlewood. The twenty thousand pounds, too, that his cousin Sir John had taken such precautions to keep from him, would be his; and what fortunes might he not build up from the command of such a sum!

But, in spite of his many accomplishments, and a handsome person, the Baron failed to make an impression upon Kate Hazlewood. He sought for the cause, and found it in the fact that the young woman's

heart was preoccupied with the image of Ronald Carr. And although she liked the Baron well enough, and appreciated his efforts to make the time pass pleasantly in the continental resorts, of which he possessed the full "carte du pays," yet she did not suspect any serious purpose in his assiduous attentions.

The Baron saw that nothing could be done unless he could impair the understanding that clearly existed between the two lovers. This young Carr was far enough away, and if there had been any correspondence between the lovers it would not have been difficult to intercept it. But they did not correspond; some agreement to this effect had been extorted from the young people by friends on both sides. Kate was waiting patiently for her sailor lover, confident of his constancy and enduring affection. Those qualities, which are, perhaps, becoming rare on land, still flourish among sailors. Still Kate had news of Ronald pretty regularly, from one source or another. So much was evident to the Baron's acute perceptions. Her mien became somewhat anxious and preoccupied when the news was long delayed, and then she would all of a sudden recover her buoyancy of mind and become all that was charming and pleasant. Kate's honest affection was a shield that saved her from all the evil influences that might be brought to bear upon her.

Chance, however, suggested to Baron Hector a suitable instrument for his purpose. Among his Greek connections was a young girl, Bianca, Italian on the mother's side, whose parents had fallen upon evil days. The Baron had been kind to them in his way, and had been especially kind to Bianca. Thanks to his interference, she had received a good musical education. She was a good linguist also, although in other respects her attainments were but rudimentary. The Baron obtained for her temporary employment with English families in Rome, and now he introduced her to the Hazlewoods, who took a great interest in the clever, handsome girl.

Before long, Bianca was installed as friend and companion in the Hazlewood household. Kate treated her as a sister, and admitted her into full confidence. Bianca was faithful only to her Baron, who was for her a very demigod. For him she would have gone through fire and water, and she would have obeyed his commands even if they involved a baseness foreign to her nature.

"Find out for me," said the Baron, brusquely, one day, "how Miss Hazlewood gets news of her lover." Before long, Bianca handed a packet secretly to her patron.

"Here are his letters," she said, simply, and waited his further commands.

After all, the letters were a disappointment. They were not from Ronald, but from an artless young sailor, Philip Brook, who wrote to Kate as his foster-sister, and who evidently looked up to her with almost fraternal, nay, almost filial feelings. There were acknowledgements of gifts of money, of books, and other matters; of good advice, too; of scoldings sometimes, for Philip got into scrapes now and then, and always made full confession to his foster-sister.

"Devilish idyllic and nice!" said the Baron with a sneer, as he glanced through these school-boyish letters, for the young sailor was still but a boy in knowledge of the world.

But in these letters there was a good deal said about a certain "2nd luff"—allusions that puzzled the Baron not a little, till in one place he found substituted the name of Mr. Carr. That accounted for it all. Ronald Carr was second lieutenant in the same ship, and Kate was kept fully informed of all that happened to her lover.

"And now," said the Baron to Bianca, when he returned the packet of letters, "get me a sight of the next letter that comes, before Miss Hazlewood."

There was no great difficulty in this either, for Kate took no precautions about her letters; and, indeed, those she received from her "sailor laddie" all the world might have read. And early one morning Bianca brought him a letter to his hotel. The Hazlewoods had been out late the night before at some reception, and were not to be disturbed for letters or anything else. Hence this opportunity.

The Father of Evil must have been specially interested in the Baron's favour, for, as it happened, poor Philip's letter for once contained a piece of scandal:

"There has been a jolly row here. Luff has bolted with a girl, daughter of a rich merchant. It will all be hushed up, no doubt; and don't mention it when you write, for fellows look over sometimes."

Now Luff, in Philip's vernacular, was always the first lieutenant, and, no doubt, the scandal was on his account. But it was easy enough to insert a figure 2 before the word in Philip's usual manner, and then—to watch the result.

The result was apparent enough. Kate was cut to the heart. The arrow had gone home with almost fatal effect. If she would not condemn her lover unheard, at the same time she could not doubt but that Philip had written the truth. The base fraud was likely to prove even too effectual, for Kate seemed to fade and wither from that moment, till all her friends were seriously alarmed, and people began to recall the fate of all the other children—her brothers and sisters. And Kate's death would benefit nobody except that unknown Count in the Crimea, to whom, rather than to his own blood relation, Sir John had willed the reversion of the estate as well as of Kate's twenty thousand pounds.

The doctors summoned shook their heads, and said that the climate of Italy was too relaxing for her, and it would be better to take her back to her native air.

The prescription proved efficacious; or, perhaps, it was that Kate's natural spirit and vivacity reasserted themselves together with a girl's natural pride. The rôle of a deserted maiden was not one for Miss Hazlewood to play. The Baron was at hand, his tenderness and assiduity during her illness had been grateful to her feeling. Lady Hazlewood was continually sounding her brother's praises. The marriage would be an excellent family arrangement. All debts would be paid, and Lady Hazlewood would resign her interest in the estate to the Baron and Kate, in consideration of an annuity which would be paid whether or no Lady Hazlewood married again. That was the crux of the whole arrangement for Lady Hazlewood, who had already formed an attachment to a handsome young French artist whom she had met in Rome. At last Kate gave way; she would marry the Baron, but not now; a year hence. A lapse of time reduced to six months at Lady Hazlewood's earnest solicitation. Then, after the engagement had only lasted a month, during which time the Baron had been engaged abroad arranging his affairs, came a pressing demand that the marriage should be solemnised at once.

The Baron's ruse had answered admirably so far, but certain precautions were necessary to ensure its final success. No more letters must she receive from her foster-brother—lest she should be undeceived. And here the chance that inflicted a serious wound on Philip Brook, came to the Baron's aid, and the danger

was removed from his path. Elspeth Brook, Kate's foster-mother, with whom Miss Hazlewood was on the most affectionate terms, and who might have cleared up the misapprehension under which she suffered—Elspeth Brook had left her cottage on the moor in charge of a little blind girl, her servant, and had gone away on some secret expedition. Such occasional absences, lasting for six months or more, were not unusual on Elspeth's part. The result in this case was, that Kate had no one about her except those who were altogether in the Baron's interest. Ronald Carr was on the other side of the world; Philip Brook was lying wounded in some distant hospital; while Ronald's people, the Carrs, had quarrelled so bitterly with Lady Hazlewood, that they visited no longer at Hazlewood.

But it was a considerable shock to the Baron when he discovered, from the rencontre of his yacht with the gunboat *Widgeon*, that his rival was, in person, so near at hand. He had thought him safe in the Pacific for another year at least. But he was all the more confirmed in his resolution to force Miss Hazlewood into an immediate marriage. The twenty thousand pounds were indispensable to him, and any delay might bring the lieutenant on the scene, and seriously complicate the situation.

CHAPTER II.

THE SIBYL'S HOME.

THE lieutenant and Philip landed at the little harbour, whose entrance was marked by a feeble oil-lamp glimmering at the end of a rough jetty. The fisher-folk, such as were not at sea, had all gone to witness the festivities at Hazlewood. Not a soul saw the two young men disembark, or noticed them as they struck into the road that leads to the Hall. They reached the park, and passed from the shadow of over-arching trees into the full light of the illuminated grounds about the mansion.

"Wait for me here," said Ronald to his companion. "I will go to the house and demand to see Miss Hazlewood."

Ronald's demand, however, was met with courteous refusal. Lady Hazlewood herself came out to receive him.

"So sorry that Kate is a little out of sorts, and unable to exert herself as she wished. And, you know, she has to save herself for to-morrow—the wedding—you know," as Ronald gave her a puzzled

glance. "But she will appear for a few moments. When the Baron arrives—we expect him every moment—Kate will show herself with him at the drawing-room window for a short time to take a general leave of all her old friends."

"And where is she going?" gasped Ronald, quite overcome by the certainty of his misfortune.

"In the Baron's yacht to the Mediterranean. She will have anchored off Whitby by this time. And now will you find your way into the ball-room, and choose a partner? You won't want an introduction, I know, to any of our Yorkshire belles."

"Will you let Kate know I am here?" replied Ronald, disregarding altogether her suggestion. "I and Philip Brook."

"Oh, certainly," replied Lady Hazlewood, sweetly. "I will tell her myself."

In a few moments Lady Hazlewood returned.

"She is so sorry, poor girl! she would like to see you both. But where could she draw the line?"

Ronald turned on his heel, with something like an execration, and retired, baffled. He went to look for Philip, intending to go back to the ship. But Philip, whose feelings were less engaged in the matter, had wandered away in search of amusement; and when Ronald discovered him, he was in a remote corner of the grounds, and having his fortune told by a tall gipsy in a tartan shawl and tall conical hat.

"Look here, lieutenant," cried Philip in high glee, "here's the stunningest gipsy that ever I saw! She's told me everything that ever happened to me. And I'm to have a girl with—how many thousand pounds did you say, mother?"

"Never mind the figure, my dear," said the gipsy, laughing; "but here's a handsome gentleman with a lucky face. He shall have twenty thousand pounds for a portion, and the sweetest girl that ever was born."

Ronald looked straight into the gipsy's face, and then burst into a laugh. "Brook, you donkey, look at her again."

"Why, it's mother," said Philip, and gave the gipsy a hug that considerably disarranged her tall hat and false ringlets.

"Oh, hush!" said Mrs. Brook, for she it was, rearranging hastily her coiffure and placing one finger warningly to her lips. "Yes, my dears, it is Mother Elspeth, and I'm just on my way home from half round the world; but I'm bound to see Miss Kate, and there's many that would like to

stop me. But go your ways, you two marplots. They'll never bring out my Kate till you two are off the premises. Go to the cottage, Philip, and bide my coming, and if Mr. Carr will go too, he will be heartily welcome. And if he wants to see Miss Kate, he shall, if there were twenty Barons in the way."

"Come along, Mr. Carr," cried Philip, "mother will be as good as her word, never fear. But I say, mother," in a whisper, "were it you that raised the fire on the Topping?"

"What! is there a blaze on the Topping," said Elspeth in a tone of awe. "Oh, my poor Kate; I fear—I fear for thee. But, never mind, there's other Hazlewoods than thee in the house this night, and the ill-luck shall be for them, the Lord grant it, Amen." And Elspeth dropped upon her knees and raised her hands to the sky.

After a few moments' reflection, Ronald determined to follow Mrs. Brook's advice, and take refuge at the cottage for the night. And just as they reached the gates, a carriage and pair drove up, from which, meaning the carriage, appeared a grey, gaunt-looking head, which Ronald recognised as belonging to his uncle, Vicary Carr.

"Hi," said old Carr, recognising his nephew, "what are you doing ashore? You'll be dismissed your ship, sir. What am I doing here? What's my friend, Mr. Smith, doing here, you mean—Mr. Smith, of the North Cleveland Bank. He's got the money, not I—I tell everybody that. I don't want to be murdered in my bed. He don't mind, he's paid for it, ain't you, Smith?"

Admiral Carr jumped from the carriage and was followed by Mr. Smith, who carried very carefully a small black bag. "The Admiral will have his joke," said he, and smiled feebly.

"Well, I'm going to sleep in the enemy's camp to-night, Rony," said the Admiral, apart to his nephew. "I'm bound to be there, for I'm trustee under the will. Smith has got the coin; all Miss's portion. The Baron—faugh!—his lordship! thinks he's going to have it all. Perhaps he's mistaken. Rony, my boy, you are well out of the mess."

The Admiral made his way to the house with long, rapid strides, followed by Mr. Smith with the black bag. Hardly had they disappeared, when the road was lit up by the lamps of a four-horse coach, that came rattling along at full speed, and

making a sharp turn at the lodge gates, rolled smoothly along the avenue. Baron Hector was driving, and the coach was crammed inside and out by men in crimson caps and blue jackets—twenty or more of them. These were the crew of the yacht, no doubt; and what was more natural than for the Baron to bring them over to share in the festivities at Hazlewood? On the other hand, it might be said that Baron Hector was a cautious player, and did not choose to leave anything to chance.

Ronald and Philip breasted the hill together in the pure exhilarating air of the moors. The footpath led upwards and still upwards for a couple of miles, and descended into a little ravine where a large whitewashed cottage stood by the margin of a little brook, with a few trees and shrubs growing about it, and some signs of cultivation showing here and there. This was Elspeth Brook's little domain, which she had inherited from her ancestors, subject to a quit-rent of half-a-crown a year to Hazlewood. People said she was a lineal descendant of the old witch who was burnt on the Topping long ago, an assertion to which Elspeth said neither yea nor nay.

A cheerful light shone from the cottage window, and mingling with the babble of the stream, was the voice of one singing the lilt of some old border ballad.

"It is Lucy; she is always singing," said Philip, as he stood to listen for a moment. "Eh, it's pleasant to be home again, little woman," he said, as he burst into the cottage.

"Philip!" cried the girl in a glad voice. "Oh, I knew you were coming; and mother, too, she will not be far behind."

Besides the comfortable kitchen, with a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth, there was a capital room, which Sir John had fitted up for his own use when he was shooting on the moors, and adorned with various trophies from all parts of the world, as well as bookshelves well filled with volumes; and everything remained just as he had left it. But the air within was rather oppressive, and Ronald preferred the sweet, soft breeze outside.

"Come with me," said Philip, "and I will show you mother's best room."

He led the way to a little hillock that occupied the rising ground above the ravine. There was a circle of ancient stones, two or three of which, piled together at random, formed a comfortable seat, from which could be seen an almost

boundless extent of sea, and sky, and wild hill ranges.

The tongue of fire on the Topping had sunk down to a scarcely distinguishable glow of red light, but Hazlewood and its lights were clearly to be seen, and the sea stretched away till it mingled with the purple sky in the distance. There lay the Widgeon, peacefully becalmed, her anchor light shining like a star.

Ronald lighted a cigar, and, finding himself in the Druid's seat, scanned the scene about him—the multitude of stars shining serenely down from the purple sky, the moon now riding high in the heavens, the hill-tops, some wreathed in white mist, and others of a darker hue than even the purple sky, and the sea, with its scattered lights, that bounded the dim and indefinite horizon.

Before long, footsteps might have been heard, and the tall form of Elspeth seen slowly ascending the footpath. Philip gave a whistle, and his mother, instead of turning towards the cottage, followed the path to the Druid's circle.

"Well, I have seen her," said Elspeth, when she had recovered her breath; "I have seen my bonnie Kate. But eh! yon man's got a powerful hold of her. I doubt whether she can win through against him. But she's coming at sunrise to-morrow; she'll be here then to see her old mother. But you lads must get out of the way, for I've that to say to her and she to me that no other ears must listen to. And now get ye your suppers while I watch the stars; ay, and watch and pray that my lassie may win the victory."

CHAPTER III.

A SACRILEGIOUS DEED.

WHEN day dawned over sea and land—the dawn of the day that was to witness the marriage of Kate Hazlewood—that young woman awoke with a dazed consciousness of impending misfortune, that only deepened as she became thoroughly aroused. She remembered, too, her tryst with her foster-mother, and the thought inspired her with some faint hope of escape. She dressed hastily, and went out, making for a garden gate that led to a footpath to the moors. No one had now a right to question her movements, for she remembered, with an accession of confidence, that she had now attained her legal majority, and had a right to act for herself.

Nevertheless, she looked over her shoulder more than once, wondering if she would have the courage to face and defy Baron Hector, should he forbid her progress. But no one was stirring at such an early hour, and she reached the garden gate without interruption. But then she heard hasty footsteps, and found that Bianca was following her.

"Kate," said Bianca, coming up breathless, "let me go with you!"

There was something more than friendship upon Kate's part to poor friendless Bianca. She loved the girl for her beauty and her gifts, although sometimes the thought came over her that for all her caressing, endearing ways, she was like some wild animal—neither to be loved nor trusted.

"You shall come with me to the hill-top," said Kate, "and wait for me while I talk to Mother Elspeth."

"Oh, you are going to see the old Sibyl!" exclaimed Bianca. "Will you ask her to tell my fortune?"

Coming into the park they found a picturesque encampment under the trees. The crew of the Cossack had bivouacked there, and half-a-dozen of them jumped to their feet at the sound of the opening gate and scrutinised eagerly the two girls. Bianca spoke to them in her native language.

"It is all Greek to me," said Kate, smiling. "Speak French or Italian."

"They were only wishing us good luck," said Bianca.

The men threw themselves again on their blankets, watching the girls as they passed with bold, free glances, that made Miss Hazlewood shiver a little as she caught the glitter of their eyes. The next turn past a clump of trees revealed two other figures approaching through the morning mist.

"All the world is matinal this morning," murmured Bianca.

"It is my dear boy," said Kate, running to meet Philip, who was a little in advance. "Philip, are you really safe and sound?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all right, missie," replied Philip. "But I'm not rated as a boy. I've got my warrant now, thanks to our gallant commander. Perhaps you aren't acquainted with Commander Carr?" said Philip, mischievously.

Kate assumed her most dignified air as she bowed coldly to Ronald, who stood, cap in hand, looking wistfully towards her. But she was burning with curiosity, never-

theless, to hear what he had to say for himself; and what about that young woman at Hong Kong?

Thus it happened that the company sorted itself in pairs. Philip fell behind with Bianca, to whom the susceptible sailor had at once surrendered his boyish heart. Kate and Ronald, walking in front, exchanged mutual reproaches for awhile, and then discovered that neither was to blame. Kate had only given up Ronald when she had every reason to think he had proved unworthy, and Ronald, for his part, was able solemnly to aver that her image had constantly occupied his heart to the exclusion of any other girls at Hong Kong or any other part of the globe. It was delightful to Kate to hear all this; but when it was told, what difference did it make?

An unhappy mistake had been made, but the consequences were now irrevocable. Kate could not forget her pledged word, and then there were all the family arrangements dependent on her marriage with Baron Hector, who could have had nothing to do with the original misunderstanding. Ronald might urge what he pleased, but he could not move the girl's resolve. As they stood together on the brow of the hill, and bade each other what might be a last farewell, in full sight of old Hazlewood and the deep purple sea, a white wreath of smoke puffed out from the gunboat, and presently the echoes of a gruff report rolled from one hillside to another. It was a signal of recall. Something had happened that required the commander's presence on board. There was a hasty farewell, a sigh, a kiss, and Ronald was gone.

Kate left her companions on the brow of the hill, and descended quickly to her foster-mother's cottage. Here everything was swept and garnished, a bright fire burnt upon the hearth, and the blind girl was busily employed in the preparation of some savoury-smelling stew, of which Mother Elspeth insisted that Kate should partake before she entered upon the purpose of her visit.

"You'll want all your strength, my bairn, before the day is out, and it's ill to commence a great work fasting."

Mother Elspeth had meantime arranged the sitting-room with some eye to effect. A trophy of weapons, all bright and burnished, appeared at one end—of old-fashioned, smooth-bore, Russian muskets with bright barrels and powder-flasks

depending, and bullet-pouches, such as the grey-coated soldiers bore in the primitive times, as far as weapons of precision were concerned, of the Crimean War. There were cavalry sabres, too, and polished helmets, and beneath was a spirited crayon portrait of an infantry officer of the same remote period, with shako and gold-lace epaulettes, swallow-tailed coat, and crimson sash. On the opposite wall was a curious chart of the heavens, which seemed of Eastern origin, with cabalistic signs sprawling over it, and quaint figures of men and animals aligned upon the various constellations. Mother Elspeth's astrological lore was hardly of a scientific character. With judicial astrology she had probably little acquaintance; hers was the traditional lore of shepherds and of gipsies, handed down perhaps by word of mouth, from the days of the witches and warlocks of old times.

But the principal object in the room was an iron casket, curiously wrought and chased, which was placed upon an embroidered cushion, and to which Dame Elspeth brought her foster-child. "My dear bairn," she said, "thy father, on his death-bed, gave this casket into my keeping, to be handed to thee on this the day of thy birth. It is twenty-one years ago to-day since I took thee from the side of thy dead mother. There seemed to be a curse upon the house of Hazlewood, and none of thy brothers and sisters were spared to brighten the old house. And coming to love thee, Kate, as my own child, I speered often and often into the stars to know what was amiss, that it might be turned from thy pretty head. But there was always something that baffled me, as if some spell were at work that was too strong for me to cope with. And even now I cannot fathom it, though I have travelled far and wide to learn the secret. But there may be something in yonder case that may tell thee more than I know, and so I leave thee to it, for that was the promise I made."

Kate, a little fluttered with curiosity and not without trepidation, took the key of the casket from Mother Elspeth and opened it carefully. Within was a lamp as it seemed of pure gold, with suspension chains also of gold. The body of the lamp was curiously enamelled, and all round were empty sockets that had once, it was evident, been filled with precious stones. Beneath was an inscription in Greek and Hebrew characters—exquisitely

chased and curiously ornamented. Below the lamp was a letter addressed in characters which Kate recognised for her father's, to "my daughter Kate."

"My dear child," began the letter, "although I have not yet reached the limit of the allotted span of life, yet I feel my end approaching, and can no longer delay to make a confession of sin and sacrilege which have long burdened my conscience, and made my days unhappy. My narrative goes back to the date of the beginning of the Crimean War. I landed with the rest at Old Fort in the Crimea. I led my company into action at the battle of the Alma, and on the evening of the third or fourth day after that victory, I found myself with an outlying picket on the extreme left flank of the allied armies. Our march had been wild and hazardous; for we had abandoned our base, to seek a fresh one on the further side of the great fortified arsenal of Sebastopol. Towards the end of the day we had come in contact with a Russian force, which proved afterwards to be one of the retreating columns of the army we had defeated, shortly before. At the time, however, we were quite in the dark as to the meaning of our rencontre, and I, with a portion of my company, were hurried forward with instructions to push on and feel for the enemy, and not to rest till we had found him.

"As daylight faded away we found ourselves marching up a delightful little valley, watered by a stream that descended from wooded heights which formed cool and delightful vistas, while in the distance rose the peaks of distant mountains glowing in the pearly hues of sunset. But for aught we knew, these pleasant woodland slopes might be bristling with armed men. Halting my little force on the margin of the stream, I left them to prepare their evening meal while I advanced alone for a few hundred yards to reconnoitre the valley beyond. A little way in front opened out the ravine of a tributary stream, and here were limestone rocks all overgrown with creepers, and a broad, well-used bridle-path which I began cautiously to explore. The path brought me presently to a chapel crowned by a little dome, with its green roof and gilded cross. The building was of white marble, with polished and variegated columns of the same material. I entered; the place was empty, but bore traces of recent hasty evacuation. Pictures had been removed, hangings had been hastily snatched away, and everything

moveable that was of value, had been carried off. The gilt and fretted doors of the sanctuary were ajar. I peered within: the ornaments of the altar, and its silver-gilt plate were wanting; but overhead hung a beautiful lamp, which was still burning, and which seemed to have been overlooked in the hurry of departure.

"I do not know what possessed me at that moment. Perhaps I regarded the lamp as fair spoil of war. A few days of rough campaigning, with the heat and stress of battle and the familiar spectacle of death and destruction, tend to blunt the moral sense. The French Zouaves, too, were following in our track, and I felt sure that they would not scruple to appropriate anything that was left behind. I seized the lamp, extinguished it, and placed it carefully in my haversack. At that moment I felt a horrible sense of oppression, and a strange dizziness and murmuring in the ears. I staggered towards the open air, and then in the almost darkness of the building, I was suddenly seized by the throat by a powerful hand.

"I struck desperately out and the hilt of my sword descended heavily on the head of my assailant, and he rolled helplessly on the ground. At that moment I heard shots fired outside, and believing that my post was attacked, I darted out and ran in the direction of the firing. After all it was a false alarm—an advanced sentry had fired upon an advancing horseman, luckily without touching him, for he proved to be one of our staff-officers who had come with orders to withdraw to the main body. Lord Raglan had taken possession of the little land-locked harbour of Balaclava, and was in full communication with the fleet and transports.

"For a long time I thought no more of the sacred lamp that I had purloined. With the new and irksome duties attending the conduct of the siege, with the weary work of the trenches, varied only by an occasional brush with the enemy, any time I might have for reflection, was sufficiently occupied with the thought of home embarrassments. I was poor—I had been extravagant. If our army swore horribly in Flanders, it not only swore but gambled horribly during the Eastern campaign. I lost more money than I could pay, and I applied to my cousin Fred to help me. He was at that time at the Embassy at Constantinople—over head and ears in debt, but always ready to dip himself a little deeper. We had bills rolling

up in common, and by Greek or Jew, he could always manage to set another one going. Fred was always great in curios, and he was continually writing to me to send him objects of interest from the battle-field. I sent him a batch of things by one of ours who was invalided, and among them I placed the sacred lamp.

"Fred's next letter to me was of a most jubilant nature. He had raised plenty of money on our joint account, and he sent me Treasury bills for as much as I wanted. This increased facility in raising money I attributed to the chance I had of inheriting the Hazlewood estate from the death of my two cousins—of which you have often heard—at the battle of the Alma. All the same the estate was not entailed, and my crotchety uncle might leave it to whom he pleased.

"Well, if we got plenty of hard work and abundant chances of wounds and death, promotion was also rapid. I landed at Old Fort a penniless subaltern, I was Major when Inkermann was fought, and brought the regiment out of action. Then I was Colonel and C.B. My feelings in the meantime had altered a good deal. I had given up dicing and drinking, and had begun to admonish my own subs on the enormity of such courses. Soon after, in an unsuccessful assault on a Russian redoubt, I was desperately wounded and left for dead in the Russian lines. But happening to groan as their burying parties were at work, I was picked up and sent to a military hospital.

"When I came to a knowledge of things about me, I found myself the object of much kind attention from some Russian ladies, the wife and daughters of Count Sarda, who had a villa in the neighbourhood of Simpheropol, to which place I had been removed. Especially kind was the youngest daughter, Catherine. As I recovered a little she would come and read to me, and talk to me about home in the most engaging manner. After a time the Count had me removed to his own château. He knew England well, and had even visited my uncle at Hazlewood, and by his means my friends were informed of my safety.

"Catherine was devout without being bigoted. Resting so long within the shadow of death, I, too, had turned my thoughts towards heaven. With faltering voice, she had often read to me the offices of our Church. As I recovered, it was often my privilege to accompany her to the services

of her own, the Greek Church. A sacred sympathy united us; her influence aroused in me all that was best and highest in my nature.

"By the time I was fit for service, the war was practically at an end. News had come of my poor uncle's death, and that he had bequeathed Hazlewood to me, who was, indeed, his natural successor. Then I besought the Count for his daughter's hand. I was accepted; we were married; and we went to spend our honeymoon at the Count's more southern villa at Aloupka, a charming spot, sweet, retired, blissful.

"Shortly after our marriage, on one happy Sunday morning, my wife proposed that we should attend a neighbouring church within an easy distance of the villa. It was the Church of Saint Catherine, for which she felt a filial kind of affection. On the way—what a delightful way!—she told me the story of the church. How an Empress Catherine passing this way, her carriage rolled over into the stream, and she was only saved from destruction by the special interposition of her patron saint. For there was the church close at hand, and thus dedicated, and upon this little church the Empress lavished the choicest gifts. Chief of all was a magnificent lamp that had been one of the treasures of the Sultan, and that he had presented as a peace offering to the conquering Empress. The lamp, according to the tradition, had once hung before the Holy Sepulchra, ere it fell into the hands of the infidel. Enamelled with the choicest work of early Byzantine art, it was encrusted with jewels of price, and one vacant socket had been filled by the Empress with a ruby of immense value. Round the bowl of the lamp was an inscription in Greek and Hebrew characters, invoking a curse of the most terrible character on any who removed this lamp from the sanctuary. So potent was deemed this malediction, that when the alarm was given that the allied armies had landed in the Crimea, and that the forces of the great Czar had been routed, while the other treasures of the church were removed and hidden, nobody ventured to carry away the lamp; but one of the priests of the neighbouring convent volunteered to remain and defend the sacred vessel even with his life.

"'But,' continued my wife in a tone of scorn and indignation, 'there was found among the invaders some one base enough to violate the house of God, avaricious enough to steal the lamp from the altar,

cruel enough to murder its guardian on the very steps of the inmost sanctuary; but God's vengeance will follow him.'

"My daughter, I recognised everything at a glance: the church among the woods, the bridle-path that led into the valley where we had bivouacked. I was the man whom my wife had justly denounced as beyond the pale of human sympathy.

"You will say that I ought to have confessed, to have owned my evil deed, and sought to make atonement. I think so now; but then it was impossible. My wife would have shrunk from me as if I had been a leper; my name, my reputation would have sunk lower than those of the meanest thief. Was I called upon to be my own accuser—with my own hand to shatter every hope in life? I had not the courage to do it. The only practicable course was to maintain inviolable silence as to the whole affair. And this I have done. Till you read this confession, not a soul shares with me the shameful secret. Fred might have suspected it, but he is dead, and by my marriage with the second Lady Hazlewood I have come into possession of all his papers, and there is not a trace of it. But he has a son, Hector; beware of him.

"But as far as was in my power I tried to make amends. I could not restore the life I had destroyed. All through my own existence I have felt that I bore the mark of Cain upon me. But the lamp, I might perhaps recover that and secretly restore it.

"By this time my cousin Fred had made Constantinople too hot to hold him. But I traced him to Odessa, where he was trading among his Greek connections; and I questioned him as to the lamp. He acknowledged that he had sold the precious stones out of it for a large amount. Some of the money had gone in taking up bills that bore my signature as well as his own—other part had helped to establish him in business. No part of it was available just then. The body of the lamp—which was valuable as a rare antiquity above its intrinsic worth—he had pledged with a Jew in Constantinople, from whom I eventually recovered it.

"It was always in my mind to restore the lamp to the sanctuary in the same state as when I stole it; but many things interposed to turn me from my design. When your mother died—my poor Catherine—I thought that I had suffered all that could be suffered from the vials of wrath poured upon my head. But when

I saw you, dear Kate, growing up a beautiful image of your beautiful mother, I began to tremble lest you, too, should expiate your father's sin in untimely death. You have been preserved so far, and mainly through the love and care that my faithful friend Elspeth bestowed upon your early years.

"And now I lay this task upon you—to restore the lamp to its former splendour, and to deposit it secretly in the place whence I took it. The means are provided in the bequest of twenty thousand pounds, which you will receive on your twenty-first birthday. Till this is accomplished I feel that I shall never enter into my final rest.

"Not long ago your mother appeared to me in a vision, her face troubled, as it were, by mingled love and sorrow. 'The task is not for you,' she said, mournfully; 'the sacrilege must be atoned for by pure maiden hands.' She vanished; but her words remained engraved upon my mind, and I knew that my time would be short, and that I must leave the rest to you. I have no strength to write more.—Your loving FATHER."

Attached to the letter was a memorandum of practical instructions for her guidance, which Kate put by for future perusal. Then, having noted down the various names and places mentioned in her father's narrative, she carefully burnt the letter. Whatever might happen, her father's secret should be faithfully kept. But could she accept the task that was set before her?

"Yes, I accept it," said Kate, aloud, after a few moments' painful thought. "I undertake my father's debt, and will pay it!"

And she felt with joyous emotion that now, for the first time since she had come under the Baron's influence, she had attained a thorough freedom of volition. She no longer dreaded him, or felt her spirit overborne by his, while her eyes, unveiled, beheld the man in his real character—cruel, avaricious—an embodiment of lawless and destructive force.

It was well that her mind was thus braced and strengthened, and, indeed, she had need of all her powers. At that moment she heard a slight jarring sound from the casement, and there, framed in the window, and dark against the outer glow, was the bold, handsome head and massive shoulders of the Baron, who, leaning upon the window-sill, was looking at Kate with a laughing, mocking glance.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER THE CLIFFS AT WHITBY.

A DESPATCH from the Admiralty, which had been brought to the *Widgeon* by the coastguard, had caused the second in command to make signals for the recall of his chief. Complaints had been made of wilful damage done some nights ago to the nets and tackle of English boats by certain French fishermen. The matter was to come before a French court at Boulogne in the course of a few days. The *Widgeon* was to collect those English fishermen who could give evidence of the facts, some of whom were with the fishing fleet, while others were to be found at various parts along the coast; she was then to run across the Channel to Boulogne, and remain in that port till the fishing case had been heard.

There was nothing for it but to obey orders; and soon after her commander had gone on board, the *Widgeon's* anchor was weighed, and she steamed off to the northward, in which direction the greater part of the fishing fleet was now at work. The *Widgeon's* gunner, however, was left ashore; his commander had given him leave of absence for a few days.

The business of picking up the fishermen proved less troublesome than might have been expected. The men, by some mysterious understanding among each other, seemed to know that they were wanted, and came aboard without being sent for. But several men were on board a boat that had run into Whitby to refit, and the *Widgeon* came to an anchor outside the harbour, and Lieutenant Carr went ashore.

On a bright sunshiny morning Whitby seemed to be all white and sparkling, with its handsome pier and jetties, its tall light-houses, and its terraces climbing up the cliff, and massed upon its summit. In contrast was the old town, rugged and brown, and the dark mass of the lofty height crowned by the gloomy-looking old church, behind which stood "High Whitby's clustered pile," or such ragged remnants of its ruins as time and tempests had spared. Then there were the cheerful lines of shops, where Whitby jet was not to be passed over without notice; and in other matters as gay and showy as could be found in any seaside resort. And you looked over from the shops to the black fishing-cobles bobbing up and down in the tideway, and to the coasting steamer dis-

charging its cargo, and to one or two ancient-looking brigs, where something in the way of hauling or pulling was going on. Military music sounded from the heights, and mingled with the "heave ho!" of the sailors, just as a fragrant whiff of tar mingled every now and then with the essences and bouquets from the perfumer's shop.

Ronald was busy enough at Whitby, and had little time to think over his troubles. The fishing case had excited great interest in the town, and the commander of the gunboat was in great request among the notables of the place. Magistrates buttonholed him; the M.P. of the district had a word for his ear, and local reporters watched him up and down, and darted upon him, hoping to extract materials for paragraphs from his unguarded utterances. Then there were papers to be prepared, declarations to be made to this and that, and all kinds of official worries to be perpetrated.

As the day went on, the weather changed very much for the worse. The gentle westerly breeze was replaced by a searching wind from the north, which rose at times to a gale, and brought with it seething clouds and whirling storm, such as cast a gloom over everything. The sea rose too, and between wind and tide there was such a surf and fluster outside, that open boats were likely to fare badly in it. The gunboat had been pitching heavily at her anchors, and to ease the strain upon them she was now steaming slowly ahead. Another craft further out, which was, in fact, Baron Hector's yacht, the *Cossack*, was also having a lively time of it; sometimes half lost to sight in the trough of the sea, and again rolling about in the green waters, till she showed the lowest streak of her copper sheathing.

Ronald had been so taken up with his duties ashore, that he had scarcely had time to speculate as to what had happened at Hazlewood. It came with something like a shock upon him to see his uncle, the Admiral, drive in to the town, and deposit Mr. Smith at his bank; the black bag a matter of no consideration now, and Mr. Smith evidently much easier in his mind.

"Well, it's all over, Ronald," cried the Admiral, hailing his nephew from afar. "Baron and Baroness fairly spiced."

Ronald experienced the feeling of relief of a resolute man, quitted of the vain turmoil of hope and fear, and steadfast to endure the worst that can befall him.

But the Admiral beckoned to his nephew to follow him into a sitting-room of the hotel. "Ronald, my boy, it was lucky for you that we broke with the Hazlewoods. What do you think the little baggage has done now? Run away! The bride of an hour, and run away from her husband! And what's more," cried the Admiral, with an appreciative chuckle, "I'm dashed if I don't think she has carried off with her the twenty thousand pounds."

Even as the Admiral was speaking, a little crowd was gathered about a boarding opposite the hotel, where some one was posting a huge bill that was headed: "One thousand pounds reward," and announced that a daring robbery had been effected at Hazlewood House that afternoon. A casket had been stolen, containing golden ornaments and twenty notes of a thousand pounds each, the numbers of which were given below. A description followed of the supposed thieves—an elderly woman who had made her way into the grounds on the previous evening under the guise of a gipsy fortune-teller—with a tolerably faithful description of the personal appearance of Mother Elspeth, and a young man in the garb of a sailor, supposed to have deserted from one of her Majesty's ships. Not a word was said as to any other person who might be implicated in the disappearance of the casket.

"A clever move, by jingo," cried the Admiral, when he had mastered the contents of the bill. "The police will capture the whole party. Kate will be handed over to the Baron, and he will carry her off with the twenty thousand pounds, and the affair will be hushed up!"

At this moment one of the boat's crew from the Widgeon lounged up to the knot of people who were reading the bill, and began to pick out its contents for himself. The boat's crew that had been waiting for its commander all the day, had not been without hospitable entertainment from the townfolk of Whitby. It was made up of steady fellows, but the steadiest are not always proof against a constant succession of friendly pledgings. All that the seaman could gather of the contents of the bill was that in some way a comrade, who wore the Queen's uniform, was accused of a disgraceful theft. With an impulse of righteous indignation, the man seized a corner of the bill, ripped it from the wall, and trampled it under his feet. The crowd laughed and applauded, and there probably the incident would have ended. But just

then a four-horse coach drove up from Hazlewood, the Baron driving, his face as black as a thunder cloud, and the coach loaded with the foreign seamen of the Cossack. The Baron sprang from the coach box, beckoned to the bill-poster, who stood close by, open-mouthed, with his paste-box and sheaf of bills, and bade him replace the bill that had just been torn down. As soon as the wet sheet was once more displayed, the seaman tore it down again.

By this time more of the crew of the Widgeon had come up, and the seamen of the yacht had swarmed about the scene of contest. A blow was struck, knives and cutlasses gleamed in the air. There was a stampede of foot passengers and idlers. The alarm spread, shopkeepers rattled up their shutters, vehicles drew up at a safe distance, doors were barred and upper windows thrown open, with the heads and shoulders of curious gazers protruding everywhere.

Ronald had now at a couple of bounds reached the scene, and thrusting back the combatants on either side, at the imminent risk of his life, called to his men to stand together and face the excited group of foreign yachtsmen. For a civilised crew they were certainly a wild and fierce-looking company. There were Greeks among them, Italians, and Maltese, and others whose nationality it would be difficult to guess at. But there was some amount of discipline among them; and when the Baron—who had hitherto stood aloof with folded arms and viewed the fight with amused indifference—interfered with a gesture of authority, they drew back, panting and quivering with excitement.

"Get your men on board," cried Baron Hazlewood to the Captain of his yacht. "Hire a steam-tug, if you like; but get them on board."

The men filed off towards the harbour, some of them limping a little, and others tying up broken heads and muttering maledictions and curses.

"And now, commander," said the Baron, addressing Ronald, "a word with you, if you please."

The two walked up and down together, apparently in amicable converse, in front of the hotel. As the sounds of combat had abated and ceased, the town resumed its former tranquillity, shutters were taken down, windows deserted, vehicles moved on, and a strong body of police massed at one end of the quay ensured the continuance of peace.

"If you, my young friend, are Lieutenant Carr," said the Baron in an undertone, "you will understand that our quarrel cannot be decided in a street row. I believe that you are concerned in the abduction of my wife, and I give you fair warning, that if you meddle farther in the matter, I will kill you!"

"Baron," replied Ronald, with equal politeness, "I regret that the uniform I wear prevents me from caning you on the spot. I only hope that we may meet under more favourable circumstances ere long."

"A bientôt, then," said the Baron, raising his hat. "You shall hear from me shortly."

"The sooner the better," said Ronald, saluting politely.

"Ronald," cried the Admiral, who had witnessed the apparently amicable interview from the window of the hotel. "Ronald!" he repeated, severely, taking his nephew by the arm; "I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"What do you mean, uncle?"

"Why, that you'd have let that fellow crow over you like that."

"What would you have done, then, Admiral?"

"I should have applied at once for leave, and gone out with the fellow."

"And if leave had been refused?"

"I'd have resigned my commission."

"And if your resignation had not been accepted?"

"Why, dash it; I'd have deserted, sir. I'd have deserted, fought the man, and took my trial."

"That is just what I mean to do," said Ronald, calmly.

"What! leave the service—ruin your prospects! Think well of it, sir! You shan't have a penny from me if you do!" The Admiral took a short turn and darted up the steps of the hotel. "Dash it," he muttered, as he went. "If he smashes that dashed Baron, I'll leave him Carrholme and every sixpence I'm worth."

There was something of a crowd at the pierhead to witness the departure of the foreign seamen. There were two boat-loads of them, and the boats were in tow of a powerful tug to carry them through the current, that went like a mill-stream through the harbour mouth, and the wild surf that dashed over the bar. The man-o-war's boat soon followed, but that trusted only to the strong arms of its rowers, and to the skill of him who handled the

tiller. Several fishermen of the town were in the boat with their kits, and their wives and families were in full force, supported by friendly hands, upon the coping of the pier, and waving and screaming enthusiastic adieux. Then night fell over the scene, and the boats were lost to view.

Both wind and sea moderated as the tide ran out, and the wind being fair for coasting southwards, the commander of the Widgeon got his boat under sail, and the engine fires were banked up with a view of saving coal and earning the approval of official heads. The Widgeon was not a flyer under sail, but with a fair wind she ran in a leisurely way along the coast, past ghostly grey cliffs and bold headlands, where the surf made a pearly fringe along the shore. For a few miles on each side of Whitby, a broad band of sandy beach stretches beneath the tall, beetling cliffs, but the sands gradually tail off, and then the waves wash the very bases of the cliffs, and in stormy weather tumble, roar, and sport among cliffs and caverns in a wild, tumultuous way.

All along the coast Ronald had kept a sharp look-out upon the shore. In some way or other he felt sure that Elspeth Brook, or her son, Philip, would try and communicate with him, and knowing as they did every cliff and cranny along the coast, they would have had little difficulty in finding a hiding-place within view of the sea.

But he looked for a light on the heights, and behold the one he sought flashed out from the very margin of the sea. A white strip of sand lay in the hollow between two beetling cliffs, and from some hidden cleft on the level of the sands a light shone out in intermittent flashes. Ronald was skilled in all the lore of signalling, and he saw at once that the longer and shorter flashes represented the dots and dashes of the Morse system of telegraphy. He read it as easily as a book, when once his attention was called to it. The Widgeon's number was repeated again and again, till Ronald seized a hand lamp and waved it in the air as an acknowledgement of the signal, when the flashes spelled out:

"Three stranded here; take us off."

Ronald brought the ship to, and in a few minutes was being rowed rapidly to the shore. As the boat's keel touched the strand he sprang out, and was received by Philip Brook.

"Missie is here," he said, "and mother too. We've been hunted as if we were

thieves, and we might have been drowned on this spit of sand; but we are all right now, and Missie must tell you the story herself."

Kate now came forward from the rocky recess where the party had taken refuge.

"Ronald, you will take care of me, and help me, and you will not give me up."

"You may trust me, Kate," said Ronald, "but tell me"—in a whisper—"has that man any right to call you wife?"

"I am not his wife," said Kate, firmly, "and never will be."

"My dears," said Elspeth Brook, who had hitherto remained in the background, "I have been reading the stars for you, and they tell me that the path is long and difficult, but the end will be bright if you win through to it."

The fugitives were taken on board, and the boat proceeded on its way. "I have no luggage except this," said Kate, laughing, and holding up the casket which was enclosed in a leather case, "and yet we have far to travel. Where is our first stopping place, mother? Vienna, is it not?"

"I can't take you to Vienna," said Ronald; "but I can land you at Boulogne, and once on board the train you are safe."

He had asked no questions except that first one; but he wondered what it all meant and how it would end.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNCONSCIOUS BRIDE.

WHAT it all meant, must be told as nearly as possible in Kate Hazlewood's own words, as she told the story on the quarter-deck of the *Widgeon* to Ronald's attentive ears, as the boat glided gently along beneath the tall cliffs of the Yorkshire coast.

When the Baron surprised Miss Hazlewood at her foster-mother's cottage, his manner, mocking and sarcastic at first, was soon marked by an assumption of stern authority. Kate accompanied him back to Hazlewood meekly enough, but on the way she found courage to inform him of her final decision. As to marrying him on that day, it was out of the question. Even if her own feelings permitted it, she was prevented by her late father's wishes. Her father had left her a certain trust to accomplish, and for the next six months she would be occupied in its fulfilment. Then, if her task was accomplished, and he wished her to carry out her promise, she would do so.

All this the Baron said was beside the question. He was here to marry her, and marry her he would. His affairs required his immediate presence in the East, and he intended to marry her that day, and to take her on board his yacht as soon as the ceremony was over, when they would sail at once for the East. These arrangements admitted of no question; the clergyman had been summoned to attend, the special license had been obtained, the ceremony would take place at three o'clock in the Hazlewood drawing-room. As for her father, he was dead, and any wishes he might have had were dead too, except so far as they were of legal force.

To this Kate replied shortly that she had decided, and that nothing would alter her decision.

"We shall see," said the Baron, with equal brevity.

Breakfast passed over in a state of armed truce. After breakfast the legal business commenced. Kate signed a release to her trustees, and the Admiral handed over to her the notes representing twenty thousand pounds which Mr. Smith of the bank produced from his black bag. The Admiral advised her to return the notes to Mr. Smith, and leave the money in the bank till she had occasion for it. As she did not respond to the suggestion, there was nothing more to be said. Mr. Smith retired, greatly relieved to find that the bag was going back empty, for the appearance of those cut-throat-looking sailors in the Baron's suite made him feel extremely nervous. The Admiral remained to luncheon by Lady Hazlewood's special request. He was required as a witness of the marriage.

Kate retired to her own room, determined to remain there till the hour named for the wedding had passed. Her money she placed in the steel casket, where it would be always ready for its purpose. No long time elapsed before Lady Hazlewood came to her and urged her tearfully to submit to Hector's wishes. But Kate remained firm.

"You will never persuade me, and you cannot force me to marry him."

Bianca came presently, not to persuade, but to weep, to sympathise, to console. She was strangely moved at the prospect of the Baron's marriage, now for the first time realising it fully as imminent. She remembered, too, with bitter self-reproach, that her own treachery had brought about the catastrophe. She had lost her Hector

through the very devotion with which she had served him. Falling upon Kate's neck, Bianca made a full confession. How she loved Hector, and would do anything in the world to serve him, and how he had tempted her to act as traitress and spy. Here was confirmation for Kate's purpose, were any needed.

Then came Lady Hazlewood, with a last appeal. The Vicar of Blackness, Ronald's father it will be remembered, had arrived to read the service; everything in the drawing-room was arranged for the ceremony; the upper servants had been warned to attend. "Oh, Kate! do not make a scene at the last!"

"I shall make no scene," Kate had replied. "I shall remain here."

"Then at least would she grant the Baron a final interview in the library?"

"Willingly," said Kate. Indeed, she would have requested such an interview herself, to denounce the engagement between them, as brought about by his, the Baron's, fraud and treachery.

The library at Hazlewood was in a quiet, secluded part of the mansion, where an oriel window looked over into an old-fashioned walled garden, with shaded lime walks, quaint box hedges, and in the centre, a velvet lawn and a sun-dial. There was no one in the room when Kate entered it, and fatigued with emotion, she threw herself upon an old-fashioned couch by the window and closed her eyes in utter weariness. When she opened them again, the Baron stood before her, burly and powerful, in black evening costume, with a great diamond gleaming like a star upon his chest.

"Kate!" he cried, seizing her firmly by the wrist, "I approach you now not as lover or future husband, but as physician. Your nerves are overwrought, your judgement impaired; sleep, I command you, sleep!"

In vain Kate summoned all her forces to resist this man's strange influence, she felt herself wrapped up in a strange, benumbing dream; her eyes closed, her limbs relaxed; she was lost in a slumberous trance. Then she had some confused remembrance of moving here and there, and seeing people about her; and she might have repeated any words that were put into her mind by the influence that controlled her; but whether these impressions were real or only imprinted upon her mind, she could not tell.

All that Kate knew with certainty was,

that she came to herself suddenly. The pressure on her brain had been waved away; she was in the fresh air and clinging to her foster-mother's arms.

Dame Elspeth had little to add to this account. She had been warned of Kate's danger; she had found her way into the house by the good offices of one of the old servants, and had discovered Kate in her own room, in a kind of trance, upon a couch, with her precious casket, however, beneath her head. Flinging her own cloak about her, she led her away into the open air. For some reason or other the watch that had been kept about the house had been relaxed. The crew of the Cossack were all clustered about the front of the house, raising frantic cries, that were meant, perhaps, for cries of joy, at a given signal. There was little difficulty in getting clear of the house, and by the lodge gate Philip was waiting with a country cart and fast horse, and away they drove to a friendly farmhouse on the coast towards Whitby.

The hue and cry after Kate must have been raised very soon after her escape, and the energetic measures taken by the Baron put the fugitives into a dilemma. Kate had made up her mind to follow her father's instructions to the letter, and these were that she should make her way to Vienna and put herself in communication with a certain jeweller there, who would give her full assistance in her task; and what was more easy than to drive to the nearest station and take train for London, whence any part of the world can be reached by one in possession of means! But the audacious move of the Baron's put this out of the question. Dame Elspeth and Philip would certainly be seized by the police, en route, and Kate herself would be virtually a prisoner, and completely in the Baron's power. But Philip knew the course that the Widgeon would take, and that his commander was not likely to take the Baron's part in the matter, and so the party had taken refuge under the cliffs, and had happily been successful in attracting attention from the sea.

CHAPTER VI.

COAST SCENES. SCARBOROUGH TO DOVER.

THE sun rose behind a tranquil sea as the Widgeon, bearing up in the bay, took up her moorings in full view of Scarborough. No greater contrast can be imagined, than that between the lonely

grandeur of beetling cliffs and lovely headlands, and the colour, brightness, and verdure of the amphitheatre of noble buildings, terraces, gardens, that opens out to view. Even the rugged promontory, the scarp, that gives its name to the town, crowned by a battered Norman keep, has a festal aspect; its grass-covered plateau dotted with white tents, where some volunteers have pitched their camp, while a bugle-call rings out, and rattling drums sound the *réveille*. The town, perhaps, is not matinal, it is too gay at nights to get up very early in the morning; but signs of life soon begin to appear; there are toilers by the sea surrounded by this colony of pleasure-seekers; light wreaths of smoke rise to the heavens; bathers appear; early attendants at the Spa; boats begin to dart about, and white sails to flit upon the waters.

"Why should I not go ashore?" said Kate, as she gazed upon the scene spread out before her from the deck of the *Widgeon*. "I have an outfit to buy for my travels, and here I shall find everything I want." Dame Elspeth had nothing to say against it, except to warn her to be careful. A shore boat was hailed and Kate was soon busy among the shops, while Ronald, in mufti, strolled about and smoked his cigar, and kept a careful lookout for any signs of danger. A boat-load of luggage was sent on board, the owner of the luggage followed, and then the boat having picked up another fisherman or two, cast off just as the first strains of the band from the promenade thrilled over the sea; and away she went, under full steam now, for the wind had failed altogether, with her nose well out to sea, turning a furrow of blue water, that frothed and sparkled in her wake. Filey was just seen with its sharp ridge of rocks rising like the back of a gigantic saurian out of the sea, and Flamborough Head being left on the port beam, the long, low coast that succeeded, with hardly a bay or indentation, was soon lost to sight in the autumnal haze.

But for the smoke of the steamers running out, or coming in, Humber mouth might have been passed without notice, and the flats of Lincolnshire were so mixed up with sand banks, half-covered shoals and channels, that it could hardly be identified as belonging either to land or water. All was sea, and sand, and haze till the coast of Norfolk was sighted; Cromer, with its red cliffs; and Caistor, with castle turrets

peeping over the trees; and Yarmouth, spread along the sands with its windmills and tall watch-towers and Nelson's column on the Denes; and Gorleston pier, where the harbour mouth is, and where the fishing boats are beating in and out, or a row of smacks are trailing after some fussy little tug. Then comes Lowestoft, brown and comely, with piers and lighthouse, and a general air of bustle and well-doing; and now Southwold comes in sight, straggling along its steep open beach.

As night came on, Harwich blinked at the passing ship with round, staring eyes, lamps gleamed from the Essex shore, and, in the soft lambent glow, white-sailed ships seemed to hang in the air, and coloured lights shone over the sea and were reflected in the gently undulating waters. And still the boat cut its lone furrow through the waves; and just as morning dawned again, folk on shore were putting out the lamps along the sea front of Margate and Ramsgate, and rosy sunshine gleamed upon the white chalk cliffs that seem so home-like and English in their contours. Presently they were in the Downs, among a whole fleet of ships, and Deal boatmen hailed them with suggestions of stores and soft tack. Battlements and bedroom windows blinked upon them from Walmer Castle, cosily nestled among the trees, and Saint Margaret showed herself gleaming among her wooded heights. Then there was the long, low coast-line, with only tufts of trees and the spires of village churches, as land or sea marks, till the white wall of cliffs appears again, and there is Dover, with its majestic line of towers and curtain walls rising high above the sea.

What a happy unconventional cruise it had been. Kate, relieved from her fears of the overpowering influence of the Baron, recovered her former gaiety of spirit and light-heartedness. Everything on board interested her—the details of the day's work, the discipline, the drill, and all the devices by which the sailors varied the monotony of their lives at sea. But now the steamer's head was turned for the French coast, and the voyage would soon be at an end, and she had before her all the long wearisome journey over land and sea, with only her foster-mother to bear her company.

And then came Boulogne harbour, as it was growing dusk, with rows of jalousied houses looking down upon them; with fisher-girls, and blue blouses, and the

clatter and cheerful jingle of a foreign town.

Next scene was the lighted "Gare" and the gloomy-looking train drawn up with its "wagon lits" and massive luggage vans; there was the tumult and bustle of the arrival of passengers from the boat that had just come in, and then it was necessary to say Farewell!

CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

It was not to be expected that Baron Hector would permit his prey to escape him without some effort to detain her. It was possible that the Continental police had been apprised of the pretended robbery, and that the travellers might be arrested. And as the examination of tickets was made at Boulogne and stern-looking officials scrutinised the faces of passengers, a thrill of excitement was felt by Kate and her companion. But they passed unquestioned, and it may be assumed that the Baron was too wise to have taken any such false step. The device of the pretended robbery and the thousand pounds reward, might at first have answered admirably as a means of bringing back Kate into the Baron's power; but when required to be supported by formal evidence and brought into the light of day, the result could only have been a scandal that would cover the Baron with ignominy and render him a byword among men.

Still the fear of her pursuer was strong upon Kate. She dreaded the appearance of his dark, saturnine face; she doubted her own power of resistance to his overbearing influence. If only Ronald could have stayed with her; but that was impossible. He had only had time to put her on board the train and to bid her farewell, when he was hurried away to run to the assistance of his cargo of fishermen, who had been badly received by their French confrères, and who were likely to get into trouble with the authorities in consequence. But as the train was moving off, and in spite of the vigorous protests of the officials, a passenger flung himself into the carriage. It was Philip, almost unrecognisable in his shore-going clothes without any seafaring trappings about him.

"The Captain and I," said Philip, when he recovered breath for an explanation, "we put our heads together. 'If you don't go, Brook,' said he, 'I must. To leave

that girl and your mother to travel all that distance without anybody to take care of them——' No, it wouldn't do, we agreed, and so I took my discharge, and here I am."

"You foolish boy," said Kate; "it is we who shall have to take care of you."

But she was greatly pleased after all, and Philip's presence gave her a feeling of security which she had not felt before. At the next station Philip left for a carriage where he could enjoy a smoke. But he was at hand at every stoppage to see how they were getting on. And although he knew but few words of French, yet he made such adroit use of these, and was so soon on terms of perfect intimacy with all belonging to the train, being universally recognised as "un brave bonome," that everything was done for the comfort of his charge.

"I'm the courier," said Philip, "and mother's the dame de compagnie. That's what they call us, and we are on our way to see our uncle who is a great swell in the Crimea. I have told everybody all about us."

At Paris a halt was made for some days at the Grand Hotel. Kate had many purchases to make, and if she were to make a creditable appearance among her unknown relatives, it was necessary that she should have dresses—many dresses—and all kinds of feminine adornment. Kate changed one of her notes for a thousand pounds, and as there were no subsequent reclamations on the subject, it is to be presumed that the Baron had given up the idea of stopping payment of Kate's own money. Dame Elspeth, too, was transformed. The homespun garments, which had been suitable enough for the Yorkshire moors, were exchanged for black satin, and a cloak and a hat, "à la Pythonesse," as the manteau-maker exclaimed, who had an infallible eye for the characteristics of the female figure. And all trimmed with the "vrai jais de Whity!" added the man milliner, which was a gratifying tribute to the celebrity of our native products. Philip, too, must be arrayed with dignity. He cast longing eyes on a costume, "à l'Honved," with fur pelisse and braided jacket—for your sailor's secret envy and admiration is for the dashing horseman and his bravery—but he was persuaded out of this, and assumed a flat muffin cap, and surtout, bordered with Astrachan lamb's skin, such as gentlemen couriers affect.

At Paris, passports were obtained which were necessary for travelling in Russian dominions, and the party set out for Strasbourg, where a halt was made for the night, and a hasty visit made to the Cathedral. The next stopping place was Augsburg, that ancient city of the Suabians, whose mediæval streets, fountains, and palaces were duly admired. And the day brought the travellers to Munich, where they rested, and where Kate spent a couple of happy days among the art galleries. And then a fatiguing railway journey brought them to Vienna, where a stay of some weeks was necessary.

In the Ring Strasse of Vienna dwelt Ivan Vasilovitch, a famous jeweller, and dealer in objects of art. He received Kate Hazlewood with great distinction in a salon adorned with choicest specimens of bronze and silver ware. He received into his hands the golden lamp, which Kate produced from the casket with reverential respect. It was a most interesting example of ancient art, he said, Byzantine, and of the very best period. He referred to a richly bound volume filled with choice engravings, and turned to a certain page, which he offered for Kate Hazlewood's inspection. Here was an illustration and description of the very lamp itself, with a note that it had been formerly in the possession of the Empress Catherine of Russia, but that its present owner was unknown.

"And from this sketch you will have no difficulty in restoring the lamp and inserting its proper setting of jewels."

"No, mademoiselle," replied the jeweller, "but the expense will be considerable; especially to replace the ruby which occupied the central boss. Considerable research would be necessary to procure such a stone. Still all things were possible for the wealthy."

As the wily Russian had already in his possession the very stone required, eventually he agreed to undertake the work, which he estimated at about six thousand pounds. There was a considerable margin between this sum and that bequeathed by Sir John. But then the priest, who was slain by the altar, there was blood-money due for him; and it was possible that he had left descendants—for Russian priests often marry—and these must be duly compensated.

From Vienna, Kate wrote to Count Sarda, at Aloupka, announcing her intended visit to the Crimea. The answer came

within a week. The Count, wrote his wife, was charmed at the prospect of making acquaintance with his English niece. He would have come himself to Vienna, to escort her, but he was unfortunately laid up with a severe attack of gout. But his yacht, the Yalta, should meet her party at Odessa; only let his niece send a message by telegraph to say when the yacht should be there.

It was very pleasant for Kate to find that she would be welcome among her mother's people. Already the worst part of her task was over, and if it had not been for an occasional misgiving, as she recalled the scene at Hazlewood, and the mesmeric trance into which she had been thrown, she would now have been perfectly happy. But she would ask herself: "Is it possible that I am legally that man's wife? Actually I will never be." And yet of what avail her resolve if she should come within the scope of his baleful power?

CHAPTER VIII.

INTERCEPTED.

MEANTIME Hazlewood was shut up once more. Lady Hazlewood had sailed in her brother's yacht to the Mediterranean. Kate's manner of escape had altogether baffled him, and he could not recover the trail. But his study of Sir John Hazlewood's will had shown him, that Count Sarda had once been on intimate terms with his English connections. Kate's money was to have gone to him had she died before attaining her majority. What more likely than that she should have sought his protection? Had she gone straight to her end, it would not be possible to intercept her. But does a young woman ever go straight to her end? With plenty of money at her command, and two or three European capitals on her way, could she have hurried on without stopping? "No! I shall be in time," said the Baron, with a laugh.

The Baron's yacht, the Cossack, had been built, not many months before, on the Clyde. No pains had been spared in her model or machinery to make her one of the fastest boats of the day. She had cost a large sum; but it was the intention of the Baron and his financial confederates to sell her for a much larger one to the Russian Government. When it was seen that she could steam round and round any of the fastest vessels of the Russian fleet,

the Government were sure to buy her. If not, Baron Hazlewood would be the master of the Black Sea, and not the Russians. There were two Scotch engineers on the yacht, but all the rest of the crew were foreign, and had joined the ship overland. The Baron hoped, so he confided to the ship's engineers, to beat the record on the run from off the Lizard to Constantinople. And the Cossack raced through the Mediterranean at full speed, only touching at Malta for a supply of coal, and to put ashore Lady Hazlewood and her companion, Bianca. And still at full speed the Cossack ran on, till she came to an anchor in the Golden Horn. At Constantinople the Baron went ashore. He had telegraphed from London to Odessa, to a firm with which he was connected, giving a description of Kate Hazlewood and her attendants, and asking for information of their movements. Reports were to be sent by every fast steamer that passed Stamboul.

The Baron found several missives awaiting him. The first two or three contained merely regrets at not having any information to furnish. But the last arrived was more explicit. A member of the firm had just returned from Vienna, and reported that a young lady, as described, had attracted some attention at Vienna; that she had been making enquiries at the office of the Steamboat Company, and had, in fact, taken a passage for Odessa, down the Danube, and by rail, having secured berths and places, as was then necessary, a week in advance, for herself and suite.

"I shall have her now," the Baron said to himself, as he crushed up the dispatches in his fingers.

CHAPTER IX.

OVER THE BLACK SEA.

DARK clouds were scudding wildly over the sky, the sea was fretful with dark chopping waves that flung their foam hither and thither, and the general aspect of things justified the choice of its name as a happy one for the bad Black Sea. From the delights of Therapsia and the charms of the Bosphorus to plunge into the chilly rough-and-tumble of the Black Sea, is an unpleasant experience at any time. And the wind howled, and the sailors shivered and uttered cruel maledictions, while the Cossack, running dead against the wind, threw the waves aside with easy power.

Three hundred miles straight ahead over these churning waters; it was a pretty dance to lead a man, the Baron said to himself, shivering too, and Madame Kate should pay for it when he caught her. But in twenty-four hours land was sighted on the port bow; that was no doubt Cape Tarkhan, the most westerly point of the Crimea, and the course was altered a trifle to bear up for Odessa. A smart-looking steamer was heading in the same direction, and the Cossack, having the speed of her, soon overhauled her, and came up alongside. She proved to be the Yalta, Count Sarda's yacht, and also bound for Odessa. The Baron recognised the master of the yacht as an old acquaintance. He was a Greek, and had been employed by the Baron's associates, and was a good seaman, and generally faithful to his salt, but with an ear attuned to the tinkle of silver roubles. The Baron hailed him to come on board, and the pair were presently in earnest conclave. The Baron had ascertained the errand of the Yalta, which was, as he had guessed, to meet at Odessa and carry back to Aloupka a relative of the owner of the yacht. Well, the Baron had reasons for wishing to reach Odessa first. What harm would there be in the captain delaying his passage for twenty-four hours? Some slight accident to the machinery—anything would do for a pretext for lying-to for that space of time. The captain lent ear to the chink of a canvas bag full of silver coins. It was true that he was not in any great hurry; and if the Baron would report him as on the way, and detained by fouling his screw, there would be no harm done to anybody.

The Baron was satisfied, and so was Georges, the Captain of the Yalta. As soon as the Cossack had left the Yalta hull down on the horizon, the Baron called the master of the yacht. "It is time we ceased to carry that absurd name on our stern—Cossack! Who ever heard of a Cossack afloat? Have it painted out, and when the paint is dry, paint in Yalta; my friend, the Count, will not object." The master of the yacht showed his white teeth in an appreciative manner, and said it should be done. And the alteration was made without exciting any comment except between the two Scotch engineers.

"Man, I'm thinking we're going to sail under false colours!" said Sandy to Alec. And Alec looked grave and pulled his beard thoughtfully, but only replied with a grunt.

Arrived within the roadstead in front of Odessa, the false Yalta anchored and signalled to the shore. Health officers and Custom House officers put forth, but when they came alongside, the master of the yacht, who had received his lesson, explained that he did not wish to come into port or to hold any communication with the shore; but that a lady passenger awaited him at Odessa, and that his master had authorised him to hire a steam-tug or tender to bring her and her belongings to the yacht, so as to avoid any detention in port. Another little bag of silver roubles made smooth the negotiations, and the Customs boat returned, an officer having promised to apprise the young lady and give notice to the master of the tender.

CHAPTER X.

A BAND OF DESPERADOES.

KATE HAZLEWOOD had reached Odessa early that morning, attended by her faithful suite. There was nothing about the town to excite vivid interest. All was modern; there were long wide streets, low white houses, trees everywhere and falling leaves, droskies dashing here and there, soldiers and uniformed officials everywhere visible, with the cosmopolitan men of commerce, such as you might meet in Mincing Lane or Eastcheap, with a sprinkling of brown faces under turban or caftan. Down by the quays, to which Philip Brook found his way at once to enquire for the Yalta, all seemed English and familiar. Burly English Captains, Scotch engineers, tall Northumbrians, broader in their Scotch than Sandy himself, with a few sallow Americans, or swarthy Italians; these were the staple of the men to be met on the quays, or discovered in the numerous cafés and houses of entertainment adjoining.

Presently Philip was surrounded by a knot of excited Levantines.

"You want a ship, Johnny! Me take you on board! Very good boat, sar!" But these retired to a respectful distance as the harbour-master, who wore a deeply embroidered uniform, and might have been an Admiral, walked majestically along.

The Yalta had just been signalled; she was not coming into harbour, a steamer would take out her expected guests to where she lay in the offing. The officials were courteous and yet obdurate. Passports must be examined, permits for embarkation made out; but Kate coming

upon the scene, quickened all the former processes with a few judicious douceurs. There were so many obstacles to their embarkation, that all their anxiety was to get on board. Everywhere along their route hitherto, there had been a certain nervous dread of interruption on Kate's part. The Baron, with his indefinite claims, might appear at any moment. But now she felt in complete safety. Once on board her uncle's yacht, and all danger was over.

"Eh, they're a bad lot here, Miss Hazlewood!" said a jolly voice at Kate's elbow. "Don't you trust 'em for a copper copeck."

The speaker was a bronzed and elderly tar, one Captain Grant, who was well known to Kate by sight. He was the owner and master of an old tub of a brig, the Saucy Bess, that traded a good deal in coals, but was not particular as to its cargo; and he was a man well known upon the staith at Whitby, while equally familiar with the Rialto of Venice. The Saucy Bess was at this moment lying at anchor in the roadstead with a cargo of wheat, and only waiting the Customs clearance, while a fair wind for home was blowing, and her Captain was fretting his heart out at the delay. When Kate's papers were ready, she spoke a word for her compatriot to the urbane chief.

The little harbour-tug, with Kate and her fortunes on board, was soon speeding across the stretch of muddy waters to where the false Yalta lay anchored. Even now her anchor was being lifted, and it was quite evident to a practised eye, that with the set of wind and current, the Yalta would foul the old north-country brig that lay close alongside, as soon as the former began to move. The crew of the brig were quite alive to this, and were pelting the yacht with lumps of coal and injurious words, but no response was made from the false Yalta.

"There's a family likeness about these Russian yachts," said Philip, who had only had a glimpse of the veritable Cossack one night by moonlight; still, he had as good a memory for a ship as some people have for a face, and his suspicions might happily have been excited before it was too late, but he read the name on the stern, and was satisfied.

The Captain of the yacht in his best uniform advanced, cap in hand, to meet Kate Hazlewood as she sprang upon the deck of the yacht; half-a-dozen men in white jackets hurried her luggage on

board; the tender was cast off; Kate was ushered into the principal cabin; while Philip and his mother remained on deck, looking curiously about them.

Then the Captain gave a word of command. At that moment the long-expected collision came off, and the yacht and the brig were hugging each other, in a way that was much resented by the crew of the weaker vessel. But they were too much occupied in fending off the steamer, to continue their fusillade. Instantly twenty or thirty men rushed on the yacht's deck. Philip and his mother were roughly seized, quickly enveloped each in forty or fifty folds of cotton, and in that state, like mummies, handed over the yacht's side and deposited on the deck of the brig. Then the yachtsmen cut all clear with axe and knife, and the steamer shot away under full steam, with a howl from her steam-pipe, as it seemed, of savage derision. The brig, with bowsprit shattered, and rigging hacked, spun round slowly.

But the moment of collision had been long enough for two sturdy Scots to recognise each other—one on board the brig, the mate, generally known as Long Sam; and the other, an engineer of the yacht.

"Man Alec!" shouted the former.

"Man Sam!" echoed the other.

A pantomimic gesture towards the damaged rigging was sufficient explanation.

"Ye're aboard a pirate!" shouted Sam.

Alec replied by extending his five fingers in a way that had its significance for Sam. For, hardly noticing the living cargo so unceremoniously thrust on board, the mate himself swarmed out to the end of the bowsprit, with the end of a tarred rope in his hand, and his knife between his teeth, to splice the broken spar, while through a spare corner of his mouth—it was a wide one—he shouted commands to the crew to lift the anchor, and loosen all sails.

Captain Grant soon after came on board with his papers all right, but purple with anger at the sight of his damaged rigging. By this time Philip had released himself and his mother from bondage, and was able to explain what had happened.

"What, have they run off with the bonnie leddie?" cried the Captain. "Oh! what will we do?"

"Chase the villains!" cried the mate, who had spliced the bowsprit with wonderful expedition, and was now repairing the running rigging.

Captain Grant lifted his arms with a gesture of despair.

"Are ye a reasonable creature, Sam?" he cried; "yon boat is running twenty knots an hour."

"Cap'n," said Sam, with a strange contortion of the features, "I've got a friend aboard."

And yet the chase seemed a hopeless one. Half an hour only since the collision had elapsed before the Saucy Bess was under sail, and yet the steamer was only visible as a patch of smoke on the horizon. With the wind full abaft, and every sail drawing, the Saucy Bess might run her ten knots an hour. But then Mother Elspeth stood in the bows of the pursuing ship, her hands raised, invoking curses on the "fated and perfidious barque" that was disappearing in the distance, and beckoning on the wind to fill the sails as the brig flew through the waters.

Indeed, the sailors worked with double zest, and thought themselves sure of a prosperous voyage as they recognised Mother Elspeth's presence—a woman well known for hereditary power over winds and waves. And it seemed to those on board as if, indeed, something miraculous attended her prayers and imprecations. For, instead of disappearing altogether, the patch of smoke grew more distinct; masts became visible, and then the hull of the steamer. The Saucy Bess was gaining fast upon the fastest steamer yet launched upon the Clyde.

Then it was seen that the pillar of smoke from the steamer's funnel was succeeded by a column of white steam.

"Her engines have broken down!" shouted Captain Grant, in delight. "We've got her now!"

For the beautiful ship, but just now the monarch of the seas, lay as helpless as a log upon the waves, at the mercy of the veriest tub that floated and had power to sail.

Captain Grant called up all hands and addressed them in a short but stirring speech:

"Men, we're going to fecht. Any saft fules can go down below."

But the crew of the brig were staunch, and no waverers were found to seek ignominious safety.

Meantime, how went it on board the yacht?

When Kate was ushered into the handsomely decorated salon of the yacht, she sank into a fauteuil with a feeling of delightful restfulness. There were English newspapers and magazines on the table.

What! Did they take the Times at Aloupka? Then she looked up and saw the Baron standing before her. He came to her with the same air of overpowering force, as on that dreadful day. But to her great joy, Kate found that his magnetic power had now no effect upon her. She held her casket firmly clasped in her arms. Nothing should ever part her from that. But how did he come here?

"Have you cheated my uncle, too?" she asked, disdainfully. "Have you lied and forged your way into his confidence?"

"We are here chez nous, my dear Kate," said the Baron, changing his serious attitude to one mocking and sarcastic. "You are on board your husband's yacht, no longer the Cossack; but what matters? You shall choose a name to please yourself."

"And Philip, and Mother Elspeth?" cried Kate, with a shudder of horror.

"I have dismissed them. They will find their way back. What matters for those canaille? Here we are together, we will commence that honeymoon which was so cruelly interrupted."

Kate, still carrying her casket, walked past the Baron, and ascended the companion ladder. She thought of throwing herself into the sea, if they were not too far from land, but the sight of the wide sea horizon, and of the seaport shining white in the distance, and so far distant, made her recoil.

"All this yacht is at your disposal, my dear Kate," pursued the Baron, who had followed her to the deck. "Its owner, its sailing master, its devoted crew. These are the men who were witnesses of our marriage. You remember hearing their cheers as the benediction was pronounced. Now they shall cheer again for your arrival."

At a signal the crew gathered together in a picturesque group. At another signal they raised a strange, shrill cry, that represented a shout of joy. Kate remembered the sound perfectly; she had heard it when escaping from Hazlewood in Mother Elspeth's arms.

"Thank Heaven," said Kate, "I am not your wife. It was not for me those wedding cheers were raised."

"But under the circumstances," replied the Baron, "I should think you would not desire to disown your marriage. Here I have every proof that may enable me to combat your delusion. The certificate of your worthy pastor Sholto Carr, the attestation of your good trustee the Admiral, with others."

"I had rather be the victim, than the wife of such a scoundrel."

"Well, then, we must alter our treatment," said the Baron, fiercely. "You are insensible to kindness, authority must take its place. You have a case there, a casket; give it to me."

Kate did not deign a reply, but clasped the casket closer in her arms.

Just then there ran a perceptible thrill through the ship, and there was a rush of engineers and stokers to the deck, followed by a gush of steam from the stoke-hole. The screw ceased to revolve, while through the escape-pipe rushed the full pressure of white steam. Alec appeared last of all with an air of conscious pride.

"Man Baron," said Alec, "I've saved your boat by turning off the steam at the risk of my life. The main shaft's gone."

The Baron stamped and swore.

"How long will it take to repair it?"

"I may make some kind of a job of it in four-and-twenty hours."

"Ah, well!" cried the Baron, turning to Kate. "In such society, four-and-twenty hours will pass like one."

But he had not reckoned for the pursuing brig, which presently came in sight, full sail crowded upon her, presenting a beautiful and even majestic sight, for under such circumstances the meanest collier brig is grander to see than the biggest ship in the world under steam.

"'Tis the brig we collided with just now," remarked Alec, innocently.

"What do you want?" roared the Baron, as the brig came within hail. "You'll be aboard of us directly."

"I mean to," replied Captain Grant. "First we want compensation for damages."

"Granted," said the Baron. "Twenty pounds, as much as your tub is worth."

"Then we want the leddie," replied Grant with still more emphasis, "the leddie you've took from her friends."

"Pish!" cried the Baron.

"Then if you won't, we'll sink you," roared Grant.

The brig, admirably handled by Long Sam at the wheel, was bearing full upon the side of the helpless steamer; which, assuredly, she would crack like a nut. Heaven knows what would have been the result to the brig; Captain Grant did not; but he trusted in Providence, and in the Sibyl at the prow, who denounced vengeance on the false loons in the yacht.

But the fifty men who formed the crew

of the false Yalta, seeing sudden destruction coming upon them, raised a yell and, as one man, rushed aft, seized the Baron, and hurried him from the deck, while they energetically waved a full surrender. Round came the brig into the wind, just shaving the steamer's quarter, and Kate, with a cry of joy, leapt from the deck into the arms of her foster-brother Philip.

CHAPTER XL

THE CRIMEA.

WHEN the Saucy Bess lost sight of the Baron's yacht, it appeared that the engineers had succeeded in repairing the main shaft; for she was last seen steaming along at reduced speed towards the south. The brig bore up towards Odessa, a long beat to windward, but happily the true Yalta made her appearance soon after—her Captain in a terrible fright lest his treachery should be discovered—and Kate Hazlewood and her friends were taken on board. All her baggage had been flung aboard the brig; the desperadoes being only too glad to get rid of everything that might be evidence against them, as to this "coup manqué." Captain Grant was warmly thanked, his crew rewarded, and the vessels parted, amid hearty cheers from the British crew.

With her head pointed south-west the yacht soon came in sight of the Crimean coast; the low, sandy desert country first of all, with Eupatoria—in the great bight that was almost filled once upon a time by the immense fleet, transports, and men-of-war, steamers, and mighty sailing battle-ships, which transported the allied armies to the destined scene of conflict. Then the ground rose in precipitous heights, broken by the ravines of the river Alma, and Belbec. Higher rose the heights, and more steeply scarpred were the cliffs, till Sebastopol came into view with its noble estuary, and the remains of its forts, and moles, and half-ruined streets, all in shining white limestone. Then followed the sight of the iron-bound coast, where the dark sea, deeper than plummet could sound, broke against the mighty wall of rock. Cape Chersonese, with the white walls of a convent visible upon its lofty summit, seemed to bar the passage along the inhospitable coast, but Kamiesh Bay, snugly lying beneath, was pointed out as the base of supply of the great host of Frenchmen, whose tents once whitened

the plateau far and near. A mere rift in the jagged and terrible precipices was the entrance to Balaclava harbour. Here were the frightful rocks on which the Prince went to pieces on the night of the terrible storm. But by degrees the scarpred cliffs are succeeded by charming slopes, and lovely groves; the hills recede into the background, and between their purple summits and the sea, which itself seems to assume a brighter colour and more gracious aspect, there stretches a tract of country of the utmost luxuriance and beauty. A line of splendid villas occupy every point of vantage, whose gardens bloom with every variety of sub-tropical plants, while marble terraces, statues, temples, fountains, gleam from out of the verdure. A pearl, indeed, in the Æthiop's ear is this strip of Paradise, surrounded by the bad, Black Sea.

The yacht dropped her anchor in the roadstead of Yalta, the place from which she took her name. A crew in the smart uniform of the yacht took the travellers ashore. A carriage was awaiting them as they landed in the midst of a little market-place, set out with the richest of autumn fruit and flowers. And what a mingled crowd it was through which the carriage slowly made its way! For it was the hour when everybody, rich and poor, prince and peasant, were found on the promenade. The Tartar chief in pelisse and caftan, his compatriot, a beggar, in picturesque rags, a bevy of maidens of the same race, with roguish almond-shaped eyes; Russian uniforms by the score; officers' wives in Parisian costumes; lines of droskies and private carriages; all and everybody rubbing shoulders with the most friendly equality beneath the arching shade of avenues of chestnut, lime, and acacia. It was a scene almost startling in its life, movement, and grace.

But once out of the press the coachman started his horses at a gallop, and up hill and down dale the vehicle went at a pace, till passing under an avenue of beech, and through a thicket of scented and flowering shrubs, the vehicle drew up before the verandah of the Villa Sarda, a far stretching building of only one storey, with white walls and a green glittering roof, studded with domes and minarets—all very graceful and bizarre.

The whole family had assembled to welcome the new arrival. The venerable grandmother who received her granddaughter with the dignity of the ancient

school, and then wept as she recalled the features of her sainted Catherine, reproduced in their English guise; the Countess, brisk and pleasant; her husband, good-tempered and lazy; a small group of daughters, inquisitive and critical; a son in a smart undress uniform, with a background of guests of all kinds, but chiefly military. It was bewildering enough to Kate, after a somewhat lonely youth, to be suddenly transplanted into such a family life.

CHAPTER XII.

BATTLE-FIELDS OF THE CRIMEA.

GAY enough was the time that followed Kate's first introduction to her mother's family. Were there not balls, parties, entertainments of all kinds? Were not the Russian officers accomplished waltzers? Was there a night that passed unoccupied by music and the dance? Kate had innumerable admirers: a Prince with a fortune of millions; another with only his sword, but the handsomest man and bravest officer in the Russian army; half-a-dozen more of various degrees of eligibility were more or less infatuated for the charming English girl. Kate was known as the heiress to a considerable English estate; but it was also understood that if she married a Russian subject she would inherit her share of her grandmother's fortune, and the old Countess was reputed as fabulously rich. But Kate remained untouched by the attentions she received.

Expeditions, too, were made before winter came on, by Kate and her friends, to all the points of interest in the neighbourhood. From the heights above Balaclava they looked down upon the valley that witnessed the charge of the "Six Hundred;" they traced the course of the railway that supplied the English camp. There was the plateau once covered with the tents of the invaders; there the ravine of Inkermann up which rushed the overpowering tide of Russian soldiery; there the site of the battery that first checked their advance; the old windmill on the hill; the white sparkling quarries, where a whole hill-side was cut away; the caverns; the aqueduct; and, beyond, the arm of the sea that meets the pleasant valley of the Tchernaya river. Then there were the graveyards—the hill, with its broken walls and shattered monuments. But there were certain tombs that had been carefully tended, and Kate gathered

a handful of charming wild flowers that grew upon the graves of the brave men of old.

But the most enduring memento that the British army left of its hostile presence was the acres of broken beer-bottles that surrounded the site of their encampments. Thirsty souls were these paladins of ours, and corkscrews were unknown in the British camp. To knock the head off a bottle, to pour the contents down his throat, and smash the bottle on the ground, such was the delight of Tommy Atkins in those distant days, and thus he has left his imperishable mark.

Then there were the mighty works of Todleben, for the defence; the Malakhoff, now a beer-garden; the Redan, a portion of the same public promenade; quiet burghers strolling up and down, arm-in-arm, with fierce Cossack warriors; and a band playing upon the site that was drenched with human blood.

Sebastopol was no longer a ruin, a railway had brought life to its grass-grown quays. A depôt occupied the place of an old redoubt—droskies rattle through the streets and raise the white dust in clouds. Sometimes a steamer puffs noisily into the noble harbour, and wakes the echoes from broken forts and demolished batteries.

Then there was a famous picnic to Bakhtchi Serai, the old Tartar capital, with its Palace of the old Khan, penetrated with a soft melancholy feeling; marble pavements, arabesques, fountains, whispering trees, and murmuring waters, all telling the same sad story. And the bazaar—for a bit of Eastern life commend us to the bazaar of that Crim Tartar town. Turbans, caftans, fur-caps, rough shock heads, mingling about the stalls; artisans at work in the background—tinmen, saddlers, bakers, smiths, with the noises of their work, and the general rattle of voices; veiled women flit about—lovely Jewesses, the daughters of those solemn long-bearded rabbin.

At night the picnickers slept at the hotel; they ate kabobs of mutton on skewers; they tasted the famous sweetmeats of the Karaites. And what a gallop back they had over steppes, coming every now and then to fertile valleys and streams of living water!

Among all these distractions had Kate forgotten that there was a serious purpose before her? That was the question that Mother Elspeth put to her in an impressive manner one day. Dame Elspeth had

employed her time in wandering about, making friends in Tartar huts, and among Greeks and Jews, and charming everybody by her mysterious gifts. At the Villa she was in great demand. She told fortunes by cards, by the ancient arts of palmistry. The whole division of the army then in camp—horse, foot, and artillery—sent its officers to learn their fate from the old lady. But she was getting tired of it all, and she longed to see her old cottage on the moors, and to feel the keen winds of the North, and taste the brine from its sea. Philip, it must be said, had gone home long ago. Once Kate was safe among her own people, Philip's occupation was gone, and he was impatient to be at sea again. If he could not get restored to his old rating in the navy, he would get employment in the merchant service. Indeed, he picked up the Saucy Bess at Constantinople, where she had been detained, and travelled home very comfortably in the society of Captain Grant and Long Sam. Not a penny would the hospitable Captain receive for the passage; and as Philip had been handsomely rewarded by Kate for his services, he landed at home tolerably well provided for, and able to look about him.

Somewhat startling news had reached Kate about home affairs. Lady Hazlewood had written to her from Brighton. She was married; had been married, indeed, for some months to her dear French artist, and now, circumstances imperatively demanded the avowal. This event would make Kate the owner of Hazlewood; but Lady Hazlewood, or, as she now announced herself, Lady Hazlewood Deschamps, threw herself on the mercy of Kate. It had been a cruel provision of Sir John's to cut her off from any future union, and surely Kate would not leave her to exist upon what her dear husband might earn by coining, as it were, his heart's blood into ducats.

Kate replied in a kind and generous way. Whatever Hazlewood brought in, her stepmother should take half of it. But here she was met by a very awkward manoeuvre on the part of Baron Hazlewood. He claimed to administer the estate on his wife's behalf. All the tenants had received notice to pay their rents to him and nobody else.

News came of Ronald too. The Admiral was dead, and he had left Carrholme to his nephew. His will was dated on the day following Ronald's rencontre with the

Baron at Whitby, and Ronald had a shrewd notion that the pugnacious Admiral must have had a purpose in the bequest. Ronald himself was uneasy and unhappy. He had been cheated and insulted by Baron Hazlewood, and he could settle to nothing till he had cleared the matter up. Ronald had resigned his command, and was now on half-pay, and roaming restlessly up and down the surface of the earth looking for the Baron.

All this made Kate unhappy in her turn. Her life was poisoned by the continued influence of this man. He would probably meet Ronald in a duel and kill him, for the Baron was skilful in all the weapons of the duello. And, if Ronald were the survivor, she could never marry him—to "kill and take possession" would be a revolting end to their story.

It was in this darkened frame of mind that Dame Elspeth found her foster-child when she put the momentous question: "Have you forgotten?"

No, she had not forgotten; but still she had been slack about the matter. Ah! she had found out the little chapel; she had visited it more than once. The chapel had been kept in repair, but it had not been used for worship since its altar had been desecrated by bloodshed. The people of the neighbourhood still talked about that terrible deed. Sometimes a priest would come from the convent, would dust and arrange the ornaments, and he would lower the brazen hook from which had once hung the sacred lamp, would polish it and restore it to its position, open doors and windows. But when the priest went away he took the key with him. And here was the difficulty, not a very serious one in appearance, and yet it had baffled Kate repeatedly. To apply for the key would excite some curiosity; the restoration of the lamp would be a nine days' wonder, and not for worlds would she have given a clue to the knowledge that her father had done the guilty sacrilegious deed.

The winter had passed, there had been no frost or snow in the southern part of the Peninsula. On the other side of the hills there had been icy winds and cruel frosts; but here the climate was always mild, and the tropical verdure of summer was preserved in the very lap of winter. Perhaps when the spring came the northern regions had their compensation, for then the steppes were covered with the freshest green and carpeted with fragrant wild flowers; the forest trees were bursting into

leaf; orchards were white with blossom; and the little Tartar farmhouses, with clumps of tall poplars rising above them, were embowered in shrubs and flowers.

Especially lovely was the spring-time in the little valley of the chapel; the woods resounded with the songs of birds; the paths were festooned with creepers, and carpeted with the most delicate ferns. In the midst of all this flood of renewed life, the chapel stood, cold, lifeless, deserted. Kate passed the place one evening with a joyous party on horseback. Some crossed themselves, others shrugged their shoulders and smiled; it was a point of delicacy among the party of the villa not to mention the incident of the sacrilege before an English woman. Kate turned her horse, dismounted, and looked in. A venerable priest with a white beard was looking sorrowfully about him. The key was in the lock and Kate drew it out softly and threw it into the long grass, and then rode on and joined her companions.

Early morning was Kate's opportunity, for at any other time of the day it was difficult to evade companionship. She rose at daybreak, dressed herself in white, and with trembling hands drew the lamp, now glittering with jewels, from its casket and concealed it in the folds of her dress. The house was buried in sleep as she passed out. The sun rose on her way and turned the dewdrops at her feet into diamonds, and the massive summit of the mountains glowed like gold. Not a soul was to be seen in the wood; the chapel was in the midst of a peaceful solitude. The door was unlocked and secured only by a morsel of bent wire. Kate entered breathless. Daylight had scarcely penetrated the narrow windows. With quick, noiseless steps, she passed to the sanctuary, drew down the brazen hook, affixed the golden chains.

The lamp was swinging on high, and as it swung a ray of sunlight, through some narrow aperture in the eastern gable, fell upon the lamp and lighted up its jewelled rim, darting luminous sparkles and coruscations of light all around. And then occurred a marvellous thing which is hardly capable of explanation. The lamp was alight! a feeble flame glowed upon the wick.

Kate sank back into a recessed seat, and knelt there full of awe and wonder, not unmixed with reverent gratitude. The offering had been accepted; the sacrilege was expiated; her father's sin was forgiven.

As she knelt the door was slowly opened,

and the venerable priest, whom she had seen the night before, entered the chapel. He did not see her, his eyes were riveted upon the lamp. He folded his hands, he threw himself upon his knees at the gate of the sanctuary. "It burns still," he cried, "but it burns low," and turning to a little arched recess he drew forth a vessel of oil, replenished and trimmed the lamp, and again knelt down. Kate now rose and tried to pass out unobserved. But the priest turned his head. She was discovered.

"It is the blessed Saint Catherine who has restored the precious relic," murmured the priest, bending low, and covering his face with the sleeves of his robe. "And why am I chosen to be the witness of this glory? Because I was the only witness to the sacrilege. Behold the wound that thy servant received in defending thy precious lamp, from the sword of the unbelieving invader. Let it be a crown of glory for me in Paradise!"

The gesture, the words which she could well comprehend, brought conviction into the mind of Kate. This was the priest whom her father had struck down. There was no blood-guiltiness upon him. She glided silently away, and when the priest raised his head he was alone.

Some days after, Kate made a visit to the convent to which the old priest belonged. She was anxious to see if anything could be done to make his latter days more comfortable. The old man was dead. "His latter hours had been brightened," explained the superior, "by a wondrous vision of Saint Catherine; a vision corroborated by the miraculous replacement of a lamp in the chapel of the saint, which had been stolen during the invasion of the Crimea. During his life the old man had been held in much honour on account of a wound received in defence of the altar."

"But I have been told," said Kate, "that the priest was killed."

The superior smiled quietly. "There was a pious fiction to that effect, which strengthened the courage of our soldiers against the invaders. But the truth can now be told."

CHAPTER XIII.

LIFE OR DEATH.

WITH wealth, a fine career before him, and the world, so to say, at his feet, Ronald Carr was unhappy. Baron Hazle-

wood weighed upon him. That man had ruined his life, cheated him out of the only blessing he really coveted — his bonnie Kate. If the Baron had himself gained little by the transaction hitherto, he had, at all events, effectually prevented Ronald from attaining his heart's desire. And then, his overbearing insolence had left in Ronald's mind a feeling that he could not worthily hold up his head as a Carr of Carrholme—for they had been a fire-eating, fighting line — unless he vindicated his honour. It might be a foolish, uncivilised, unchristian notion; but there it was, and made inaction unendurable.

Several times Ronald had reminded the Baron that he was waiting to hear from him. He had received no answer.

The Baron was a migratory being. He had stayed for a single night at Hazlewood, just to assert his right. He had frightened the old servants out of their wits, and then had disappeared. He was next heard of at Brighton, where he had a stormy interview with his sister and her husband. The young Frenchman was brave and high-tempered, and would have adjourned the discussion to the sands of the opposite coast, with either swords or pistols; but the Baron laughed him to scorn and departed. Then he was known to be at Constantinople, engaged in some financial intrigue. The last accounts were that he was buying horses and mules in Asia Minor, presumably for the Russian Government. He had sold his yacht to the Czar, for she had proved the fastest boat in the Black Sea, and was to be utilised as a despatch-boat and light cruiser. He was, indeed, in high favour with the Russian administration, and, at his request, a mutiny that had recently broken out in his yacht, had been punished by sending half-a-dozen of the offenders to the mines. It would be no easy matter to bring him to account; but Ronald determined to try.

Ronald had experienced enough heat and discomfort from engines and boilers in the navy. He bought a fast-sailing schooner yacht, the *Dream*, and put Philip Brook in command of her. He intended to navigate her himself, and Philip was a practical seaman, who might be trusted in other matters.

The *Dream* had a prosperous voyage through the Mediterranean, and to Constantinople. There Ronald had news of the Baron. He had gone to the eastern shores of the Sea of Azof—a desolate, thinly-peopled region, whence there had

come recent reports of the discovery of oil wells that would put those of the Caspian into the shade. Here, too, Philip had letters from his mother. She was thankful to say that Miss Kate was about to start for home, and that she would soon see her native moors again. The Count would accompany his niece to Constantinople in his yacht, and would then place her on board an English steamer. Miss Kate was going to take possession of Hazlewood, and meant to hold it against all comers. The Count, who had been told the whole story, would have gone with her and backed her up, but he could not get permission to travel beyond Stamboul.

Well, the two yachts were hardly likely to meet, for the *Dream* was to skirt the Asiatic and Circassian coasts for the sake of scenery and sport. That, at least, was the original intention, but Ronald grew impatient of delay, and the wind coming fair off Sinope, the *Dream's* course was changed for the Straits of Yenikale. Ronald was a careful navigator; he had made a good observation at noon. But he must have made a mistake somewhere, for as he neared the coast he found that the lights were, according to his reckoning, all wrong. The twin lights that showed the entrance to the straits, which should have been directly ahead, showed far away on his larboard quarter, and being in doubt as to his position, he very wisely anchored, and made all snug for the night.

Presently, a steamer's lights were made out in the distance, coming from the Crimean coast. She was not making for the straits, apparently, but for the Circassian coast. The night was rather thick, and as the steamer passed close by, they saw nothing more of her except her lights. Then after some hours an extraordinary thing happened. Suddenly the lights came all right again, as if somebody had given the Black Sea a shake round. There were the lights of the straits just as Ronald had expected to find them, and other lights in their due order according to the charts, while those previously seen had been extinguished.

"There is some devilish work going on to-night, sir, I expect," said Brook to his commander. "I've heard of such things, but I never expected to see 'em."

"What do you make of them?" asked Ronald.

"False lights," said Brook. "Wrecking business; hung out for yonder steamer, I expect."

If that were the case, the steamer was now past praying for. She must have gone ashore by this time on the barren un-hospitable coast—a sort of no man's land, almost uninhabited and entirely desolate. All on board the yacht listened and watched for signals of distress.

But nothing could be heard. As the night wore on the wind rose, and heavy waves came sweeping in before the gale, but anchors and tackle withstood the strain and the yacht rode out the gale in safety. Daylight appeared, and the various points of the coast came into sight, as the sun began to gild the foaming crests of the waves. A good way off could be made out the masts and funnels of a steamer apparently some distance in shore. One of the yacht's boats was lowered, and Ronald set forth to investigate the fate of the steamer. As the boat proceeded the mouth of a wild lagoon opened out, and within the lagoon could be seen the steamer fairly aground, but apparently not injured. By great good fortune she had struck the mouth of the lagoon on the previous night, and had thus escaped shipwreck on the rocky shore. Rowing into the lagoon, Ronald hailed the steamer. She was the *Yalta*; Count Sarda's yacht. And where were the passengers?

Nothing could be definitely made out from the men on board; but it was evident that they had landed, and probably had made their way to the nearest post station. Ronald landed on the sandy shore of the lagoon and walked on in the direction pointed out by the crew of the yacht. Far into the distance stretched a flat, open country, across which ran a narrow post-road bordered by a line of telegraph poles. The country was not wholly barren; horses and herds of cattle could be seen feeding in the distance. A helpless feeling came over Ronald, alone and on foot in the midst of a boundless plain.

Then Ronald beheld a cloud of dust rising in the distance, and presently a body of horsemen, at full gallop, came into view, showing bright sparkles of light here and there in their dense mass. It was a squadron of irregular cavalry, and as they came in sight of the yacht stranded there upon the plain, the leader of the party halted them, and entered into parley with the crew. Then the cavalry advanced at a more leisurely pace, while the leader and another galloped forward at full speed. The cavalry chief was a noble-looking fellow in a dashing uniform. His com-

panion was also a handsome fellow, but looked evil enough to Ronald, who recognised him at once as Baron Hazlewood.

Ronald stepped forward, and stood in the track as he waved to the pair to stop. They reined up and the Russian officer, saluting politely, while the Baron eyed him with a cold indifferent glance, inquired the other's business. Ronald explained that he was a naval officer, and had just landed from his yacht. That he had left England and traversed the Mediterranean and Black Sea, for no other purpose than to meet the Baron, between whom and himself words had been exchanged and injuries given, that nothing could atone for. The officer turned to his companion, who nodded an emphatic assent to this statement.

"We are on special service," said the cavalryman. "But everything must give place to an affair of this kind. The opportunity that offers may never be renewed. Let me consult my brother officer."

The chief rode back to where the rest of the party had halted again, and presently the chief and his subordinate came on, dismounted, and beckoned to Ronald.

"You are quite sure you wish to fight him?" asked the chief. "I don't think you need. He is not quite—" shrugging his shoulders. "In fact, what you call 'œuf pourri,' eh, bad egg, is it not? Here is this man, he has laid information against Count Sarda, our friend whom we all love. We hoped that he would have escaped and the charming demoiselle who accompanies him; but by what devilry he has trapped our friend, I know not."

"All the more I desire to meet him," said Ronald, grinding his teeth.

The officers bowed low and withdrew to consult. Presently they summoned the combatants to the conference.

"We desire to equalise the combat—you are a good swordsman," turning to the Baron, who bowed assent. "And you?"

"It is not my weapon," replied Ronald.

"Probably you are both good pistol shots?"

The Baron evidently preferred the sword, and Ronald modestly disclaimed any special skill, although with his own revolver he could make good practice.

Then the Cossack chief announced the terms of the combat. A semicircular arc would be marked out on the steppe. On the chord of the arc Mr. Carr would take

his place, with his revolver. At some point of the circumference, the Baron, on horseback, would take his place, armed with sword and loaded cavalry carbine, but with no other ammunition. Confined within the limits marked out, the combat would continue at the will of the combatants; but if at any time one held up his hand in token of defeat, the combat must cease.

The ground was marked out, a semi-circle with a radius of about a hundred yards. Ronald and the Baron took their stations exactly opposite each other, Ronald in the centre of the chord, and the Baron in the centre of the arc. The Cossack troop drew round at a respectful distance, while the officers as the seconds of the combatants posted themselves at either end of the line, sharing the danger of a stray shot—a danger they politely ignored. The signal to begin was given as the combatants stood like statues watching each other narrowly. The Baron's tactics would be, his opponent judged, to take a deliberate shot with the carbine, and if that failed, to charge straight upon his adversary, who might easily miss a rapidly advancing foe even with the five barrels of his revolver. But if such were his purpose, he did not appear to be in haste to carry it out. He rode round the circumference of the half-circle slowly, as if to make sure of his ground, with carbine at the present, and naked sabre hanging from his wrist. At a hundred yards the best revolver makes but uncertain practice, and Ronald reserved his fire; but he advanced step by step nearer to the middle of the area, keeping a wary eye upon his antagonist. Ah, now he came! wheeling his horse suddenly at the extremity of the boundary, the Baron dashed at full speed at his enemy, flinging the carbine contemptuously high into the air, and charging straight at Ronald, whirling his flashing sabre over his head.

A guttural exclamation of admiration and delight burst from the assembled Cossacks. Three little puffs of white smoke issued from Ronald's pistol, but still the horseman rode on. At the fourth puff horse and rider rolled upon the field together. But the Baron sprang to his feet in a moment, unhurt, his sabre still in his hand, and dashed forward. The combat was still equal—let Ronald miss but that shot, and all was over with him.

But Ronald's last shot told; the Baron fell on his knee, struggled to his feet again, and then, striving to cut his opponent to

the ground, fell once more prone upon the earth.

"He can fight no more," said the Cossack chief, walking up to the Baron's prostrate form. "You, noble sir, hasten to rejoin your ship. The civil authorities will perhaps give you trouble. He was a great rascal, I believe, but the Government favour him. Hasten. Adieu."

Meantime, Philip Brook, alarmed at the long absence of his chief, had taken a boat and landed too, but at a point of the coast a little lower down, for he had caught sight of the Cossack lances, and thought it prudent to reconnoitre them from a distance. As Philip approached the head of the lagoon, he heard his name distinctly pronounced in a low voice. Close by, was a hut half sunk in the ground, and covered with turf.

"Yes, it is really Philip," said the voice in a louder key; and next moment Kate Hazlewood held him by the hand, and his mother fell upon his neck and kissed him. There was a pleasant-looking, elderly gentleman, too, who turned out to be the Count Sarda. The boat was close at hand, and Philip, explaining rapidly how it was the Dream had come into these waters, hurried them on board, and then went to search for Ronald. He heard shots, and ran forward to meet Ronald presently, stalking moodily towards his boat. Even when apprised of the happy chance that had brought Kate and her companions safely on board the Dream, his face hardly brightened.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE DARDANELLES.

THERE was plenty of wind, and the Dream walked through the waters like a thing of life. Ere she was clear of the coast some attempt was made to detain her: a boat was launched from a quarantine station, a battery fired a shot across her bows; but when she was fairly under sail she left all the trouble behind her, and soon was out of sight of land and careering along with her head pointing for the Bosphorus. After awhile, on their right, they caught sight of the peaks of the Crimean mountains just showing above the horizon, and a few white sails showed here and there; but these soon disappeared, and the Dream was alone on the waters.

"Now that I am in for it," said the Count gaily, as he smoked his cigarette

under the lee of the companion hatchway, "I shall make the voyage with you."

He had no fears on his own account; he had never conspired; he was too lazy and good - tempered for a conspirator, and he did not doubt soon making his peace with the Czar. But if Kate were detained, she would certainly be handed over to the Baron, who would show a good title to her as his wife. Ronald forbore to explain that the Baron was out of the way of making such a claim. He had not even told Philip Brook, and he dared not make confession to Kate. Now that he no longer saw things in a red, lurid light, he shuddered to think that he had joined in such a barbarous combat. Surely he was a more wicked man than the one he had slain; more barbarous than the wildest Cossack who had cheered on the contest. In fact, conscience troubled him most fiercely.

Kate saw the change in him, and wondered what it meant. Ronald occupied himself over his charts; he was always on deck watching the sails, studying the compass, busy with his sextants and strange-looking brass instruments. No incident marked the run; there was nothing in sight but sea and sky till the *Dream* was within sixty miles of the Bosphorus. Then, on the horizon behind her, appeared the smoke of a steamer.

The *Dream* was racing at her topmost speed; but still the distant smoke remained in sight and became more distinctly marked; and then a steamer could be made out that was fast overhauling the yacht. Only one steamer on that sea could perform such a feat, and that was the despatch-boat which the Government had bought from Baron Hazlewood, now named the *Ukraine*. Dame Elspeth came forth uttering spells, and shook her fist at the approaching ship.

"It is the avenger of blood," said Ronald to himself, and he watched its approach with the feeling of one foredoomed. The wind fell, the *Dream* was almost becalmed, her great sails flapped idly to and fro; and the steamer was coming up hand over hand. Then the sails were taken aback; the wind had chopped round into the south-west, almost directly opposite to the yacht's course. But the wind brought with it a thick white mist, which came rolling over the waters in dense curling masses. The *Dream*, her sails trimmed and sheeted home till they were stiff as boards, shot forward once more.

The speed of the mist and the speed of the yacht together were too great for the pursuing steamer. She fired a shot, but it fell wide of the mark, and then a great white curtain was spread over the whole scene. The steamer slowed, and began to hoot dismally the tidings that she was bewildered in the fog. The yacht stole softly on unseen, unheard.

After sailing some hours, the *Dream* shot suddenly out of the mist into the rosy sunshine of a lovely summer's evening. Bold headlands were on either hand, and beyond them a beautiful shore, a mass of verdure, among which gleamed white villas, kiosks, minarets, and towers. The yacht had passed within the Bosphorus, whose blue waters, smooth as glass, reflected every feature of the lovely scene—skiffs, and boats, frail caiques, and fairy pleasure-yachts shot to and fro in every direction. And soon appeared the thousand glittering pinnacles of the lovely queen of the east: seraglios, palaces, mosques, aligned above the curving shore, while in clusters upon the purple waters hung ships of every kind from every clime, masts and rigging showing in dainty tracery against the opal sky. There was Scutari, too, over the way, with its great white barracks, and green cemeteries, quiet and gloomy in the dying sunset. The report of a gun thunders over the waters; the muezzin calls to prayer from the lofty minaret; a sweet, short twilight descends; and myriads of lights sparkle forth into the perfumed night, and twinkle in the calm waters.

There was still a risk that the *Dream* might be detained at Constantinople, and she passed on and crossed the Sea of Marmora, where all was chilly and grey, with mist and rain. The sun was high in the heavens when the yacht passed between the solemn walls of rock, where the current runs strongly, carrying a mass of chilly water into the bright *Ægean* Sea. As they passed between the forts of Europe and Asia, a signal was made to stop the yacht; a boat was put out from the shore, filled with men in uniform. But the yacht continued her course, and when the boat's crew tried to hang on, the sailors cast her off. A blank shot was fired from the fort, and as the yacht took no notice, a shotted gun, the ball from which skipped across the water just in front. The yacht slipped along so fast, however, that she was soon out of range. As there was a good deal of shipping in the straits, the Turks were

probably afraid of sinking some innocent craft.

A few hours later the *Dream* was cruising among the Isles of Greece.

CHAPTER XV.

DANGER AT MALTA.

THE voyage of the *Dream* through the Mediterranean had not proved eventful up to the time that she arrived at Malta, and took up a berth in the outer harbour. The weather had been chilly and, at times, squally, and even Malta proved comfortably cool. The Count wore a great-coat when he went ashore, and grumbled about the cold. Not for worlds would he cross the Bay of Biscay in such weather. He would take his niece home by way of Marseilles and Paris, especially Paris. He returned with the zest of a schoolboy at holiday time to his dear Paris.

As for Dame Elspeth, she preferred to stick to the ship. Kate had picked up a French maid at Malta, and could get on very well without her. And the dame was very comfortable on board the yacht; she had her son with her, she was very useful on board and highly popular with the sailors, who were mostly from the north country, and who had faith that they would never want a fair wind as long as the good dame sailed with them.

The yacht required some refitting, and she went into dock to be thoroughly overhauled. Ronald found plenty of friends among the naval and military people on the island. In his reckless and despondent mood he took to high play as a diversion, and, caring little whether he won or lost, he was generally very lucky. Among those who frequented the club, where Ronald was in the habit of playing, was a young Vicomte belonging to an ancient Maltese family, whose ill-luck was as notable as Ronald's successful play. And whether it was from pique or some deeper motive Ronald could not tell, but this youth sought every opportunity of forcing a quarrel upon him.

Tired of this sort of persecution, Ronald, finding the youth alone in the smoking-room of the club, put the question to him simply and roundly: "Why do you seek to quarrel with me? I have no enmity to you. I think you a nice boy. Do you wish to make me fight you? I assure you, your trouble is wasted. I will never go out with you."

"Is it that you are afraid?" said the other, with a sneer.

"No," replied Ronald; "but I have killed a man in a duel. He had done me grievous wrong; but the thought of him haunts me continually. Night or day, I am never free from remorse."

"Is that so?" replied the youth, with something like contrition. "I was told that it was quite otherwise—that you went about boasting of the death of this man."

"And who told you that?" asked Ronald sharply.

"It was Bianca. She lives with my mother, and she is the most beautiful creature in the world. It was her relation, the only friend that she had—and she tells me, 'Kill me this Englishman who murdered him, and I will love you.'"

"Ah, that is terrible," said Ronald. "Well, kill me if you like, Vicomte; but till then, let us be friends." And they shook hands over this strange compact.

Next time when they met, the youth appeared with a gloomy face.

"My friend, he is not dead, this man; he has written to her. He is recovering from his wound, and she loves him, and does not care for me."

The Vicomte looked the picture of despair; but for Ronald the news was most joyful—a weight was lifted from his heart, his gloom had vanished, and the world was bright to him once more. Still, it was evident that Bianca had not forgiven him. Often, on his way home, he found himself dogged by desperate-looking men, and one evening he received a stroke from a knife that, had it not been turned by his watch-case, would have put an end to his career. Evidently, Malta was not a safe place for him, and the yacht being now ready for sea, he had one tremendous bout of play at the club, lost all his winnings, and a little more, took a hasty leave of his friends—the Vicomte, who had won largely, was moved even to tears—and sailed early next morning for home.

CHAPTER XVI.

NAVAL MANŒUVRES.

It was August in this present year of grace, and along the wide sea-front of Brighton, a general excitement and expectation was to be noticed. On the beach, bathing-men, fishermen, and loafers, were engaged with long telescopes; binoculars

were in great request upon the pier-head ; parties of horsemen and horsewomen cantering along the King's Road drew up, and shading their eyes with their hands, gazed anxiously seawards ; carriages were drawn up by the railing ; the green lawns of Hove were dotted with spectators, and the windows of hotels and lodging-houses, wherever the slightest view of the sea was attainable, were crowded with heads.

The cause of all this interest was the fact that a low, distant rumbling was heard, which might have been thunder, but that people thought was distant cannon-ading. One or two war-ships lay in the offing ; these belonged to the British fleet. And it was thought that at this moment the ships of the invading squadron were engaged in breaking through their line, and were about to spread havoc all along the coast.

Excitement at the pier-head reached its height when a boat was seen approaching from some ship in the offing, which was thought to be a man-o'-war's boat bringing some intelligence of the progress of the manœuvres of the fleet to the authorities on shore. There landed, however, only a young man in civilian attire, a bronzed seafaring youth, with a gold-banded cap, and an elderly woman, tall and gaunt. "The boat," said the seamen left in charge, to eager questioners, "was from Mr. Carr's yacht, the *Dream*, just arrived from a cruise in distant seas."

"Yes, it is Ronald Carr," said a handsome young woman, who was leaning affectionately on her husband's arm.

Ronald started and turned on hearing his name pronounced, turned and encountered the gaze of Lady Hazlewood and her husband, the young artist Alphonse Deschamps. He doffed his hat, but his face showed anything but desire for further intercourse.

"Let me detain you a moment, Mr. Carr," continued Lady Hazlewood. "I have news of my dear stepdaughter."

Ronald's attention was enlisted at once, and he even took a seat graciously indicated to him by Lady Hazlewood, at her side, and allowed himself to be introduced to her husband. "Alphonse, you know, is a painter ; he paints *le monde*. His next picture will be 'The Lawn at Goodwood.' The Duke gave us every facility. My Alphonse established his easel in a famous position. Well, among the first of the faces to attract his attention, was our

Kate ; yes, with her uncle, Count Sarda. And they are coming to see us, Alphonse, me, and the bébé"—with a very becoming blush. "You will come, too ? If Kate has forgiven me, I think you may."

"And your brother ?" asked Ronald, still icily.

"We have quarrelled ; but I believe he is in England. He has behaved shamefully, and Kate has been so kind. Is it likely that I should be any longer of his faction ? Indeed, there has been a great scandal about him. My poor Bianca ; when I married she was obliged to leave me, and she joined a most excellent family in Malta. Well, I hear that she has left—run away—and I fear that she has followed my unhappy brother."

The evening papers had just come out, and newsboys were shouting vigorously one startling item of their news : "A Brighton mystery ! A Brighton mystery ! Strange tragedy at Brighton !" Alphonse, with a keen appetite for news, bought a paper, and his wife looked over his shoulder. Suddenly she gave a loud cry, and fell almost fainting into his arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRIGHTON MYSTERY.

THIS was the succinct announcement that appeared in the evening papers :

"A gentleman of foreign, but distinguished appearance, had reached Brighton by a morning train, and engaged rooms at one of the principal hotels. Some little time after a lady, young, handsome, and richly dressed, drove up to the hotel, having apparently arrived by a later train, and demanded to see him, giving a description of his person, for the name he had given at the hotel was apparently a feigned one. The hotel porter requesting to know what name to announce, the lady replied in an excited manner : 'You can say his wife.' After some demur the lady was admitted, and a stormy scene appears to have followed. Before long, however, more amicable relations were arrived at, and the parties went out together, as it seemed, on friendly terms. They hired a carriage and drove as far as Kemp Town, and then proceeded on foot along the path by the cliffs in the direction of Rottingdean. Nothing certain is known of their further movements ; but a boatman, sailing along the coast, deposes that he witnessed something like a struggle on the

top of the cliffs. His impression was that the lady fell or threw herself from the cliff, and that her companion, in endeavouring to save her, shared her fate. The two bodies were discovered lifeless on the beach. They have not been identified; but some articles of silver in the gentleman's dressing-case bear the monogram 'H. H.', with a Baron's coronet above."

On reading this paragraph, Ronald at once hurried away in a fever of anxiety to the place where the bodies had been deposited. There was no mistaking the stern determined face of Baron Hazlewood, that, in the pallid dignity of death, had something even heroic in its expression. But the other—Ronald trembled as the attendant removed the veil that covered the face of the dead woman. It was not what he dreaded; the features were those of poor Bianca. But why had she called herself his wife?

The explanation was forthcoming in a letter which was found among the Baron's papers.

"MY OWN HECTOR" (ran the letter),—"I have the best right to your love, for I am your wife. We have stood before the priest together; the ring that he blessed you placed upon my finger; you swore that death only should part us—you and me—Bianca, and not Kate. She shuddered at your touch, and I loved you. When she lay fainting in my arms I said that she should not marry you. I put on the dress and veil that were waiting for her. The room was dark; the priest was half blind; the old admiral saw nothing. But your sister, I think she found out; and you, did you not know me when you gave me that kiss? No other lips shall touch mine. If you should fling me away, I will die.—Your wife, BIANCA."

The mystery remains a mystery still to the world in general; but those who have read this narrative may find a clue to it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HER TRIUMPH.

"My dears, it was written in the stars long ago," said Dame Elspeth. "I tried to spell it out, but I could only read a

little bit here and there. But I knew that the path would be hard; but that if ye had the strength ye would win through it."

Ronald shook his head sceptically.

"The stars shine away," he said, "brightly and coldly enough; but they don't take much interest in us."

"Ah, ye're but a faint-hearted unbeliever, my son," rejoined the dame. "Do you mind that story I told you about the Indian woman and her mistress, that happened in our own country, and that I promised to show you chapter and verse for? * Were the stars right there, or no?"

"Ronald," said Kate tenderly, "you must not rail at the stars, for they have been very kind to us, I think."

They had all dined on board the Dream, as she lay anchored off Brighton shore, the whole family party, including the artist, who had been making studies of seamen in various attitudes, as long as daylight lasted. It was one of the few lovely nights of the present season, the sea calm, and the sky twinkling with myriads of stars, while along the shore shone tier upon tier of lights, which stretched as far as the eye could see, as if the whole coast were lighted up for some high festival.

A festival it was, for two of those on board, Kate and Ronald, had plighted their faith again; and now there were no impediments in the way of their happy union. Carrholme and Hazlewood would now be joined together, and every one along the coast of rugged cliff-land would rejoice.

"And when the wedding-day comes," said Dame Elspeth, "we will have a bonfire on the Topping that shall light up the whole country, and that shall bring good fortune and no longer evil luck to Hazlewood."

"For to conquer the love of all, and hold it as a blessing; to be staunch to her friends, and true to her sweetheart; and to keep her sweet face that everybody may love to see it." Thus we read the stars for Kate Hazlewood. If the peril has been keen, great is her triumph.

* A promise fulfilled in "The Sibyl's Story," page 41.

THE LIEUTENANT'S STORY.

THERE is plenty of monotony in a sailor's life, and after a cruise that had been deadly dull off the coast of Siam, it came as a real relief to be ordered by cable at Singapore into Chinese waters on a pirate chase. Not that we anticipated any very warm work. It was more likely to be a game at hide and seek—cunning against cunning—for these yellow-skinned rascals have a wholesome dread of getting to close quarters with a man-o'-war, and, seeing how the odds stand, I am not the one to say that this reflects upon their courage. Nevertheless, it was change, and there is sometimes magic in the mere word.

The Rajah was an old tub, but a stout one, and a rare sailer. "Handsome is as handsome does," was Captain Webster's answer to any who smiled the smile of scorn at her lines. Every man rated on the Rajah's books knew that once she could fairly slip in between the buccaneers and their shore-haunts, the doom of the scoundrels was sealed.

To me there was novelty in this work. It had hitherto remained the one item in the ordinary programme of my profession with which I had absolutely no acquaintance except from hearsay. The case was widely different with Captain Webster. Again and again he had rendered police service to the polyglot commerce of the Eastern seas; and his methods were framed on the teachings of the past.

Not at first, in the present instance, with conspicuous success. We cruised about for a fortnight, searching, without seeming to search, every curve and swell of the shore line between two indicated points; and in vain. Reporting our failure at Swatow, what was our chagrin to find that an outrage of peculiar atrocity had been committed in our wake, and off a certain bold and ill-reputed promontory under the lee of which the Rajah had laid in ambush—so to speak—for two whole days! A trader from Brisbane had been looted. Her boats were scuttled; with practised pains she was rendered unmanageable; and then the hapless crew were forced to submit to be bound hand and foot, and were left—as so many animated logs—to starve or sink; or, if Fortune's wheel turned, to be rescued. Luckily, it was the latter.

There were faces both blank and black

in our mess-cabin when this report was brought. The effrontery of the deed staggered us.

"They shall pay for this, or I'll get out of the navy as an impostor and an old woman," growled Captain Webster, his huge face red as his own bandanna with wrath. Not a man of us but thirsted for the fray.

Once more we sailed, and straight for Lulu Point. Captain Webster was confident that the pirate rendezvous was near. I shared his opinion.

Our look-out man became a person of exceptional importance. He was bidden to report instanter any suspicious sign, either inland, or on the wide blue track across which we had ploughed.

"A woman signalling from the beach."

This was the puzzling announcement that came from Dan Lees aloft. The circumstance had been simultaneously noted by my own immediate senior, the first lieutenant. What it portended we were one and all at a loss to imagine.

The Rajah's course was altered a few points, and the female figure, standing solitary on a little spit of land, grew in distinctness—a woman of our own race and not a semi-savage.

"What do you think of it, Captain?" the first lieutenant asked.

"I don't think at all; I prefer to wait and see," answered Webster.

It sounded uncivil, but it was only the old man's manner; he was an honest British bear, and bruin would not be bruin without his snarl. The next minute he was requesting, rather than commanding, his senior officer to superintend the lowering, manning, and arming of a boat.

We were on the tip-toes of expectation until the parties returned. They brought the woman with them. She was a majestic creature, and might have served for a model of Cleopatra. Her beauty was of a type oftener encountered in Southern lands than in England. It was lustrous, large, full-orbed. Her hair was raven-black, her eyes shimmered like twin lakes of night set in dusky caverns, her features were rounded and regular, and her complexion, though that of a very pronounced brunette, was singularly pure. The face as a whole suggested slumbering possibilities of passion. She was perhaps thirty.

"A glorious—animal," whispered Captain Webster to me.

And my verdict coincided.

It was a queer story to which, in slightly

varying versions, the entire ship's crew had shortly listened.

Mrs. Kemble—this was the name given—was of English extraction, but Trinidad born. Her husband had been acting-manager for a firm of Hong-Kong merchants. Six weeks ago he had persuaded her to accompany him in a small barge, "The Silver Star," bound for the port of Shanghai. The pirates had swooped down on the little vessel, rummaged and scuttled it, and had set its crew, herself included, adrift without sail or oar in a leaky boat. A storm sprang up. They were driven helplessly on to a lee shore. And then she remembered no more until she awoke to consciousness on a long sandy ridge with the waves lapping at her feet. There was no sign of her recent comrades in misfortune, and she could only conclude that they had perished, while some huge breaker had swept her far up the shingle into safety. And she had since subsisted by her wits as a female Robinson Crusoe—with a difference. There were a few native fisher huts in a cove, perhaps a mile to the south, and here, where she looked for molestation, she had experienced surly kindness. But her hope had been that an English vessel would examine the coast for traces of the marauders, and that then she would be able to escape from her wretched durance. We had come when this hope was nearly submerged by the tides of despair.

Captain Webster put Mrs. Kemble through a stiff cross-examination, and she adhered to every statement, giving fuller particulars at any stage of the narrative where he demanded them. Jack Tars are proverbially susceptible, and I believe every man was moved by this tragic tale—illustrated by the streaming eyes of the disconsolate sufferer—to vow that if once the Rajah got a fair haul on the wretches who were committing this series of crimes, it should not be his fault if the villains lived to be hung. I confess my own blood boiled at the fiendish malice of the sea robbers.

Only the Captain seemed a trifle more stolid than before. He had scarce a word for any one. The taciturnity was a token that his thoughts were deeply engrossed. As Dickson, the chief gunner, would have said, with nautical metaphor, he was crowding on all sail to overtake a racer. There was a riddle to the fore.

It was shortly rumoured that the Captain had decided to return to Swatow, and

there transfer Mrs. Kemble to the care of the authorities who would arrange for the remainder of her journey to Hong-Kong. The first lieutenant vacated his cabin in favour of beauty in distress.

But the same afternoon we signalled a Yankee, also bound southwards, and the Captain seized his chance. He informed his guest that she would be received with all courtesy and kindness under the flag of the Republic, and that she need be under no apprehensions of a second catastrophe, seeing that the Boston brig was by no means the minnow that such sharks would dare to attack.

If ever a woman looked crestfallen and terrified while striving her utmost to dissemble those feelings, it was Mrs. Kemble. I was close to her elbow when she tried to express acquiescence and gratitude, and I knew that her speech was at the antipodes—for whatever reason—of her wishes and actual sentiments. Her face for many a second was haggard and colourless. A furtive despair was in the wonderful eyes. The lines of the sensuous mouth were rigid and harsh. But objection was useless, and she knew it. Not only so, it would have cast inevitable doubt upon her bona fides from the first.

"Yes, I am obliged; I will go," she said.

She stepped back when about to descend into the Captain's gig, and, as if it were an afterthought, communicated information that surely ought to have been given much earlier.

"From what I could make out from the people who gave me food, the pirates belong to villages to the north of the Straits of Formosa," she said, with hurried emphasis. "Show them no mercy, they have robbed me of all—all!"

The woman was a consummate actress if this were not the voice of genuine passion—a fierce cry for vengeance. Nevertheless, there were two of us now—the Captain and myself—who preferred to credit her with histrionic gifts.

With what seemed afterwards brutal celerity, the Rajah tacked at once in such a manner as to show that she was about to resume her interrupted work of coast hugging, and that Webster, in spite of Mrs. Kemble's advice by implication, had no idea of pushing immediately up the Straits. And I could hazard a shrewd guess at what was in his thoughts.

I was not wide of the mark. By nightfall we were under Lulu Point, and next

day we rounded it. Taking frequent soundings, the Rajah crept into the winding channel. Suddenly a dingy with three men on board pulled out of a cove to the left, and with startled haste drew athwart our track and vanished. A few more minutes and, as if by magic, the coast scroll opened out. Before us was a secluded upper reach of the same deep sea channel. It was a capital, natural harbour, and in it were moored a couple of the queer, quaint Chinese vessels which bear the name of junks—big unwieldy boats, which could yet carry plenty of canvas, and on open ocean would undoubtedly have given the Rajah a troublesome chase, and, perhaps, have escaped. They were safely trapped now.

Captain Webster was a changed man. All his phlegm broke up, and he was as full of vivacity as a Frenchman. And I believe every soul on board shared his enthusiasm. We had the honour of our age to vindicate. These pests, whom it was our business to exterminate, were an anomaly in the nineteenth century. A period was to be put at last to their career of mischief, and to the discredit it entailed.

The question we were all asking was this: "Would the enemy show fight?" Our ardent hope was that he would. The strange exhilaration of battle was already in our veins. And it would enhance the glory of the exploit if we had to report a stubborn resistance overcome.

But it seemed that our wishes were not to be gratified. The dingy had taken timely notice of our approach, and we saw the ruffians incontinently taking to the element like so many water-rats, and then swarming up the shore behind. It was a stampede.

Out boats! was now the word. The first-lieutenant took command of one, and I was in charge of the other, and away we raced for the shore.

All was calm and still, the water like glass, nothing moving on the strip of beach, while the jungle behind with its gorgeous tropical vegetation seemed as quiet as the grave. My boat was in advance and had almost reached the shore, when a puff of smoke whiffed out from the jungle; and, before the report of the gun reached my ears, we were all scrambling in the water, for the heavy jingall ball had knocked a hole in our craft. It was a good shot or a lucky one, and was followed by a howl of exultation from the jungle, and next

moment the beach was alive with hundreds of wild-looking ruffians who hacked at us with spear and sword as we struggled to gain a footing on terra firma.

Meantime Captain Webster had kept an eager watch upon the proceedings, and as soon as the pirates opened fire from the jungle, a couple of shells from the Rajah whistled over our heads and exploded among the foliage, setting the birds and beasts screaming and chattering like mad, but doing no particular harm to our enemies. For a time I thought that all was over with us; the yellow skins fought like demons led on by their chief, a tall, powerful fellow, who looked like a European in face, although he wore the Malay costume. In the confusion their weapons were as good as ours and better, for their heavy and razor-like krissees dealt terrible blows. I had managed to get a footing on the beach, and half-a-dozen bluejackets had rallied round me and were making play with bayonet and cutlass, when the chief desperado bore down upon us and singled me out for attack. As a natural consequence of the ducking it had suffered, my revolver missed fire. Next moment the fellow closed with me and his long knife was gleaming over me, when Phil Brook, my coxswain, got a blow at him with his cutlass. It was a well-dealt cut, and knocked the knife out of the pirate's hand and sent him sprawling on the ground. He was not killed, however, although Phil's cutlass was twisted up with the blow, and his men closed about him and carried him off to the jungle. Meantime our comrades had landed a little higher up the channel, and their fire began to tell upon the thickly-clustered pirates. My own fellows, too, were getting into form and working forward, firing rapidly, and the enemy began to give ground.

Soon the rascals broke and made for the jungle, leaving twenty or thirty dead and wounded stretched upon the beach. Our men followed pell mell, and had the enemy rallied, we might have had reason to regret our rashness. As it was, deprived of their leader, they lost heart and thought only of flight, and we rushed a strong stockade armed with cannon, which was concealed within the jungle, and which might have cost us heavy loss had it been resolutely defended, and we captured their camp and all the plunder they had collected there. But the birds were all flown, and it was useless to urge further pursuit. Our loss, indeed, had been serious, five men killed

and twenty or thirty suffering from wounds and contusions, and among these was Philip Brook, who had saved my life and received at the same time an ugly gash from a spear-point.

"Humph!" said Captain Webster, when I made my report as to the captured loot. "That looks like system—as if the scoundrels had an ambitious leader, and one who intended an extensive trade. I hope he tasted steel or lead."

"There was a fellow over six feet—a regular giant—who fought like a possessed man. I had a narrow squeak with him. Perhaps it was he," I answered.

The result of the day's doings was that a gallant blow had been struck against a tyranny of terror, that the old Rajah had won fresh laurels, and that a very considerable quantity of booty was carried back to Swatow and placed in the hands of the Queen's representatives, pending the application of claimants.

And now enters the coincidence of which I spoke at the outset. I would call it strange, wonderful, but that I have found the threads in life's vast web again and again cross and part, and in quite another part of the fabric reunite.

It was eighteen months later, and the Rajah to our relief was homeward bound. Gibraltar was reached, and there Captain Webster granted a few of us leave for a run ashore. The port, beneath its trappings of gaiety, is often insufferably dull. But a day's sensation had been created by the capture of two alleged notorious offenders—smugglers on a large scale, bill-forgers, and I know not what beside. They were taken in disguise at the very time of our landing. I saw them marched to prison: a man of some forty summers, with the most sinister-looking countenance on which it was ever my lot to gaze; and Mrs. Kemble.

She it was. I assisted at an investigation in the stuffy chamber that did duty for a special court. But no word of mine was needed except as corroboration. Captain Webster was in the forefront, and the female prisoner looked him unblushingly in the face. She stopped the preliminary proceedings.

"You will believe me; there are those here who can prove part of what I say. I'll out with it all, and then do what you like—only send him to prison—to prison, out of my sight!"

And she stamped her feet and gesticulated as I had seen her once before. She was pointing her finger of hatred and scorn at the cowering wretch whose name she also bore upon the charge-sheet.

"Listen," she said. "I have a happy home at Hong-Kong. My father lives there still; he is a merchant's clerk. But this man came. He told me—Bah!—that he loved me. I married him. And I ran away from my friends to do it. And he was getting money wickedly then. He traded with sea-thieves. He took me to their haunts. It was horrible!" she shuddered with disgust. "And when the Captain over there came with his ship to put a stop to the thieves' tricks, I was sent to lure them away with a false tale; and for love of him I did it." With a superb gesture of disdain she again indicated her reputed husband. "The game failed, as the Captain—I forget his name—can tell you; he was not to be blinded by any dust that I could throw in his eyes—the Captain of the Rajah wasn't. The thieves were mostly killed, and I gave Peeko up for dead, too. But he wasn't; no such luck. He had taken care of his precious skin. I got back, it doesn't matter how, to Hong-Kong, and he was there before me. And there was a tale of property waiting to be claimed at Swatow, and he made me get some of it by false swearing. Then, for fear he should be found out, he came right away, through Suez, here. And a nice game he has been playing. Everything that's charged against Austin Hollis Peeko is true—true; and plenty more besides. Two days ago we quarrelled, and he told me that I was not his wife at all, and never had been. When he married me he had a wife living in England. I pity her, and I hate him. Yes, it has all come to hate. He thought I was too crushed a creature to stir under his foot. It was a mistake."

The old, old tale; jealousy, cruel as the grave!

The Rajah had to leave. But tragedy in the interval had rounded off the narrative to which Captain Webster and I had listened. Peeko had committed suicide by hanging in his cell.

On arrival in England, I wrote to my Gibraltar acquaintance for information as to the fate of Mrs. Kemble, alias Peeko. The answer was that she had been set free, and had returned to Hong-Kong.

THE SIBYL'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"AUGUST FIRST, 1886.—I have warned her, but she will not heed. She mocks at the stars, and what they tell me. But they have said, 'And sorrow and dishonour lie in the path she is taking with such eager feet and happy eyes.' I am old. But I shall live to see it. If I could but read— But the stars are patient, inscrutable. They will not hasten. They keep back what they will, and leave us, miserable worms and mortal, to tread out our own expiation in gloom and sorrow. They tell us that evil is coming; but if we will not heed, they leave us to face it, without one glimpse into the future that shall be made out of our present. Sorrow and woe, treachery and dishonour overshadowing her path! How shall she walk that she do not fail by the way? Allah is great! May she come out undefiled in the future the stars keep yet to themselves."

The old Indian woman closed her book, in which she had written, her heart full of dread for the girl whose destiny she had read in the stars, and who had mocked at it with her careless laughter. This girl's life had been happy, though some nameless evil had always lurked in its background. This shadow had been drawing nearer as she grew out of childhood into maidenhood. And now it was close at hand. The stars had said it. In what shape it was to come, the old woman could not yet see. That was the terror of it. It would unfold itself, day by day, until at last it stood bare in all its hideous shape, built up by cause, effect, and circumstances, casting its shadow all along the path her darling had to tread. What the end would be, she could not tell. A sudden blank fell on her vision. The stars spoke no more. It seemed as if a veil were dropped between her and the future she was straining her eyes to see. That sudden silence of the stars chilled the blood in her veins.

"And so that old Indian sibyl of yours doesn't want you to come and pay us a visit."

While the old woman sat upstairs, her heart heavy within her, the girl who had roused all the anguish and dread was laughing and talking in the drawing-room below. She had a visitor, a distant connection of her father's. She had only

made his acquaintance a week before. He had come up to town from Derbyshire, where he lived with his wife, whose money had made him one of the wealthiest men in the county. His life of pleasure and luxury was so far removed from the straitened circumstances of the retired invalid officer, that he never even remembered his existence till that day, a week before, when he had met him walking in the Park, leaning on the arm of his daughter.

The result of that meeting had been a charming letter from the as yet unknown wife in Derbyshire, inviting the Mays to pay them a visit. Elinor was looking pale and a little thin. The heat in London had tried her, and it was arranged that she should accept the invitation, and travel under the escort of Gerald Holt, who was leaving town at the end of the week. Captain May, who had been included in the invitation, had declined it. His constant ill-health had made him indolent, and he never left town, finding himself more comfortable in his own house, waited upon by an old Indian man-servant who had devoted his life to his master's service, as Ayesha had devoted hers to her young mistress. Gerald Holt had delayed his journey, to give Elinor time to make all the preparations necessary to girls when going away on a visit. It was the very first visit she had ever paid; her life had been spent in the narrowest seclusion. Her father's ill-health and scanty means, combined with the selfish indolence of a confirmed invalid, had gradually withdrawn them from all friends and acquaintances, and this visit was like the opening of a new world to her. The only shadow on it was the intense dislike her old nurse showed to it. She was talking of this now to Gerald Holt, who had dropped in, as he had been doing every day since he had re-made their acquaintance. She and he had grown very friendly. She seemed to have known him for years. It was a new experience, this handsome, clever young man, who had stepped suddenly out of an unknown world to her. This afternoon, in the pleasant familiarity which had already sprung up between them, she had told Gerald how bitterly set Ayesha was against the visit.

"She is afraid it will be a different life, and you will like the new life better, and not come back to her any more," said Gerald Holt, laughing.

"No; she is afraid," and a shadow darkened the girl's eyes. It seemed as if some of the old woman's dread touched her for a moment. But her Western scepticism came to her aid, and she shook it off, meeting the young man's amused wonder with frank, laughing eyes.

"The stars speak against it!" she said with mock solemnity. "She says there is a shadow darkening the air of your house, and that if I enter it, I shall share the doom that menaces it!"

The young man laughed too, but his lips twitched suddenly, and as he turned away, to hide the momentary weakness, a savage and cruel light shone in his eyes.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day, they started for Derbyshire. Elinor enjoyed the journey immensely. It was all so fresh and new. Gerald Holt watched over her comfort, and talked to her as he rarely troubled to talk to women, and made the time speed so quickly, that the journey seemed ended almost as soon as it had begun. Mrs. Holt was awaiting them at the station. She was a tall, sallow-cheeked woman, apparently some years older than her husband. Her greeting of Elinor cast a sudden chill on the girl's happy excitement. Mrs. Holt's manner was stiff and cold, and Elinor, remembering the warm letter of invitation she had received from her, was bewildered for a moment. But after Mrs. Holt had exchanged a few words of greeting aside with her husband—and Elinor noticed how wonderfully the sallow, rather sullen-looking face lighted up at the sight of him—her manner became more cordial; Elinor responded eagerly to the change, with her own natural brightness and courtesy. She put away again with some shame, another suspicion that struck her as they entered the carriage waiting for them outside the station, that this cordiality was only forced. Perhaps Gerald Holt also suspected it. At any rate, he had a long talk with his wife on his arrival at the house.

And when Mrs. Holt came down with rather red eyes to the drawing-room, where she found Elinor already waiting, she spoke to the girl in quite a friendly manner. She found Elinor dressed in one of the pretty gowns her father had given her, standing admiring herself in one of the big mirrors. She started and blushed hotly, as she saw Mrs. Holt's face reflected in the

mirror, beside hers, and then she caught her breath as something flashed into the elder woman's eyes.

Greystone Hall was a large, rambling house, situated in a dip of bare, bleak hills. It was a strange spot to choose for a dwelling-place, when within a few miles were exquisite dales and fertile uplands. But it was an old house, and had belonged to the Holts for generations. It had suited the tastes of the founders of the family, who were of a warlike and quarrelsome disposition, decidedly not particular as to their modes of self-enrichment.

It was more convenient for many reasons to have a house in an isolated and, in those days, when roads were few, almost inaccessible spot.

Perhaps ill-gotten gains take to themselves wings, quicker than more lawful spoils. At any rate, the family during the generations preceding the present representative, had grown poorer, till when Gerald Holt entered in possession, it was of a ruined estate. His marriage had saved him. There were no signs now, of the crisis the family fortune had gone through.

The great house, set in perfect repair, was exquisitely furnished, the modern blending cunningly with the old. There were serving men and women. The beautiful, extensive grounds were one of the sights of that part of the county, as was the house itself. There were carriages and horses. The best society visited there, and Gerald Holt was respected in the county; a justice of peace, and it was rumoured, a probable Member. And all this had come of his wife's money. The month passed like a dream of delight to Elinor. Gerald Holt was a perfect host. Mrs. Holt did not always accompany them on the rides and drives they took together.

She laboured under the delusion that she was a confirmed invalid. She visited little among her neighbours, and after a time, Elinor, seeing what an effort it was for Mrs. Holt to chaperon her to some tennis or luncheon party, gave up the pleasure of accepting a great many of the invitations that came to her, and contented herself with riding and driving, and wandering about the beautiful grounds of Greystone Hall. Gerald Holt, clever, well-educated, with an innate power of pleasing, was society enough. One day, Mrs. Holt, who had been suffering considerably for the last few days, exciting Elinor's pity

and sympathy, for she looked really ill, announced her intention of accompanying them on the drive arranged for the afternoon. Elinor was very glad. She did not like Mrs. Holt. To her, she seemed a disagreeable, sullen woman, who would sit silent for hours together, ignoring all efforts at conversation. But in her kindly sympathy, the girl set it down to ill-health, and was really pleased at the prospect of Mrs. Holt's being well enough to accompany them that afternoon. But the drive was a failure. Mrs. Holt sat through it so sullen and silent, and once spoke so rudely to Elinor in answer to some question, that the latter, hurt and chilled, could scarcely throw off the disagreeable impression. Gerald Holt was moody and silent too, and when they reached Greystone Hall again Elinor entered the house, disappointed, uneasy, with a vague uneasiness she could not analyse. Mrs. Holt went up to her room, and her husband followed her. When the door was closed, he faced her, as she sat down with the same sullen, ill-tempered eyes, and began to pull off her gloves.

"What do you mean by treating my relation like this, Maria?" he asked, quietly, but his eyes were glowing, and his face pale.

In an instant the woman's smouldering rage blazed into a fury. She sprang to her feet, her face convulsed, her hands rending the gloves in her passion. "Because you love her! You love that pink and white-faced doll—that—" the word choked in her throat; it was well, for he took a step forward, and his eyes looked like murder; "while I, your wife, whose money you live on, who brought you out of ruin and infamy, am despised, insulted—oh—" Then she turned with a swift step to the door. "I will face her! I will tell her! I will—"

But he had caught her hands in his. "You shall not!" he cried, between his set teeth. "You shall not!"

But in her rage and jealous fury she was almost his match, strong man as he was. He could scarcely force her back into her chair. He saw by her blazing eyes, her figure trembling with the passion that rent her, that she was beyond his control. Hitherto he had managed her. To-day, she was stronger than himself. He thought of Elinor, and of how this raging woman would go to her, and tear from her eyes the veil with which her own innocence had blinded her. And then

Elinor would leave the house, and he and she would be parted for ever. Rage, despair, sickening dread, gave him cunning.

"My dear little wife," and he forced his lips to smile down at her as she sat panting and glaring up at him with her raging eyes, "what folly have you got in your head now? That child! Good Heavens, Maria, do you take me for a fool, or are you mad yourself?" and he laughed.

As he spoke, as he looked down with those handsome eyes she loved so well, as his voice grew softer, as he suddenly sat down on the arm of her chair and passed his arm about her, the raging storm within her received a check. She felt he was lying; she knew he loved her no more—if he had ever loved her; but the old spell he had cast over her once, when he had wooed her fortune and won her heart, reasserted its power. As he held her tenderly, uttering gentle words of remonstrance, pleading, which grew easier to him as he felt the rigid bent figure relax, a sob broke from her, and he knew he had conquered. She suddenly flung her arms about him and broke into wild, hysterical tears, and words of foolish entreaty and reproach. He thought of Elinor, and the tears and the pitiful self-abandonment of this woman whom he hated, filled him with loathing. But for Elinor's sake he submitted, and even kissed her in return.

"But she must go away!" she said, raising her head at last, with a flash of jealous fury again lighting her eyes. He consented. He could do nothing else—for his guilty love's sake.

CHAPTER III.

THAT evening Mrs. Holt was really ill. The scene of the afternoon had exhausted her mentally and physically, and she retired to her room after dinner with a racking attack of neuralgia. Elinor's offers of service were declined, though Mrs. Holt had treated her with civility at dinner, and even seemed to wish to make some amends for her discourtesy in the afternoon. Elinor was only too glad to forget it. But the dinner was scarcely more pleasant than the drive. She felt that there was some constraint between the husband and wife, while Gerald Holt himself, usually so amusing, sat pale and silent at the head of his table, evidently only rousing himself to talk with an effort, while it seemed to

Elinor, grown so accustomed to his kindly courtesy that the slightest change in his manner was perceptible to her, that he was even a little cold and distant to her. She wondered if she had in any way offended him. She felt dull and depressed too, in herself, she scarcely knew why. The depression grew, rather than lessened, even under Mrs. Holt's kinder manner. She almost began to feel glad that she had only two more days to spend there. Gerald Holt had said something about her prolonging her visit, but Mrs. Holt had not invited her to stay any longer; and now she felt that even if she asked her, she would not stay. After dinner she left the drawing-room, in which she was sitting alone, as Mrs. Holt had gone to her room, and Gerald had not yet come from the dining-room, and wandered down into the garden. She never cared for the drawing-room. It was a great square room, and its luxurious grandeur of furniture and hangings, its tall mirrors, seemed always to oppress her. There was no touch of homeliness about it. Mrs. Holt seemed powerless ever to impart this subtle spirit to a room. She remembered, too, that first evening when, catching sight of herself as she passed one of the mirrors in her pretty evening dress, she had suddenly discovered that she was beautiful.

In the shock of surprise and delight she had stopped and gazed at herself, to see suddenly reflected in the mirror Mrs. Holt's face, full of anger and hate. The expression passed as she turned swiftly to look at her hostess, only to meet now a smiling face. But that strange look of malignant dislike seemed always to haunt that mirror, and linger in the air of the great, grand room. Elinor escaped from it now with a sigh of relief, into the dusky, fragrant garden.

The passionless eyes of the far-off stars seemed to look down on her, calming the strange throbbing and unrest that stirred her pulses. She lifted her eyes to the unfathomable blue of the heavens above, and thought how beautiful they were. Perhaps the thought was akin to a prayer, for the brilliant excitement of this troubled unrest faded from her eyes and left them sweet, and strong, and serious. It was well she was all unconsciously prepared for the ordeal she was to go through. She strolled on through the grounds. One part of the garden had been left to a certain picturesque neglect; it sloped here, up the side of one of the bare hills which shut in

the Hall and its grounds. She passed through the little wicket-gate that opened on to the hillside, and began mounting the stony winding path leading to its summit.

She scarcely knew why she chose such a walk. She seemed irresistibly drawn on. She felt that up there she would be nearer the stars. Perhaps Ayesha's superstition had tinged her, without her knowing it, and she had some indefinable sense of approaching peril, and a vague yearning for their eternal steadfastness and strength. She mounted higher and higher, a little breathless and tired as the loose stones slipped from under her feet, but carried on by a desire to reach the summit, which was still so far above her.

Suddenly she stopped, she could go no further, and sank down on a boulder lying by the roadside, to rest, a pretty and strange sight in that place. A slender, graceful girl figure, in her dainty evening dress, a filmy cloud of white lace twisted round her head and throat, resting there on the desolate, lonely hillside, with the hush and darkness of night about her.

Gerald Holt, mounting up from the garden below, caught sight of her at last, as he turned a curve in the mounting road. He had been following her afar off, ever since she left the drawing-room. He had been smoking, but he had long ago flung away his cigar, which had gone out between his set teeth, and was now walking, with savage eyes and pain-disfigured face, torn by the conflicting passions of the hell within him. More than once he had stopped, his better angel hushing for a moment the fierce revolt of the black passions and despair that tore him; but he had gone on again, the evil conquering the good.

At the sight of Elinor seated there, almost, it seemed, as if awaiting his coming, the good was vanquished irrevocably by the sudden fierce onslaught of love, desire, and desperate pain. She did not hear him till he was near her. She was startled out of her half-dreamy recalling of Ayesha's curious dread of her coming to Greystone Hall, and her conviction that the stars had spoken against it, by hearing Gerald Holt's footsteps on the still night air.

She turned to look, rising hastily to her feet. The night was full of starlight, and she could see clearly his light overcoat was unfastened, showing his evening dress underneath. In its buttonhole was a rose. She suddenly recollected now, in a curious, apparently inconsequent way, that he al-

ways wore these particular roses now. They were her favourite roses, and grew just under her window, framing it in; even at this late time of the year, they clustered thick in their creamy fragrance about it. She thought, too, as suddenly, how very handsome he was, and how good and kind he had been to her. Then suddenly a great fear and trembling fell on her, and she half turned, with a desperate desire to hurry on, and reach the summit of the hill, and get out of his presence for ever. But she was too late. He stood before her.

"Elinor!" he said, in a strange, low tone.

His face was very white, but his eyes were smiling with a tender, gentle light. It stirred her to her very heart's depths. The earth seemed to waver beneath her feet; all the dark, luminous air seemed full of flashing, falling stars.

Her hands found themselves clasped in his. She felt herself slowly, gently, but with an irresistible force, being drawn into the light shining from his eyes. Her whole soul was escaping her, to be absorbed, consumed in the fire and passion of his.

"Elinor!"

A faint, far-off voice, appealing, reproachful, and yet with a note of anger, a voice she knew, fell suddenly on the awful suspense and silence of the moment when her soul stood on the brink of destruction. She snatched her hands away, staggering back.

"Aysha!" she cried, her panting breath choking in a sob in her throat.

He had heard nothing. He only saw that in some strange, inexplicable way she had escaped him. She looked at him for a moment with dazed eyes, before which he shrank back. Through their bewilderment and horror the beauty and purity of her woman's soul looked. She turned and ran down the road like a wild thing, heedless of the rough stones as they tore her slight evening shoes and bruised her feet; of the brambles catching at the dainty laces of her dress. For a moment he stood rigid, still. Then a curse broke from him.

What had frightened her too soon? Her soul had been sleeping its dream of ignorant innocence. If he could but have called it into waking life, her woman's pride and strength would have been weakened before it had even taken alarm. But something had aroused her before the love lying asleep within her had strength to assert its power. She was a woman now

—understanding, knowing. How was he to win her?

But there, in the night, with the bleak silence of the everlasting hills around him, with his own raging and baffled passions within, he could see no way but one.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Elinor reached home the next day—she having left Greystone Hall the first thing in the morning—she heard that Aysha was dead. They had found her, the evening before, lying on the floor in her room. She was quite dead. There had been a strange expression on her face of fear and anger; but it seemed to have passed away now under the calming touch of death, and when Elinor went into the darkened room to look at her, she lay beautiful with the inscrutable peace of the eternal rest.

She must have died between nine and ten, as she was found shortly after ten, and old Mahommed had spoken to her, as she sat there writing, about nine o'clock. The hour had struck as he stood talking to her, and he had gone away a few minutes after. The book she was writing in had been closed, and tied with a ribbon. Pushed in the ribbon was a slip of paper, on which was written:

"For Elinor. Read the last page, and no more; then, as you value the love I have borne you, destroy the book."

Elinor read the inscription with eyes in which the blinding tears had suddenly been dried by awe and amazement, full of fear and gratitude. Between nine and ten she had stood with Gerald Holt on the hillside; she had heard Aysha's voice. Had she come to save her? Her soul, bursting the bonds of its earthly fetters, had made one supreme effort to rouse the thoughtless, undisciplined, careless soul of the girl she had loved better than her life. It was Aysha's voice she had heard on the Derbyshire hillside, at the moment when Aysha's body lay still and cold in death on the floor in that far-off London house.

When she was at last able to open the book, Elinor read the entry that stood at the head of the page. It was the one written on the first of August. Below it was another:

"September the second.—The stars are great! What are we before their infinite patience? Why should my weak hands

impiously and vainly try to tear down the veil they have dropped between this and Elinor's future fate? I will wait. The veil will be drawn in full time. But it is awful and weary to have to sit so still, while she treads that path over which the clouds of sorrow, and dishonour, and black treachery have gathered so close. These hideous shapes are about her now. How may she abide their awful peril and pass through them unharmed? Allah is great! Will He show me a way to defend her? Who is to stand between her and this fiend in man's shape? This Gerald Holt, with his beautiful face and smiling eyes. How is she to see the treachery and murder that lie hidden behind this fair mask? But it is there. His feet will not hesitate. His hands are ready. His will is relentless. He will stay for nothing, so that he may win the girl. Will he win? Allah! . . . What do I see—there on the hillside in the star-light?—it is he and she! She is trembling like a frightened child! She knows nothing of her danger. She thinks him all that is good and noble. In her innocence and ignorance, all unknowingly, she worships him. Unless she awakes herself, before he awakes her to the power of the love within her, she will be unprepared—she will be helpless, before his pitiless, inexorable will. Her eyes must open to see the evil in him, before he casts the glamour of his fatal love over them, to bewilder her and make it hard to see the path of everlasting light. Child! See! There is murder in his heart. He will go home from you to-night, to his wife's room. She is lying sleeping there, ex-

hausted by pain, which he has caused by his heartless cruelty. The medicine for soothing that pain is by her side. What is easier than to let it escape?—it is an accident. The poison is subtle—it fills the air, and each breath she draws brings her nearer the gates of death, and lessens the space between you and him. See! She is dead! They find her in the dawn. Child! Your hands are in his! They are stained with his wife's blood. He is drawing you nearer! His lips are perjured by the blackest of perjury. Child! Elinor! . . .

"Oh! The veil has been rent. Allah is great! I must hasten. The stars have spoken. She will read and believe now—"

The last words were written in a feeble, tremulous hand. There was a splash of ink as if the pen had fallen from her hand. But with a last supreme effort she must have closed the book, and left it for the girl she had died to save.

The next day, Elinor saw a paragraph in the paper. Mrs. Gerald Holt, of Grey-stone Hall, had died by an accident. She had gone to sleep, suffering from a severe headache. The chloroform bottle she had kept by her side, had come unstopped in the night, and the contents saturating the sheet and the pillow, had killed her.

Was it an accident? The coroner's inquest so decided. Was it murder? So Elinor, looking into Gerald's eyes, when two months later, he asked her to be his wife, knew! Her eyes spoke. He will out of her presence; nor did they ever see each other again.

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TABLE OF EVENTS, 1887-1888.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

- 8.—Departure of the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany from England.
- 5.—Shortly before the conclusion of the performance, a terribly fatal fire broke out on the stage of the new Theatre Royal, Exeter, which spread with such rapidity that, in less than an hour, the whole building was totally destroyed, nearly 200 persons losing their lives by fire or suffocation. Nothing approaching such a catastrophe at the burning of a theatre ever happened before in this country.
- 9.—Serious rioting at Mitchelstown, County Cork, resulting in three men being killed, while a considerable number, both of the rioters and the constabulary, were more or less injured in this unfortunate affair.
- 11.—Fatal collision between the Irish constabulary and Moonlighters, near Ennis, head-constable Whelan being killed, and others of the police badly hurt. Eight of the ruffians were captured, nearly all of whom had been wounded in the affray.
- 13.—At Doncaster, the great Yorkshire Handicap won by Merry Duchess, and the Champagne Stakes by Ayrshire.
- 14.—The Doncaster St. Leger won by Kilwarlin, who defeated Merry Hampton (the Derby winner), Timothy, and six others.
- 17.—Parliament prorogued by Royal Commission, after a session of the unusually long period of thirty-three weeks.
Terrible railway collision at Hexthorpe, near Doncaster, an express having run into a stationary excursion train. Twenty-four passengers killed, and many others badly hurt in the excursion train; no one in the express being seriously injured.
- 18.—Fatal fire at 274, Strand, in the occupation of one Serné, a hairdresser, his two boys being burnt to death. Serné was tried on the capital charge and acquitted; but was subsequently convicted of wilful incendiarism, and sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude.
- 20.—Launch, at Portsmouth, of the Trafalgar, the largest and most powerful iron-clad ever constructed in this country. When fully equipped, this great war-ship will weigh 12,000 tons, and cost nearly a million of money.
- 21.—At Exeter, the inquest into the cause of the loss of life at the recent fire at the Theatre Royal, resulted in a verdict of "accidental death." The jury, however, added riders, blaming the magistrates for having licensed the theatre, and the architect for its serious structural defects.

- The British steamer *Romeo*, from Liverpool to Rouen, went ashore on the French coast, thirteen persons being drowned.
- 22.—The result of the enquiry into the railway disaster at Hexthorpe, was a verdict of manslaughter against the driver and fireman of the express; but both were acquitted at the trial.
 - 24.—At Mitchelstown, Mr. O'Brien, M.P., and Mr. Mandeville, sentenced to three and two months' imprisonment for having made speeches inciting to crime. Both released on bail pending their appeals.
Fatal occurrence on the Franco-German frontier, a French shooting party, mistaken for poachers, having been fired upon from the German side, and a gamekeeper shot dead, and a French officer wounded.
 - 27.—The first race for the American Cup, in New York Harbour, won by the American yacht *Volunteer*, beating the Scotch yacht *Thistle* by nineteen minutes.
 - 29.—Alderman de Keyser elected Lord Mayor of London.
 - 30.—In the second contest for the American Cup, the *Volunteer* was again victorious, the Americans thus retaining the trophy.

OCTOBER, 1887.

- 1.—Murder of the Rev. W. M. Farley, Vicar of Cettingham, in Suffolk, by his curate, who, at the trial, was found to be insane.
- 6.—At Balmoral, in presence of the Queen and the Empress Eugénie, the Prince of Wales unveiled the Jubilee Statue of Her Majesty, presented by her tenantry and servants.
A summons against the Lord Mayor of Dublin (who attended in full State), for an offence under the Crimes Act, dismissed, the magistrate holding that the charge had not been established; but he stated a case for a Superior Court.
- 11.—At Newmarket, the *Cesarewitch* won by Lord Rodney's *Humewood*, *Bendigo* and *Carlton* being second and third. Twenty-three started.
- 12.—Death of George Fordham, the celebrated jockey, aged 50.
The valuable *Middle Park Plate* at Newmarket, for two-year-olds, easily won by Sir F. Johnstone's *Friar's Balsam*, only five starting, the smallest field since the race was instituted.
Mr. Chamberlain addressed a very large and enthusiastic meeting at Belfast on the "Maintenance of the Union."
The *Empire Theatre*, Leicester Square, licensed as a Music-hall, notwithstanding

- very strenuous opposition, twelve learned counsel appearing in the case.
- 14.—General Boulanger, Commander of the 18th Army Corps, and lately French Minister of War, placed under close arrest for thirty days, for insubordinate conduct and language, in connection with the "War Office Scandals."
- The Metropolitan Board of Works decided to contribute £150,000 towards the purchase of land adjacent to Hampstead Heath, for its permanent enlargement.
- 17.—Opening of Terry's Theatre, in the Strand. Serious rioting in Trafalgar Square, by large mobs of the "Unemployed."
- At Stratford-on-Avon, Mr. Henry Irving performed the ceremony of dedicating the handsome fountain, presented by Mr. Childs, of Philadelphia, to the town, in presence of the United States Minister and a distinguished company.
- 18-19.—Mr. Gladstone addressed large meetings at Nottingham, mostly on the Irish Question.
- 24.—Lord Hartington addressed an important meeting of the Unionist party at Nottingham, chiefly in reply to Mr. Gladstone's speeches of the previous week.
- Princess Henry of Battenberg confined of a daughter at Balmoral, the first instance of a member of the Royal Family being born in Scotland since the year 1600.
- 25.—At Newmarket, the Cambridgeshire won by Gloriation, who beat Bendigo, Quicksand, and seventeen others.
- 30.—Sudden death of Sir George Macfarren, the eminent composer, aged 74.
- 31.—At Middleton, County Cork, the appeal of Messrs. O'Brien and Mandeville, against their conviction for offences under the Crimes Act, dismissed, and both lodged in gaol to undergo their sentences.

NOVEMBER, 1887.

- 3.—In presence of the Prince of Wales, Truro Cathedral consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with great pomp and ceremonial.
- 9.—Lord Mayor's Show. At the Guildhall Banquet, Lord Salisbury made an important speech on the Foreign, Domestic, and Irish Policy of the Government.
- 10.—The Irish Court of Exchequer decided that the magistrate was wrong in dismissing the charge against the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and remitted the case for re-hearing.
- The Liverpool Autumn Cup won by St. Mirin, beating Gay Hermit, Kilcreene, and five others.
- 11.—Four of the seven Chicago Anarchists, condemned for murder, executed in that city. Of the others, one committed suicide in gaol, and two had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment.
- 13.—Desperate rioting and conflict between the mob and police in Trafalgar Square and its neighbourhood, a strong military force being at last called out to clear the streets. A great number of persons, including several of the police, badly hurt and taken to hospitals, and many arrests effected.

- 16.—The steamer Wah Ysung destroyed by fire in Canton River, and 400 passengers reported to have perished.
- Dense fog and very severe cold in London.
- 17.—By an almost unanimous vote—527 to 3—the French Chamber of Deputies pronounced for the prosecution of M. Wilson, son-in-law of the President of the French Republic, on various grave charges in connection with the "Decoracion Scandal."
- Death of Colonel Valentine Baker (Baker Pasha) in Egypt.
- 18.—Notice issued by the Commissioner of Police, prohibiting meetings in Trafalgar Square.
- 19.—Visit of the Czar to the Emperor of Germany in Berlin.
- Lord Lytton elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University by the casting vote of the Chancellor, Lord Rosebery being the other candidate.
- Resignation of the French Ministry.
- Disastrous collision, off Dover, between the British steamer Rosa Mary and the Dutch steamer W. A. Schloten from Rotterdam to New York, with emigrants, the latter being sunk with the loss of 130 lives.
- 21.—Barnum's Great Menagerie totally destroyed by fire at Bridgeport, Connecticut, very many of the animals perishing in the flames. Among them was "Alice," the elephant so long the great favourite of the juvenile visitors to our own famous collection in the Regent's Park. Estimated loss, £140,000.
- 23.—At the Conference of the Conservative Union at Oxford, Lord Salisbury made an important political speech, and was presented with about 500 addresses from Conservative Associations from all parts of the kingdom.
- 25.—Beach again defeated Hanlan on the Nepean River, New South Wales, for the Sculling Championship of the World.
- 29.—Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen addressed an immense Unionist meeting in Dublin, and were received with great enthusiasm.
- 30.—Great Unionist banquet in Dublin, presided over by the Marquis of Hartington, at which Mr. Goschen was the principal speaker.

DECEMBER, 1887.

- 1.—Mr. Blundell Maple, Conservative, elected for Dulwich by a majority of 1,412.
- 2.—Resignation of M. Grévy, President of the French Republic.
- Mr. T. D. Sullivan, M.P., Lord Mayor of Dublin, sentenced to two months' imprisonment, as a first-class misdemeanant, for offences under the Crimes Act.
- M. Carnot elected President of the French Republic.
- 5.—Death in London of Lord Lyons, for upwards of twenty years British Ambassador at Paris.
- 10.—Opening of the Apprentices' Exhibition at the People's Palace, by the Prince of Wales, who delivered an address on the occasion.
- Attempted assassination of M. Jules Ferry, in Paris.

- 19.—The international prize fight for the championship of the world, between the English and American pugilists, Jem Smith and Jake Kilrain, took place near Bouen, in France, and resulted in a draw owing to darkness setting in, after a long and determined contest.
- 26.—Bank Holiday.
- 29.—Total destruction of the Grand Theatre, Islington, by a fire which broke out shortly after the conclusion of the performance. Happily, no lives were lost.

JANUARY, 1833.

- 3.—Severe gales over the British Isles, and many shipping disasters, with loss of life, reported.
- 4.—The Theatre Royal, Bolton, totally destroyed by fire, under circumstances strongly pointing to wilful incendiarism. No loss of life.
- 9.—The remains of the late Emperor Napoleon and of his son, the Prince Imperial, removed from Chislehurst to a stately mausoleum at Farnborough, erected by the Empress Eugénie for their reception.
- 11-12.—Lord Salisbury enthusiastically received at Liverpool, where he delivered important speeches to large and representative meetings.
- 17.—Collision in the Irish Channel between the Dominion Line steamer Toronto, and a Norwegian barque, the latter being sunk, and only one of the crew saved.
- 18.—Mr. John Cunningham Graham, M.P., and Mr. John Burns, convicted at the Old Bailey for participation in the Trafalgar Square rioting of last November, and each sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment.
- 19.—Death of the well-known and popular Sir Robert Carden, the Senior Alderman of London, and "Father of the Corporation," aged 86.
- 20.—Terrible fire in Houndsditch, four lives being lost, and five other persons more or less seriously injured.
- 28.—Total eclipse of the moon, visible all over Europe.

FEBRUARY, 1833.

- 2.—Lord Ripon and Mr. John Morley were presented with the freedom of the City of Dublin, and afterwards addressed a great meeting in Leinster Hall, advocating Mr. Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Policy.
- 6.—Important speech by Prince Bismarck in the German Reichstag, in which he expressed his full confidence that the peace of Europe would not be disturbed in the near future.
- 7.—Robert Preston convicted at Manchester of having set fire to the Bolton Theatre on 4th January, and sentenced to twelve years' penal servitude.
- 9.—Meeting of Parliament.
- 13.—Championship race on the Thames between Wallace Ross of New Brunswick, and George Bubear, Champion of England; won by the former in 23 min. 16 sec.
- 28.—The race for the International two miles Professional Skating Championship at

Amsterdam, won by James Smart in 6 min. 49 sec.; sixteen started; George See, the only other Englishman who competed, being second.

- 29.—The Deptford election, which had excited a good deal of interest, resulted in the return of the Conservative candidate, Mr. Darling, Q.C., by a majority of 275 over Mr. Wilfred Blunt, Gladstonian Liberal.

MARCH, 1833.

- 1.—M. Wilson, son-in-law of M. Grévy, late President of the French Republic, sentenced to two years' imprisonment, five years' subsequent deprivation of civil rights, and to pay a fine of £120, for "having received money for procuring to various persons the Cross of the Legion of Honour." Two other less prominent persons were also convicted and sentenced to minor penalties, all of whom exercising their right of appeal.
- 6.—The Waterloo Cup won by Mr. L. Pilkington's dog Burnaby, the runner up being Colonel North's Duke Macpherson.
- 7.—Sudden and alarming illness of the Emperor of Germany reported from Berlin.
- 9.—Death of the Emperor of Germany, aged 91 years. The announcement of the fatal termination of the illness of this great and venerable Monarch, though generally expected, was the cause of profound grief, not only in Berlin, and throughout Germany, but nearly over the whole civilised world.
- Collision off Dungeness, between two large Glasgow ships, the Tasmania and the City of Corinth, the latter being sunk, and two only of her crew saved.
- 10.—Silver wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Owing to the death of the German Emperor, the celebration was comparatively quiet, but a grand banquet took place at Marlborough House, the Queen and all the Royal Personages in London being present, and there were many presentations of magnificent gifts, and some brilliant illuminations at the West End.
- Another so-called international prize fight between John L. Sullivan of Boston, United States, and Charles Mitchell, an English pugilist, took place at Creil, in France, and after a three hours' contest, ended, like the first, in a drawn battle.
- 11.—The Emperor Frederick, accompanied by the Empress Victoria, arrived in Berlin, having made the long journey from San Remo without apparent fatigue.
- 12-13-14.—A terrific snowstorm and gale of quite unprecedented violence, and described by the American newspapers as a "Blizzard," reported from New York as having caused enormous destruction of life and property, both on land and sea, and rendered traffic of every kind absolutely impossible during the considerable period of its duration.
- 15.—Marriage at Bournemouth of Prince Oscar of Sweden to Miss Munck, in presence of the Queen of Sweden, his sister, the Crown Princess of Denmark, the Duchess of Albany, and a distinguished assembly.

- 16.—Funeral of the Emperor of Germany. No such magnificent and imposing a ceremonial was ever before witnessed in Berlin, it having been attended by Royal or high and distinguished representatives from every country in Europe, and by a vast number of Ministers of State, Ambassadors, and other noble and eminent personages. The health of the Emperor Frederick prohibited him from taking part, and illness also prevented Prince Bismarck and Count Moltke from joining the funeral procession. Memorial Services were held at the same time at Windsor, in Westminster Abbey, and in nearly all the chief cities of Europe.
- 19.—In the House of Commons, Mr. Ritchie introduced the Local Government Bill for England and Wales.
- 20.—The Baquet Theatre at Oporto totally destroyed by a fire which broke out during the performance, and upwards of 120 of the audience reported to have perished in the terrible consequent panic.
- 21.—The Lincolnshire Handicap won by Mr. Legh's Veracity, who started at 50 to 1, and beat twenty-four followers.
The Queen, accompanied by Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg, left Windsor, en route to Florence, for a stay of some weeks.
- 23.—The Liverpool Grand National Steeplechase won by Mr. E. W. Baird's Playfair, an outsider, who beat Frigate, Ballot Box, and seventeen others. The Prince of Wales's Magic came in eighth.
- 24.—The Oxford and Cambridge annual Boat Race on the Thames resulted in the very easy victory of Cambridge, who led from the start, and won anyhow by 6 lengths in 20 min. 48 secs.
- 26.—M. Wilson, son-in-law of the ex-President of the French Republic, who was sentenced on the 1st instant to two years' imprisonment and other penalties, for having "taken money to procure decorations," acquitted by the Court of Appeal, as were the two other persons convicted for complicity in the offence.
Great floods in Germany, owing to the overflowing of the rivers Elbe, Oder, and Vistula, considerable loss of life, enormous destruction of property, and great distress being reported.
- 27.—Launch at Pembroke of the iron-clad Nile, sister ship of the Trafalgar, these great vessels being two of the heaviest and most powerful war-ships in the world. Opening of the new Putney Embankment. General Boulanger placed on the "Retired List" of the French Army by the President of the Republic, a Court Martial having declared him guilty of various military offences.

APRIL, 1888.

- 2.—Easter Monday. Notwithstanding somewhat unpropitious weather, an even unusually large number of Londoners availed themselves, in their customary manner, of the first Bank Holiday of the year. The Crystal Palace alone attracted the great gathering of over 65,000, while the various other places of amusement in the Metropolis were well attended.
- 6.—At Leicester, the Duke of Portland's horse, Donovan, easily won the Portland Stakes of £6,000 to the winner, the richest two-year-old prize ever competed for, El Dorado and Your Grace being second and third respectively. Twenty-five started.
- 7.—The Duke of Portland was again successful at the Leicester Meeting, his horse, Johnny Morgan, having won the Spring Handicap of £1,000, beating King Month, Kinsky, and nine others.
- 11.—At Epsom, the City and Suburban won by Sir George Chetwynd's Fullerton, who beat Oliver Twist, Abu Klea, and eleven others.
- 15.—Very sudden death, in Liverpool, of Mr. Matthew Arnold, the well-known critic and accomplished man of letters, aged sixty-five years.
- 16.—Serious shipping disaster in the Channel, the British steamer Biela and the Belgian steamer Vena having been in collision, and the latter sunk, and fourteen of her crew and the pilot drowned.
- 18.—The second reading of the Bill to legalise marriage with a deceased's wife's sister carried in the House of Commons by a majority of fifty-seven.
The Marquis of Hartington presented with the freedom of the City at the Guildhall, and entertained at a banquet at the Mansion House.
- 19.—Terrible explosion at St. Helen's Colliery, near Workington, thirty of the thirty-five men in the pit at the time being destroyed.
- 23.—The Queen entertained at luncheon by the Emperor of Austria, at Innsbruck, on her journey from Florence to Berlin; this being the first occasion of Her Majesty having been in Austrian territory.
- 24.—Arrival of the Queen in Berlin, who met with a most cordial reception from all classes, and who immediately visited the invalid Emperor, whom she found better than he had been for some time.
- 25.—Reception of Prince von Bismarck, in private audience, by the Queen at Charlottenburg, the interview lasting more than half-an-hour. A great dinner party took place at the Palace in the evening.
- 26.—Lord Dunraven's Bill for the Reform of the House of Lords withdrawn, on the Prime Minister answering that it was the intention of the Government to introduce a measure to facilitate the entry of life peers into the House.
- 27.—Return home of the Queen, after a five weeks' stay on the Continent.
Announcement from Rome that the Pope, through the Holy Office, had explicitly condemned the Irish Plan of Campaign, and the practice of boycotting.
- 29.—Yet another disastrous collision in the Channel, this time between the steamer Moto and the sailing ship Smyrna, both British, whereby the latter was sunk, and her captain, pilot, and ten of the crew drowned.

- 2.—Easter Monday. Notwithstanding somewhat unpropitious weather, an even unusually large number of Londoners availed themselves, in their customary manner, of the first Bank Holiday of the year. The

MAY, 1888.

- 2.—At Newmarket, the race for the Two Thousand Guineas was a surprise, the favourite, Friar's Balsam, on whom 3 to 1 were laid, finishing last but one in the small field of six. The Duke of Portland's Ayrshire and Johnny Morgan were first and second, and the Duke of Westminster's Orbit third. Time, 1 min. 52 secs.
- 4.—The One Thousand Guineas Stakes at Newmarket won by Mr. Baird's Briar-Root, who beat Seabreeze, the favourite, Belle Mahone, and eleven others, in the good time of 1 min. 44½ secs.
- 8.—The Glasgow Exhibition opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales.
- 9.—The Chester Cup won by Kinsky in a field of twelve.
The Prince and Princess of Wales visited Blackburn, where the Prince laid the foundation-stone of the new Technical School.
- 11.—The Kempton Park Grand Prize of 1,000 guineas won by Crowberry, who beat eight others.
- 12.—At Kempton Park, the "Grand Jubilee Stakes," value 3,000 guineas, one mile, won by Minting, who easily defeated Tyrone, The Cobbler, and others.
- 14.—The Anglo-Danish Exhibition opened by the Princess of Wales.
- 15.—At the Oval, the Surrey County Club sustained a most decisive defeat from the newly-arrived Australian Cricketers, who won by an innings and 154 runs.
- 17.—The Newmarket Handicap won by Theodore, in a field of nine.
- 18.—The Princess of Wales opened the Royal Naval and Military Bazaar at the Hôtel Métropole, when purses containing upwards of £5,000 were presented in aid of the funds of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes.
- 19.—Funeral at Portsmouth of Admiral Sir William Hewett, V.C., with considerable pomp and full military honours.
- 20.—Opening of the Barcelona Exhibition by the Queen Regent of Spain; the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and Prince George of Wales being among those present.
- 21.—Whit-Monday. Bank Holiday, favoured with really magnificent summer weather.
- 24.—Queen's Birthday. At Berlin, Prince Henry of Prussia, and Princess Irene of Hesse, were married in presence of the Emperor of Germany, and a great number of Royal and distinguished personages, which included the Prince of Wales, the uncle of both bride and bridegroom.
The remarkable feat of sculling in a small open pleasure boat from Dover to the French coast in thirteen hours, accomplished by a Mr. Osborne, of Tewkesbury.
- 25.—The Manchester Cup won by Merry Andrew in a field of nine, Selby and Scottish King being second and third.
- 27.—The French Derby, worth over £4,000, won by M. Donon's Stuart, beating ten others.
- 29.—On the first day of the Epsom Summer Races, the Woodcote Stakes fell to Gold, seven others running.

30.—The Epsom Derby was won by the Duke of Portland's Ayrshire, who started "odds on," Crowberry and Van Dieman's Land coming in second and third. Time, 2 min. 43 secs. Only nine started.

Very disastrous fire at Messrs. Garrould's, in the Edgware Road, six of the female assistants losing their lives, and three others seriously injured.

31.—The Epsom Grand Prize won by Merry Andrew in a field of nine; and the Royal Stakes by Gervas, thirteen others competing.

JUNE, 1888.

- 1.—At Epsom, the race for the Oaks won by Seabreeze, who beat Rada, Belle Mahone, and three others, in the fast time of 2 min. 42 4-5th secs.
At the Oval, the Australians decisively beaten by the Players of England, who won by ten wickets.
- 4.—Opening of the Irish Exhibition at Olympia, a numerous and distinguished company of all shades of political opinion being present.
- 5.—At Nottingham, the Australian Cricketers sustained another severe defeat, the county team winning by ten wickets.
- 7.—Opening of the Belgian Exhibition at Brussels by the King of the Belgians, in presence of a brilliant assemblage.
Centenary Festival of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls, at the Albert Hall, under the presidency of the Prince of Wales, Grand Master of England, who was accompanied by the King of Sweden.
- 10.—The Grand Prix of Paris easily won by M. Donon's Stuart, the English horse Crowberry coming in second, and St. Gall third. Only six ran, the value of the race to the winner being £5,771.
- 12.—In the House of Commons, the important announcement was made that the Government had decided to abandon, for the present session, the Licensing Clauses of the Local Government Acts.
At Ascot, the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by Ossory, eight others starting; the Ascot Stakes by Dan Dancer, in a field of ten; and the Gold Vase by Exmoor. Owing to very grave news from Berlin, as to the condition of the German Emperor, the Prince and Princess of Wales did not visit the course.
- 13.—The Royal Hunt Cup won by Shillelagh, Attila and Veracity being the two other placed horses. Twenty-two ran.
- 14.—The Ascot Gold Cup won by Timothy, Tissapherne and Ténébreuse coming in second and third. Rêve d'Or and Bird of Freedom made up the field.
- 15.—At Ascot, the Wokingham Stakes easily won by Annamite, who defeated twenty-four others; and the Hardwicke Stakes by Minting, only one other competing.
Death of Frederick the Third, Emperor of Germany, after a long period of illness and suffering. The sad, though not unexpected event, caused the deepest grief in Berlin and Germany, in this country, and, indeed, throughout Europe. His reign lasted only fourteen weeks.

- 18.—Funeral of the Emperor Frederick at Potsdam. Although not conducted upon the magnificent scale observed at the obsequies of his venerable predecessor, it was, nevertheless, a grand military pageant, and was attended by a numerous array of Royal and other distinguished personages, including the Prince and Princess of Wales, and their eldest son. Special funeral services were held at Balmoral, Windsor, and Westminster Abbey.
- 25.—In opening the German Reichstag, the new Emperor delivered an important and impressive speech, declaring his firm resolve to adhere to the pacific policy of his predecessors, as far as in him lay.
- 28.—Fiftieth Anniversary of the Coronation of the Queen.
The libel action brought by Charles Wood, the well-known jockey, against the Licensed Victuallers' Gazette, after a trial which lasted eight days, resulted in a verdict for the plaintiff with one farthing damages, and the Judge's refusal to allow costs.

JULY, 1888.

- 5.—The libel action, "O'Donnell v. the Times," with reference to its articles "Parnellism and Crime," resulted in an immediate verdict for the defendant.
Strike of about 1,500 women and girls employed at the match factory of Messrs. Bryant and May at Bow. After some days the dispute was settled, and work resumed.
- 6.—Mr. Parnell made a "personal explanation" in the House of Commons, in which he denounced the highly incriminating letters published in the Times, and bearing his signature, to be absolute forgeries.
Henley Regatta concluded, unfavourable weather having prevailed during the whole three days.
Terrible fire at De Beer's diamond mine at Kimberley, South Africa; Mr. Lindsay, the manager, and several hundreds of the men, chiefly natives, losing their lives.
- 13.—Determined duel at Paris between M. Floquet, the French Prime Minister, and General Boulanger, the latter being seriously wounded.
The "Old Times" coach, driven by the well-known whip, James Selby, accomplished the journey from London to Brighton and back—108 miles—in 7 hours and 50 minutes, a wager of £1,000 to £500 having been laid that it could not be done in 8 hours.
- 14.—The annual cricket match between Eton and Harrow resulted in the victory of the Harrovians by 156 runs; and at the Oval, the Players beat the Gentlemen by an innings and 36 runs.
The Cunard steamer Etruria arrived at Queenstown from New York in 6 days 4 hours and 50 minutes, the fastest eastern passage on record.
- 17.—At Lord's, nearly 20,000 persons witnessed the conclusion of the cricket match, England v. Australia, the latter winning by 61 runs.
At Wimbledon, the shooting for the Queen's Prize of £250, with gold badge and medal, resulted in the victory of Private Fulton, Queen's Westminster, Corporal Noakes, 1st Berks, being only one point behind.
- 19.—Meeting of the Emperors of Germany and Russia off Cronstadt, both monarchs afterwards landing in company at Peterhof.
Celebration at Plymouth of the three hundredth anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada.
At Wimbledon, the Elcho Challenge Cup won by Ireland; and the Ashburton Shield for Public Schools by Clifton College, sixteen other schools competing.
- 20.—Mr. Conybeare, Member for Cambourne, suspended from the service of the House for one month, for a "gross libel" upon the Speaker, in a letter written by him to the Star, and published in that paper.
The Kempton Park Grand Two-Year-Old Stakes won by Gay Hampton. Twelve started.
- 23-24-25.—At Leicester, the Zetland Plate, of £2,000, won by Seclusion in a field of eight; the Midland Derby Stakes, of £1,500, for three-year-olds, by Arrandale, beating ten others; and the Summer Handicap of £1,000 by King Monmouth, who defeated eight other horses.
- 26.—Arrival of the German Emperor at Stockholm on a visit to the King of Sweden.
- 27.—In the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown Park of £10,000 to the winner, and £500 to the second, the Duke of Westminster ran first and second with Orbit and Ossory, and Mr. Douglas third with Martley. Thirteen started.
- 28.—Professor Baldwin, a young American athlete, effected a safe descent at the Alexandra Palace from a balloon upwards of 1,000 feet above the ground by means of a parachute. Baldwin has repeated this performance many times since.
- 30.—Arrival at Copenhagen of the Emperor of Germany, on a visit to the King of Denmark.
- 31.—Extraordinary occurrence and great panic at Munich, owing to eight elephants, marching in a festive procession, taking fright and making a stampede through the streets. Four persons killed, and a great number of others seriously injured.

AUGUST, 1888.

- 1.—Opening of the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition with great pomp and ceremony, and in presence of a vast concourse of spectators.
- 1-2-3.—At Goodwood, the Sussex Stakes won by Zanzibar; the Gold Cup by Bada, who beat Osric, Timothy, and Exmor; the Prince of Wales's Stakes by El Dorado; and the Goodwood Stakes by Stourhead, Clan Chattan and Fealty being second and third. Twelve started.
- 2.—George Galletley, aged 18, convicted at the Old Bailey of the wilful murder of Joseph Rumbold in the Regent's Park, and condemned to death; but afterwards reprieved. Seven other young ruffians, also indicted, were acquitted on the capital

- charge, pleaded guilty to minor offences, and were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.
- 3.—Terrible explosion at the firework factory of Messrs. Cadwell and Co., at Wandsworth, two girls being instantaneously killed, another dying shortly after, and the fourth dreadfully injured.
- Destructive volcanic eruption in one of the Lipari Islands; immense damage stated to have been occasioned.
- 5.—The lugger Seagull sunk off Scarborough in a terrible gale, her crew, nine in number, being all drowned.
- Death of General Sheridan, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army, at his home in Massachusetts, aged 57 years.
- 6.—Immense Unionist meeting at Bridge Park, near Tunbridge Wells, at which Mr. A. J. Balfour, the Irish Secretary and principal speaker, was presented with nearly 400 addresses from Conservative and Unionist Associations in Kent and Sussex.
- Bank Holiday. Despite somewhat unfavourable weather, the August Holiday did not lack its usual vast crowds of excursionists and sightseers.
- Disastrous collision about midnight on the South-Western Railway at Hampton Wick, resulting in the death of four persons, two passengers, and the driver and fireman of one of the engines. Many other passengers were most seriously injured.
- 8.—Banquet to Her Majesty's Ministers at the Mansion House. Ten members of the Cabinet were present, including Lord Salisbury, who made the political speech usual on the occasion.
- In the House of Commons, the Parnell Commission Bill read a third time, and carried by a majority of 116.
- Serious disturbances in Paris during a Communist funeral; the police and military in collision with armed mobs, many of whom were arrested and several badly hurt.
- 10.—In the cricket match at the Oval between Surrey and Sussex, the former made 698 runs in their first innings, the best on record in a first-class match.
- 11.—At Leicester the Twenty-mile Cycling Match for the Championship of the World between E. Howell and W. Wood, won by the former in 1 hour and 49 secs.
- Terrible disaster at Valparaiso, owing to the bursting of a large reservoir. Nearly a hundred houses destroyed, and over two hundred persons drowned.
- 13.—In the House of Lords the Royal Assent given to the Local Government Bill, the Imperial and National Defence Bill, the Parnell Commission Bill, and to other measures.
- The House of Commons adjourned to November 6th for an autumn session.
- Mr. Parnell commenced an action in the Scottish Courts at Edinburgh against the Times, claiming £50,000 damages for libels contained in its well-known articles, "Parnellism and Crime."
- 14.—News from Rome to the effect that the Italian troops had suffered a severe defeat on the borders of Abyssinia.
- In the competition with the 40-pounder breech-loading Armstrong Gun at Shoeburyness, the first prize won by the Fifth Detachment of the Third Kent Artillery.
- Resignation by Count von Moltke of his high position as Chief of the Staff of the German army, accepted by the Emperor with great regret.
- Disastrous collision in the North Atlantic, between the Danish steamers Thingvalla and Geiser, the latter being sunk, and 105 of her passengers and crew drowned. The Thingvalla, after transferring passengers to another steamer, arrived safely at Halifax.
- 15.—Mr. Justice Hannen, Mr. Justice Day, and Mr. Justice Smith, the judges appointed to investigate the charges made in the Times articles headed "Parnellism and Crime," fixed 17th September for their first sitting.
- 22.—Visit of the Queen to Glasgow. She opened the new Municipal Buildings, and then made a State visit to the Industrial Exhibition, where she was received with immense enthusiasm.
- 23.—Visit of the Queen to Paisley; and of the Princess Beatrice to Govan, who launched the new war-ship, Marathon.
- 25.—At the Crystal Palace, the cricket match between the Australians and an eleven of England resulted in the Colonists being beaten by 78 runs; this being their fifth successive defeat.
- 26.—Very disastrous fire in Hamburg, attended by considerable loss of life and enormous destruction of property.
- 27.—In the descent near Witham, in Essex, of the balloon which had ascended from Olympia an hour or two before, a terrible accident occurred, by which Mr. Simmonds, the well-known aeronaut, was killed, and one of his two companions very seriously hurt, the other escaping with slight injury. This was the veteran's 495th ascent.
- 29.—At York, the Great Ebor Handicap won by Nappe, an outsider, in a field of thirteen; and the Prince of Wales's Stakes by Nunthorpe, who beat six others.
- 31.—At Manchester, the deciding match between the Australian cricketers and an eleven of England, won by the English players in one innings, and with twenty-one runs to spare.

OBITUARY FOR 1887-1888.

On the 1st September, 1887, died **EMMA JANE WORBOISE** (Mrs. Etherington Guyton), a well-known contributor to religious publications, and editor of the *Christian World Magazine*.

The 2nd September was marked by the death of **GUSTAVE L. M. STRAUSS**, the author of "Reminiscences of an Old Bohemian," and one of the founders of the "Savage Club." He was born about the year 1807, in Canada, took the degree of Ph.D. at the University of Berlin, served as assistant surgeon in the French army, and came to settle in London in 1839. As author, magazine writer, journalist, dramatist, critic, nothing came amiss to his energy and versatility. He edited the *Grocer*, he wrote for the comic journals, and to the last was a striking and original figure in the world of letters. In 1879 he was admitted to Charterhouse, and became an out-pensioner of that foundation; but neither age nor adversity had power to daunt his indomitable spirit.

SIR CHARLES YOUNG, Bart. and dramatist, the author of "Shadows and Charms," and "Jim the Penman," was born in 1839, and died 11th September, 1887.

Early in October was reported the death of **LADY BRASSEY**, at sea, between Australia and the Mauritius, on board Lord Brassey's yacht, the *Sunbeam*, the "Voyages" of which she had chronicled with so much success.

GEORGE FORDHAM, the celebrated jockey, died 12th October, 1887, in his fifty-first year. He scored his first win in 1851; won the Cambridgeshire in 1853, and subsequently became the most successful jockey of his day. Through all his career he maintained a character of strict integrity.

MRS. CRAIK—Dinah Maria Mulock—was born at Stoke, in 1826. Her first novel, "The Ogilvies," was published in 1849, and "John Halifax," the work which made her reputation, in 1857. The last novel she wrote, "King Arthur," appeared in the year 1886. Mrs. Craik died at Shortlands, Kent, on the 12th October, 1887.

The **RIGHT HON. A. J. B. BERESFORD-HOPE** died on the 20th October. He was the youngest son of "Anastasius" Hope, and was born 1820. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity, Camb., where he graduated in 1841. Mr. Hope was a voluminous writer on ecclesiastical questions.

The head-master of Uppingham School, **DR. THRING**, was born 29th October, 1821, and was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. After some experience in private tuition he was elected to Uppingham in 1853. He raised the school to a remarkable pitch of efficiency, and carried out his own system of thorough education with very great success. Dr. Thring died October 22nd, 1887.

SIR GEORGE MACFARREN, Mus. Doc., was born 2nd March, 1813. He was educated at the Royal Academy of Music, and eventually succeeded

Sir Sterndale Bennett as Principal of that institution. He was chosen Professor of Music at Cambridge, in 1875, and was knighted by the Queen in 1883. His compositions embrace Oratorios, Operas, Operettas, Overtures, Symphonies, Sonatas, tuneful songs and effective church music. His lectures on music and biographies of musicians were also of considerable value. Sir George died on the 30th October.

The death of **JENNY LIND**, Madame Goldschmidt, on the 2nd November, at Malvern, recalled to the public mind her ancient fame as the "Swedish Nightingale." Madame Goldschmidt was born at Stockholm on the 6th October, 1821.

BAKER PASHA, who as Valentine Baker ruined a promising career in the British army, was born in 1825, and entered the army in 1848. He served in the Kafir War and in the Crimea, and was Lieut.-Colonel of the 10th Hussars from 1860 to 1873. He then devoted himself to travel and exploration on the Russian frontier, in Persia, and Afghanistan, and embodied the results of his observations in a volume entitled "Clouds in the East." In 1874 he was appointed Assistant Quartermaster-General; but in the following year he was removed from the service. In 1877 Colonel Baker began his career in the Turkish army, and served with distinction in the Russo-Turkish War. He was chosen to organise the gendarmerie in Egypt, and, after the defeat and destruction of Hicks Pasha and the Egyptian army, he essayed the relief of Tokar with a native force, which, however, broke and fled at the first attack of the Arabs. Valentine Baker died on 17th November, at Cairo.

LORD LYONS, a noted diplomatist, was born 1817, and succeeded his father, the Admiral of Crimean fame, in 1858. He had embraced a diplomatic career from the first, and passing through the various grades of the service, he became Ambassador at Washington, and subsequently at Constantinople. He was transferred to Paris in 1867, and remained at the Embassy till his retirement, shortly before his death, which occurred at Norfolk House, London, on the 5th December.

PROFESSOR BALFOUR STEWART, who died December, 1887, was born 1st November, 1828, at Edinburgh. Eventually he was appointed director of Kew Observatory, and his scientific reputation led to his appointment, in 1859, as Professor of Natural Philosophy at Owens College, Manchester. He was the author of many scientific treatises and papers.

A novelist of considerable power and promise was lost by the death of **MISS MARGARET VELEY**, on the 7th December, 1837. Her most successful novel, "For Percival," ensured her a considerable circle of readers. Miss Veley was born 12th May, 1843.

A veteran actor, **Mr. W. H. CHIPFENDALE**, died, aged 88 years, on the 3rd January, 1888. He made his first début in London in 1853, at the

Haymarket, and for many years represented the high comedy of the old school at that theatre with general appreciation. Mr. Chippendale also appeared as Polonius in Mr. Irving's revival of "Hamlet" at the Lyceum. He took his farewell of the stage as long ago as 1879.

PROFESSOR BONAMY PRICE was born at Guernsey in 1807, and graduated at Worcester College, Oxford. He was chosen Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, and was the author of many pamphlets and articles on currency and kindred topics, on which his opinions were generally bold and unconventional. He died 8th January, 1888.

SIR ROBERT GARDEN, Lord Mayor in 1857-8, an eminent stockbroker and active City magistrate, died on the 19th January.

An eminent legist is lost to us by the death of SIR HENRY J. S. MAINE, who was born 1822, and graduated from Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1844, after a brilliant academical career. In 1862 he was appointed Member of the Supreme Council of India, and remained in that country till 1869. Sir Henry has written much and well on early laws, customs, and institutions. He died 4th February, 1888, at Cannes, in France.

EDMUND LEAR, artist and humorist, author of the "Book of Nonsense," and of sundry journals of travels and sketching tours, was born near Knowsley in Lancashire, and was first employed by the zoological Earl of Derby to paint animals and natural objects, and, showing great artistic talent, was sent by the Stanley family to Italy and Greece, the scenery of which classic regions occupied his pencil for many years. From 1850 to 1873 he was a constant exhibitor at the Academy. Mr. Lear died early in February, at San Remo.

On the 9th March died the EMPEROR WILLIAM OF GERMANY, who was born on the 22nd March, 1797, and had served, as a youth, in the campaigns of 1812-15 against the great Napoleon. In 1858 he became Regent of Prussia, and succeeded to the crown in 1861. On the 18th January, 1871, William was proclaimed the first Emperor of Germany.

MATTHEW ARNOLD was born in 1822, and was the son of the afterwards celebrated head-master of Rugby. He was educated at Winchester, Rugby, and Balliol College, Oxford, and graduated in honours in 1844, and was chosen Fellow of Oriel in 1845. As a poet, essayist, and critic, Arnold achieved high distinction in the world of culture. He was also useful and popular as an Inspector of Schools. He died suddenly on the 15th April.

On the 10th June died COLONEL KING-HARMAN, who had recently come into Parliamentary notice as Under-Secretary for Ireland.

The 15th June was marked by the death of the EMPEROR FREDERICK WILLIAM, whose short and sorrowful reign was thus brought to an untimely end. As Crown Prince he had won abundant honour as a soldier, both in the Austrian and French wars. But it was upon the peaceful development and improvement of the national life that his heart was chiefly set, and his death must be regarded as a serious loss to the cause of human progress.

On the 9th July died the Rev. J. E. GLEIG, well known to the youth of the country for his

capital books of adventure, and who, "dans son vivant," was Chaplain-General to the Forces. He was born 1796, and served as a subaltern in the Peninsular War, and in the expedition against Washington. He afterwards took orders, and held preferment in the Church.

On the 31st July died Mr. FRANK HOLL, R.A. He was born on the 4th July, 1846, and first exhibited at the Academy in 1864. Although successful as a genre painter, Mr. Holl was far stronger in portraiture, and of late years devoted himself entirely to that branch of art, and he has executed fine and characteristic portraits of many of the chief men of the day. Mr. Holl was elected R.A. in 1883.

GENERAL PHILIP SHERIDAN, the great cavalry leader of the Northern armies in the American Civil War, died on the 5th August.

Other deaths during the period under notice must be briefly enumerated. Literature has been deprived of a veteran follower in the person of MRS. MARY HOWITT, author of "Wood Leighton," a novel, of many books for children, and the translator of many works from the German. To the same profession belonged Miss L. M. ALCOTT, born in Pennsylvania, in 1833, and well known on this side of the Atlantic for her "Little Women" and "Little Men." Miss HARWOOD, too, is gone, who, as "Ross Neil," was a successful writer of fiction and verse. The dramatic world has lost sundry veteran members:—MRS. CHIPPENDALE, who died 26th May, 1888, and who first appeared in London at the Haymarket as Miss Snowdon, in 1863, and who has recently played at the Lyceum. MR. CRESWICK, who died 17th June, 1888, in his seventy-fifth year, one of Phelps' old Sadlers' Wells Company, who took his farewell of the stage in 1885, at Drury Lane. Two other noted actors have departed in the full height of their powers: MR. J. CLAYTON, who recently enlivened the town at the Court Theatre, and Mr. W. J. HILL, who delighted everybody in his part in "The Private Secretary." Among the dramatic veterans who have departed may be noted also MR. T. GERMAN REED, the originator of the successful entertainment that bears his name. And MRS. SHERIDAN KNOWLES, who died in her eighty-first year, recalls the memory of her husband's dramas, in some of which she appeared fifty years ago as Miss Elphinstone, at the Haymarket. The publishing world has lost MR. ROBERT CHAMBERS, the son and successor of Dr. Robert Chambers, of the well-known Edinburgh firm; MR. WILLIAM NELSON, also of Edinburgh; and MR. JOHN HEYWOOD, of Manchester. Among clergymen we have to regret the late A. H. MACHONCHIE, twenty years vicar of St. Alban's, Holborn, who perished during a snowstorm in a Highland forest; CANON TREVOR, born in 1809, an active cleric of the Northern province and the author of many useful historical manuals published by the Religious Tract Society. Also of the DEAN BURGON of Chichester, a well-known figure at Oxford. Medicine and sanitary science have lost a distinguished representative in DR. ARTHUR FARRE. SIR JOHN ROSE, ex-Canadian Prime Minister, and a noted Bank Director and financier, MR. HENRY RICHARD, M.P., the well-known Member for Wales, and M. GUSTAVE MASSON, the veteran French Professor of Harrow, are among the most recent additions to the death roll.

NOTES OF THE YEAR

THE autumn of the year 1887 found the world of English society a little languid, after the protracted festivities of the Queen's Jubilee and of a brilliant London season. Winter came, early and gloomily, with severe cold in November. There was a general lack of employment, with serious suffering, and general uneasiness was increased by popular demonstrations and collisions between police and people. And although the winter that followed was not exceptionally severe, yet it lasted long, and was succeeded by such a wet and dreary season that trade, and any indications of reviving prosperity, were severely checked. To the wet summer has succeeded a gusty, tempestuous harvest month, and the already depressed agricultural interest is likely still further to suffer.

With the cold winds of March, 1888, came the news of the death of the German Emperor William, and then of the sad accession of his foredoomed son, of whose wisdom and high humanity such hopes had been entertained, but whose short reign was but a continued martyrdom. A young and untried Prince ascended the throne, and his influence upon European affairs is still a subject for conjecture.

In France there have been strange movements and popular manifestations, of which General Boulanger has been the hero, and a curious spectacle has been presented in a duel fought with something like ferocity between the French Prime Minister and the military aspirant to popular favour, who may or may not represent *La Revanche*. For the rest, the condition of the working population is, in France also, one of the burning questions of the hour. There have been strikes both numerous and embittered, and the growing discontent of the proletariat with existing social conditions is not without its dangers.

Italy, seeking adventures abroad, has reaped little profit or glory, any more than we have, on the coast of the Red Sea, and her relations with France have been as little cordial as possible. On the other hand,

her entente with Prince Bismarck and the Germans seems closer than ever.

Russia gloomily watches her opportunity and makes her preparations, while her internal condition is full of hidden sores, and her finances are failing under the strain.

Thus the tension of affairs on the Continent still continues. And the possibility of the sudden outbreak of a general war—although perhaps lessened by every year of peace—is yet far from being averted. The periodic scare as to our national defence, which is the result of an uneasy feeling of unpreparedness on the part of the nation, revives, and is lulled to rest; but the question still remains—does our enormous expenditure on naval and military heads, afford us any satisfactory result in national security?

The question whether our naval supremacy is still to be relied upon, to preserve our shores from aggression, is somewhat disagreeably elucidated by the result of the recent naval manoeuvres. It was shown to be almost impossible to blockade an enemy's ports so as to prevent the escape of swift cruisers; and the very existence of our enormous and costly armoured ships is threatened by the development of torpedo warfare. Any active enemy, having eluded our blockade, might easily destroy every unprotected town on our vast seaboard; and the suggestion that the alternative would be offered of a heavy ransom, is not of an exhilarating character. Our fleet must then be massed to protect the vital parts of the empire, while our enemies might work their will in the destruction of our mercantile marine, and in paralyzing our commerce. And should any disaster occur to that protecting fleet, and the Channel be left open to an enemy's transports—what are our means of meeting an invader?

Those who know the condition of our regular army the best, are the least sanguine of its success. It is good as far

as it goes ; but there is so little of it. At home we have skeleton battalions, depleted by the necessities of Indian and Colonial service, and whose ranks would be exhausted in supplying an army corps of thirty thousand men. And then we have paper brigades of volunteers. Still, that is a step in the right direction, for even a mere pen-and-ink organisation is better than none at all. But in the volunteers themselves we have a substantial and satisfactory entity. There are the men, plenty of them, mostly young, and of good physique, and behind these, numbers who have passed through the ranks and retired, but who would mostly enroll themselves as a reserve if they were ever encouraged to do so.

And here we have large bodies of men, eagerly asking to be organised, to be made efficient as regiments by the supply of proper stores and equipments ; to be massed occasionally in brigades and divisions, and take and keep their places in a thoroughly equipped "army of defence." It is not suggested that these demands meet with no attention. But the progress is slower than might be, and in some directions there is no sufficient effort to clear away the obstacles to the volunteer's efficiency. While higher tests of marksmanship are imposed, for instance, on one side, on the other he is left to scramble for such ranges as may be open to him, and has to prove himself efficient in the face of much unnecessary trouble and loss of time. The question of ranges is an important one, and power should be given to secure them in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and of the large commercial towns.

The future of the artillery of the volunteer force, too, would be encouraging were it adequately supplied with guns—not of an obsolete pattern and material. The experience of the American war showed how quickly, given the men and guns, efficient artillerymen can be produced. And in the way of horses, both for artillery and transport, what boundless resources are not furnished in the streets of London, and other large towns ! Some tentative means have already been taken by means of a voluntary registration of horses available for Government purposes in time of national danger.

It is cheering, too, to have to note some progress in the enrolment of our sea-

faring population for coast defence. Submarine mining and torpedo work is also being taught at certain points, and it must be remembered that the resources of defensive warfare are greatly increased by modern inventions under these heads.

Pity it is that our resources in the way of the best horses and the best horse-men in the world, should be so little utilised. Our experience at the Cape shows how readily an effective force, like Methuen's Horse, could be raised in our country districts, and how easily could our squires and great nobles make such an imaginary force a reality.

In the matter of legislation, the year has considerable results to show. The Local Government Bill, which all parties have united to pass, works a peaceful revolution in our system of County Government. The country squire may be said to have been disestablished, although it is probable that for a time, at all events, the composition of the new County Councils will not differ very widely from that of the Courts of Quarter Sessions which have hitherto held sway. But the new "Local Parliaments," as an active and living force, will no doubt acquire fresh functions and increased power on every side. The next step—admittedly only deferred—is to institute district councils, and parish councils must logically follow. In all this we are only reverting to the system of early times when tithing, hundred, and shire, mustered their freemen in council at every emergency.

Of foreign travel and adventure there is little to record. Henry Stanley's fate, in the wilds of the Dark Continent, is still uncertain. Some have hoped that he may yet burst, meteor-like, on the Dervishes of Khartoum, rescue the European prisoners languishing there, and revenge the fate of Gordon. Is he the White Pasha ? Who can tell ? But fear outweighs hope.

Crossing the Atlantic we find the Americans in the throes of a Presidential election, and somewhat excited by their own rejection, at the hands of the Senate, of the Fishery Treaty with Canada. It is a troublesome affair—fishery questions always are—and fishery squabbles are unceasing, whether alongside a trout stream, on the Dogger bank or along the American coast. But it is hardly likely that the friendly relations of the two countries will be seriously disturbed.

CALENDAR FOR 1889.

JANUARY.

1	T	Circumcision. Total eclipse of Sun, inv. at
2	W	Prof. James Stewart born, 1843. [Grnwhob.
3	Th	Waspée burnt, 1-76.
4	F	Isaac Pitman born, 1813.
5	S	Capture of Honore, Bombay, 1783.
6	S	Epiphany. Twelfth Day.
7	M	Earl of Kimberley born, 1826.
8	T	Alma Tadema born, 1836.
9	W	Sir Rupert A. Kettle born, 1817.
10	Th	Sir Ford North born, 1830.
11	F	Rome evacuated by the French, 1806.
12	S	Wm. Pengelly born, 1812.
13	S	1st Sunday after Epiphany.
14	M	Plough Monday.
15	T	Francis G. Heath born, 1843.
16	W	St. Marcellus.
17	Th	Partial eclipse of Moon, partly visible at
18	F	Wm. Hy. Overall born, 1829. [Greenwich.
19	S	Chas. P. Williers born, 1802.
20	S	2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
21	M	Oscar, King of Sweden, born, 1829.
22	T	Bishop Wilberforce born, 1840.
23	W	John B. Herbert born, 1810.
24	Th	Lord Robert Montague born, 1825.
25	F	Conversion of St. Paul.
26	S	St. Polycarp.
27	S	3rd Sunday after Epiphany. Emp. William
28	M	Robert H. Scott born, 1833. [II. born, 1859.
29	T	John C. Horsley, B.A., born, 1817.
30	W	John Forbes-Robertson born, 1822.
31	Th	Ashantees defeated by Walseley, 1874.

MOON'S PHASES.

1st.	New Moon	..	9A.	9m. Afternoon.
9th.	First Quarter	..	0	40 Morning.
17th.	Full Moon	..	5	37 Morning.
24th.	Last Quarter	..	3	57 Afternoon.
31st.	New Moon	..	9	10 Morning.

MARCH.

1	F	St. David.
2	S	St. Chad. Marie Roze born, 1850.
3	S	Quinquagesima Sunday.
4	M	Perey B. St. John born, 1821.
5	T	Shrove Tuesday.
6	W	Ash Wednesday.
7	Th	12,000 Ashantees invaded British territory.
8	F	St. Felix. [1873.
9	S	Kemper William died, 1898.
10	S	1st Sunday in Lent. Quadragesima.
11	M	Earthquake in China, 1876.
12	T	Benj. Williams Leader, A. E. A., born, 1831.
13	W	Aug. J. C. Hare born, 1834.
14	Th	Humbert, King of Italy, born, 1844.
15	F	Mrs. Kendal born, 1849.
16	S	Gustavus III. of Sweden assassinated, 1792.
17	S	2nd Sunday in Lent. St. Patrick's Day.
18	M	Princess Louise of Lorne born, 1848.
19	T	Sir Travers Twiss born, 1809.
20	W	Edward Poynter, R. A., born, 1836.
21	Th	St. Benedict.
22	F	Rosa Bonheur born, 1822.
23	S	Richard A. Proctor born, 1837.
24	S	3rd Sunday in Lent.
25	M	Annunciation. Lady Day.
26	T	Duke of Cambridge born, 1819.
27	W	Sir George J. Elvey born, 1816.
28	Th	War with Russia, 1854.
29	F	Albert Hall opened, 1871.
30	S	Don Carlos born, 1848.
31	S	4th Sunday in Lent.

MOON'S PHASES.

1st.	New Moon	..	10A.	1m. Afternoon.
9th.	First Quarter	..	5	59 Afternoon.
17th.	Full Moon	..	11	47 Morning.
24th.	Last Quarter	..	6	54 Morning.
31st.	New Moon	..	11	37 Morning.

FEBRUARY.

1	F	Partridge and Pheasant Shooting ends.
2	S	Purification. Candlemas Day.
3	S	4th Sun. aft. Epiphany. Marq. of Salisbury
4	M	Fred. Jas. Furnivall born, 1825. [born, 1830.
5	T	D. L. Moody born, 1837.
6	W	St. Titus. Henry Irving born, 1838.
7	Th	Charles Dickens born, 1812; died, 9th June,
8	F	Jules Verne born, 1828. [1870.
9	S	St. Cyril of Alexandria.
10	S	5th Sunday after Epiphany.
11	M	Archbishop Thomson born, 1819.
12	T	B. Disraeli took his seat in House of Lords,
13	W	Cardinal Howard born, 1829. [1877.
14	Th	St. Valentine.
15	F	Mrs. Cashel Hoey born, 1833.
16	S	Amboyna capitulated to English, 1796.
17	S	Septuagesima Sunday.
18	M	Wilson Barrett born, 1846.
19	T	Lord Lyngen born, 1819.
20	W	Leo XIII. elected Pope, 1878.
21	Th	Henry Wallis (Artist) born, 1830.
22	F	Jas. Russell Lowell born, 1819.
23	S	Samuel Pepys born, 1632. [and Martyr.
24	S	Sexagesima Sunday. St. Matthias, Apostle
25	M	Drury Lane Theatre burnt, 1809.
26	T	Rev. Jno. P. Mahaffy born, 1839.
27	W	Richard Garnett born, 1835.
28	Th	Sir R. Rawlinson born, 1810.

MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	First Quarter	..	8A.	58m. Afternoon.
15th.	Full Moon	..	10	17 Afternoon.
22nd.	Last Quarter	..	11	56 Afternoon.

APRIL.

1	M	Karl Otto von Bismarck born, 1815.
2	T	Emile Zola born, 1840.
3	W	St. Richard.
4	Th	St. Ambrose.
5	F	Alg. Charles Swinburne born, 1837.
6	S	St. Isidore.
7	S	6th Sunday in Lent.
8	M	King John of France d. in the Savoy, 1364.
9	T	Adelina Patti born, 1813.
10	W	William Booth, Salvationist, born, 1829.
11	Th	Napoleon I. abdicated, 1814.
12	F	St. Leo.
13	S	David Christie Murray born, 1847.
14	S	Palm Sunday. Pr. Beatrice of Battenberg
15	M	First Prince of Wales born, 1284. [b., 1267.
16	T	Earl of Lucan born, 1890.
17	W	Wreck of <i>Tasmania</i> , 1887.
18	Th	Irish Crimes Bill passed Commons, 1987.
19	F	Good Friday. Primrose Day.
20	S	Admiral Blake's victory at Santa Cruz, 1637.
21	S	Easter Sunday.
22	M	Easter Monday. Bank Holiday.
23	T	St. George. James A. Froude born, 1818.
24	W	Louis XVIII. returned to France, 1814.
25	Th	St. Mark, Evangelist and Martyr.
26	F	Thomas H. S. Escoffier born, 1844.
27	S	General Sir E. B. Hamley born, 1827.
28	S	1st Sunday after Easter. Low Sunday.
29	M	Lord Brabourne born, 1829.
30	T	Sir John Lubbock born, 1834.

MOON'S PHASES.

8th.	First Quarter	..	1A.	47m. Afternoon.
15th.	Full Moon	..	10	19 Afternoon.
22nd.	Last Quarter	..	1	56 Afternoon.
30th.	New Moon	..	3	56 Morning.

MAY.

1	W	Duke of Connaught born, 1850.
2	Th	Thames Embankment opened, 1868.
3	F	Columbus discovered Jamaica, 1496.
4	S	Thos. Hy. Huxley born, 1825.
5	S	2nd Sunday after Easter.
6	M	Cardinal Jacobini born, 1832.
7	T	Robert Browning born, 1812.
8	W	Bonaparte landed at Elba, 1814.
9	Th	Chelsea Embankment opened, 1874.
10	F	St. Antoninus.
11	S	Earl Granville born, 1815.
12	S	3rd Sunday after Easter.
13	M	Sir Arthur F. Sullivan born, 1842.
14	T	Battle of Lewes, 1264.
15	W	Edwin Ray Lancaster born, 1647.
16	Th	E. A. Coquelin born, 1848.
17	F	Joseph Norman Lockyer born, 1836.
18	S	Alphonse Daudet born, 1840.
19	S	4th Sunday after Easter.
20	M	Sir Horace Jones born, 1819.
21	T	Sir Lyon Playfair born, 1819.
22	W	Sir G. W. Desart born, 1820.
23	Th	Battle of Ramillies, 1706.
24	F	Queen Victoria born, 1819.
25	S	Princess Christian born, 1846.
26	S	Rogation Sunday.
27	M	Princess Mathilde Bonaparte born, 1820.
28	T	James Heywood born, 1810.
29	W	Restoration of King Charles II., 1660.
30	Th	Ascension Day.
31	F	Lord Chelmsford born, 1827.

MOON'S PHASES.

8th.	First Quarter	..	6h.	42m.	Morning.
15th.	Full Moon	..	6	42	Morning.
21st.	Last Quarter	..	9	53	Afternoon.
29th.	New Moon	..	5	20	Afternoon.

JULY.

1	M	Orby Shipley born, 1832.
2	T	Arthur Locker born, 1828.
3	W	End of Afghan War, 1879.
4	Th	Garibaldi born, 1807; died, 1862.
5	F	Phineas Taylor Barnum born, 1810.
6	S	Jas. Edgar Boehm born, 1834.
7	S	3rd Sunday after Trinity.
8	M	Mrs. Alfred Mellon born, 1824.
9	T	Thos. Hayter Lewis born, 1818.
10	W	Captain Marryat born, 1792.
11	Th	Henry Buxton Forman born, 1842.
12	F	Partial eclipse of Moon, partly visible at
13	S	Gustave Freytag born, 1816. [Greenwich.
14	S	4th Sunday after Trinity.
15	M	W. Wilson Hunter born, 1840.
16	T	Holt S. Hallett born, 1841.
17	W	First Number of <i>Punch</i> published, 1841.
18	Th	William G. Grace born, 1848.
19	F	Alfred Waterhouse born, 1830.
20	S	Clements R. Markham born, 1830.
21	S	5th Sunday after Trinity.
22	M	St. Mary Magdalen.
23	T	Marquis of Hartington born, 1833.
24	W	Window Tax repealed, 1851.
25	Th	St. James, Apostle and Martyr.
26	F	St. Anne.
27	S	E. O. Ford (Sculptor) born, 1852.
28	S	6th Sun. after Trin. Mary Anderson born,
29	M	Bank of England incorporated, 1694. [1359.
30	T	General von Blumenthwi born, 1810.
31	W	Paul Du Chailu born, 1835.

MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	First Quarter	..	5h.	59m.	Morning.
12th.	Full Moon	..	9	2	Afternoon.
19th.	Last Quarter	..	7	45	Afternoon.
28th.	New Moon	..	0	1	Morning.

JUNE.

1	S	Napoleon quitted Elba, 1815.
2	S	Sunday after Ascension.
3	M	David Jefferson born, 1808.
4	T	General Lord Wolsley born, 1833.
5	W	St. Boniface.
6	Th	Jean B. L. Say born, 1826.
7	F	Empress Charlotte of Mexico born, 1840.
8	S	Sir Philip Owen Cunliffe born, 1828.
9	S	Whit Sunday.
10	M	Whit Monday. Bank Holiday.
11	T	St. Barnabas, Apostle and Martyr.
12	W	Charles Kingsley born, 1819.
13	Th	Duc de Broglie born, 1821.
14	F	E. H. Sloper (Pianist) born, 1826.
15	S	Emperor Frederick of Germany died, 1888.
16	S	Trinity Sunday.
17	M	Chas. F. Gounod born, 1818.
18	T	Henry D. Leslie born, 1822.
19	W	C. H. Spurgeon born, 1834.
20	Th	Corpus Christi. Access. of Queen Victoria,
21	F	Proclamation. [1837.
22	S	Henry Rider Haggard born, 1856.
23	S	1st Sunday after Trinity.
24	M	St. John Baptist. Midsummer Day.
25	T	South Kensington Museum opened, 1855.
26	W	S.S. John and Paul.
27	Th	Dr. Dodd executed, 1777.
28	F	Coronation Day. Ann. eclip. of Sun, inv. at
29	S	St. Peter, Apostle and Martyr. [Greenwich.
30	S	2nd Sunday after Trinity.

MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	First Quarter	..	8h.	2m.	Afternoon.
13th.	Full Moon	..	1	53	Afternoon.
20th.	Last Quarter	..	7	35	Morning.
28th.	New Moon	..	8	54	Morning.

AUGUST.

1	Th	H. M. Marshall (Artist) born, 1841.
2	F	Battle of Sedan, 1870.
3	S	Sir Henry T. Holland born, 1825.
4	S	7th Sunday after Trinity.
5	M	Bank Holiday.
6	T	Duke of Edinburgh born, 1844.
7	W	Archdeacon Farrar born, 1831.
8	Th	Sir A. Otway born, 1822.
9	F	St. Oswald.
10	S	Massacre of Swiss Guards at Tuileries, 1792.
11	S	8th Sunday after Trinity.
12	M	Grouse Shooting begins.
13	T	Philip Bourke Marston born, 1860.
14	W	Briton Riviere born, 1840.
15	Th	Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary.
16	F	Battle of Gravelotte, 1870.
17	S	Eureka (Nevada) destroyed by fire, 1880.
18	S	9th Sunday after Trinity.
19	M	James Nasmyth born, 1808.
20	T	Blackcock Shooting begins.
21	W	Battle of Vimiera, 1808.
22	Th	Sir Francis H. Doyle born, 1810.
23	F	Albert Bridge (Chelsea) opened, 1873.
24	S	St. Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr.
25	S	10th Sunday after Trinity.
26	M	St. Zephyrinus.
27	T	Dr. R. C. Jebb born, 1841.
28	W	St. Augustine.
29	Th	Oliver Wendell Holmes born, 1809.
30	F	Strasbourg Library destroyed, 1870.
31	S	St. Aidan.

MOON'S PHASES.

4th.	First Quarter	..	1h.	27m.	Afternoon.
11th.	Full Moon	..	4	43	Morning.
18th.	Last Quarter	..	10	51	Morning.
26th.	New Moon	..	2	0	Afternoon.

SEPTEMBER.

1	S	11th Sunday after Trinity.
2	M	Partridge Shooting begins.
3	T	Lord Halsbury born, 1825.
4	W	Sir Wilfrid Lawson born, 1829.
5	Th	Prof. Odling born, 1829.
6	F	Robert Hunt, F.R.S., born, 1807.
7	S	Victorien Sardou born, 1831.
8	M	12th Sunday after Trinity.
9	T	John Hollingshead born, 1827.
10	W	Philip G. Hamerton born, 1834.
11	Th	Battle of Cambuskenneth, 1297.
12	F	Marquis of Bute born, 1847.
13	S	Sir Julian Pauncefoot born, 1828.
14	M	Holy Cross Day.
15	T	13th Sunday after Trinity.
16	W	F. Seymour Haden born, 1818.
17	Th	Frederick Goddall, R.A., born, 1823.
18	F	London and Birmingham Railway opened, [1838].
19	S	John P. Seddon born, 1827.
20	M	Sir Ed. Jas. Reed born, 1830.
21	T	St. Matthew, Apostle, Evangelist, & Martyr.
22	W	14th Sunday after Trinity.
23	Th	Battle of Assaye, 1803.
24	F	St. Rusticus.
25	S	Wm. M. Rosetti born, 1829.
26	M	Thos. Sidney Cooper born, 1803.
27	T	Paul Féral born, 1817.
28	W	Fr. T. Palgrave born, 1824.
29	Th	15th Sunday after Trinity. Michaelmas Dy.
30	F	Archdeacon Pott born, 1822.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	First Quarter	.. 7A.	35m. Afternoon.
9th.	Full Moon	.. 1 53	Afternoon.
17th.	Last Quarter	.. 4 49	Morning.
25th.	New Moon	.. 8 43	Morning.

NOVEMBER.

1	F	All Saints.
2	S	All Souls.
3	S	20th Sunday after Trinity.
4	M	Sir Edward Fry born, 1827.
5	T	General Butler born, 1818.
6	W	Bishop Claughton born, 1809.
7	Th	Last Auto-da-Fé, Seville, 1781.
8	F	Baron N. Meyer Rothschild born, 1843.
9	S	Prince of Wales born, 1841.
10	S	21st Sunday after Trinity.
11	M	Count Gleichen born, 1833.
12	T	St. Martin.
13	W	St. Brice.
14	Th	O. L. De Freycinet born, 1828.
15	F	St. Gertrude.
16	S	John H. Ingram born, 1849.
17	S	22nd Sunday after Trinity.
18	M	Wm. S. Gilbert born, 1836.
19	T	Ferdinand de Lesseps born, 1805.
20	W	St. Edmund.
21	Th	Empress Victoria of Germany born, 1819.
22	F	St. Cecilia.
23	S	Thos. Ed. Keibel born, 1823.
24	S	23rd Sunday after Trinity.
25	M	St. Catherine.
26	T	René Goblet born, 1828.
27	W	Frank Dicksee, A.R.A., born, 1853.
28	Th	Leslie Stephen born, 1832.
29	F	Rhoda Broughton born, 1840.
30	S	St. Andrew, Apostle and Martyr.

MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	Full Moon	.. 4A.	5m. Afternoon.
15th.	Last Quarter	.. 8 39	Afternoon.
23rd.	New Moon	.. 1 44	Morning.
29th.	First Quarter	.. 5 29	Afternoon.

OCTOBER.

1	T	Pheasant Shooting begins.
2	W	Gunpowder explosion, Regent's Canal, 1874.
3	Th	Lord Justice Lopes born, 1828.
4	F	Horace Mann born, 1823.
5	S	Charles T. Floquet born, 1828.
6	S	16th Sunday after Trinity.
7	M	Battle of Lepanto, 1571.
8	T	Lord Rowton born, 1838.
9	W	Miguel de Cervantes born, 1547.
10	Th	Wm. Minto born, 1845.
11	F	Old Michaelmas Day.
12	S	Sir H. Drummond Wolff born, 1830.
13	S	17th Sunday after Trinity.
14	M	Sir Wm. Harcourt born, 1827.
15	T	Sir Harry Prendergast born, 1834.
16	W	Houses of Parliament burnt, 1834.
17	Th	Isa Craig born, 1831.
18	F	St. Luke.
19	S	Surrender of Cornwallis, 1781.
20	S	18th Sunday after Trinity.
21	M	Sims Reeves born, 1822.
22	T	Wreck of <i>Sir Cloudesley Shovel</i> , 1707.
23	W	G. E. B. Saintsbury born, 1845.
24	Th	Marquis of Ripon born, 1827.
25	F	Jos. Archer Crowe born, 1825.
26	S	Count von Moltke born, 1800.
27	S	19th Sunday after Trinity.
28	M	SS. Simon and Jude.
29	T	Hare Hunting begins.
30	W	Isabella II., ex-Queen of Spain, born, 1830.
31	Th	All Hallow E'en.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	First Quarter	.. 1A.	33m. Morning.
9th.	Full Moon	.. 2 25	Morning.
17th.	Last Quarter	.. 0 34	Morning.
24th.	New Moon	.. 2 26	Afternoon.
31st.	First Quarter	.. 8 31	Morning.

DECEMBER.

1	S	Advent Sunday. Princess of Wales b., 1844.
2	M	A. W. Parsons (Artist) born, 1847.
3	T	Sir Fred. Leighton, P.R.A., born, 1830.
4	W	Frances P. Cobbe born, 1822.
5	Th	H. F. W. Lucy born, 1845.
6	F	Prof. Max Muller born, 1823.
7	S	Marshal Ney shot, 1815.
8	S	2nd Sunday in Advent.
9	M	Prince Krapotkin born, 1842.
10	T	Grouse Shooting ends.
11	W	E. L. Blanchard born, 1820.
12	Th	Surrender of Falsburg, 1870.
13	F	Lord John Manners born, 1818.
14	S	Prince Albert died, 1861.
15	S	3rd Sunday in Advent.
16	M	George Scharf born, 1820.
17	T	J. G. Whittier born, 1807.
18	W	Alex. Chatriain born, 1826.
19	Th	Baron Ferd. James Rothschild born, 1830.
20	F	Napoleon elected President, 1848.
21	S	St. Thomas. (Total eclip. of Sun.)
22	S	4th Sunday in Advent. Inv. at Greenwich.
23	M	Duke of Guise assassinated, 1588.
24	T	Matthew Arnold born, 1822; died, April 15, [1888].
25	W	Christmas Day.
26	Th	St. Stephen, Martyr. Bank Holiday.
27	F	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.
28	S	Innocent's Day. (born, 1808.)
29	S	1st Sunday aft. Christmas. W. E. Gladstone
30	M	Charles P. Stanford born, 1852.
31	T	Ed. Ang. Bond (Brik. Museum) born, 1814.

MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	Full Moon	.. 9A.	53m. Morning.
15th.	Last Quarter	.. 3 58	Afternoon.
22nd.	New Moon	.. 0 52	Afternoon.
29th.	First Quarter	.. 6 16	Morning.

Golden Number ..	9	Solar Cycle ..	23	Roman Indiction ..	3
Epoct ..	28	Dominical Letter ..	F	Julian Period ..	6603

